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Pravada in contemporary
usage has a range of
meanings which includes
theses, concepts and
Propositions.

STATE VS. THE PRESS

The state and the non-state press in Sri Lanka are on a collision course. Judging by the way in which the hostility of the state towards this section of the press has been developing during the past few weeks, a major assault on the freedom of expression appears to be in the making.

It all began with the President of the Republic repeatedly expressing his annoyance and anger in public, over the manner in which non-government media had been reporting and analysing his government. The President's onslaught on a press perceived as disloyal to his administration was soon taken up for further elaboration by the editor of the *Observer*. He, in a signed article, raised a number of questions about the opposition press, particularly its tabloid group: weren't they financed by dubious sources with anti-government intents? Did they pay taxes? Didn't they flout labour laws? How could the tabloid press carry on when they had no income at all from advertising? How could they claim 'press freedom' while being aligned with the opposition? Weren't the weekly political tabloids controlled by JVP elements?

Things became clearer within a few days when several newspaper offices were visited almost simultaneously by a host of government agencies, on the pretext of checking whether the press were paying taxes, rent, electricity and water bills etc. A part of the office of one weekly, *Lakdiva*, was sealed by the municipal authorities on the ground of violating some regulation pertaining to rental arrangements. Offices of the *Yukthiya, Ravaya, Aththa*, and the *Times* Group were visited by officials of the inland revenue who checked on payment of taxes; some of them were also visited by officials of the state-run utilities who ordered them to pay bills on the spot or face the termination of utility services.

The government defended its action, saying the officials were merely performing their normal official duties. Yet, the harassed press viewed these unprecedented and well-orchestrated official actions as a hostile move to intimidate the independent media. Meanwhile, the President in his public rallies repeated the charge that the tabloid press was being funded by foreign interests, hostile to him and his government. 'With no income coming from advertising, how else could they run newspapers?', the President and his men at Lake House kept asking.

The relationship between the state and the press in Sri Lanka has always been rather an uneasy one, becoming even adversarial at times. The nationalization of the Lake House press in 1970 was the culmination of a long-standing enmity between its owners and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party's leadership. Family feuds, political rivalries and so-called socialist ideologies--in that order, one may say—led to the take over of the Lake House by Mrs. Bandaranaike's United Front regime. Even with the formidable Lake House and the radio under state control, the administrations of Mrs. Bandaranaike (1970-77) and Jayewardene (1977-88) did not hesitate to use emergency regulations to ban, censor and harass newspapers which were not to their liking. To the credit of Mr. Premadasa, he has not so far used emergency regulations to clamp down on the press. However, the recent outbursts of the President and some of his colleagues against the non-state press, if we were to take them seriously, indicate an increasing intolerance, coupled with deep political animosity, of the opposition press.

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One may recall that soon after President Premadasa took office, he and his ministers in charge of information talked a lot about liberalizing the media. A. J. Ranasinghe, the State Minister for Information, even had meetings with members of the liberal intelligentsia to solicit their views on how to formulate an 'open media policy'. The promise of openness, which came in the wake of the post-election euphoria, was, apparently, not a serious one; it was a rhetorical flash that had no bearing on the will of the regime to maintain a tighter control over the media which it 'owns' and utilizes as departments of public propaganda.

Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan press has expanded remarkably over the past 2 or 3 years. Catering to, and thriving on, the anti-government sentiments of the populace, a range of weeklies have appeared, specializing in political reporting and analysis, investigative exposure and 'inside' stories that have traditionally been confined to the realm of gossip. The cracking up of the UNP in 1991 stimulated this political or mini press considerably. Meanwhile, the vacuum left by the impotence and ineffectiveness of the opposition political parties was swiftly filled by the new political press affecting the sales of even the non-state mainstream newspaper like *Divayina* of the Upali group. This was a unique development in Sri Lanka's mass media in that a highly politicized branch of the press, not controlled by the ruling party nor totally identified with the main opposition parties, began to intervene in the political debate. They had also managed, within a comparatively brief time span, to build up a widespread readership.

These papers had, and continue to have, their own individual political lines. *Ravaya* has been supporting the Sirima-Chandrika faction of the SLFP while Yukthiya took a generally pro-opposition stance, campaigning, at the same time, for a negotiated settlement of the ethnic question. *Lakdiva* opened up a totally different line, by emotionally appealing to primarily radical and potentially militant sentiments of young students, workers and the unemployed of the post-juvenile age group, say, 15 to 20. Notwithstanding these differences in their individual political lines and goals, they shared one common characteristic: they have been exceedingly critical of the Premadasa government, its individual politicians and the officialdom.

The non-state controlled mainstream press of the Upali Group and the Times Group too worked within a definite politico-ideological framework, although they have been more cautious and conservative in their approach to political reporting and commentary. Ideologically, the Upali Group has been unabashedly Sinhala nationalis, opposing as a policy any suggestion of political concessions to the ethnic minorities. The Times Group has had a slightly more tolerant attitude towards the minorities while being open to non-Sinhala nationalist viewpoints. The Premadasa administration could not in any case view these two publishing houses, owned by close relations of J. R. Jayewardene and Mrs. Bandaranaike, as allies. The decisive turning point was perhaps the impeachment crisis of 1991 which saw Mr. Premadasa nearly thrown out of power. Indeed, when the UNP split in 1991, both the Upali and Times groups readily provided generous propaganda space for the dissidents and consequently earned the wrath of the UNP hierarchy. Ever since that nightmarish experience of impeachment, Mr. Premadasa has been acutely suspicious of the powerful Sinhala upper caste families that have had kinship or political ties with the Jayewardenes, the Bandaranaikes, the Athulathmudalis and the Dissanayakes.

The gap between the regime and the non-state press further widened when the Free Media Movement (FMM) took the case of journalistic freedom to the public, with the active support of the opposition parties. Among the energetic campaigners of the FMM were editors and journalists of the mini press. The fact that leading journalists of the mainstream press kept themselves away from the campaign gave the FMM a rather militant character. The FMM rapidly became a major platform for oppositionist mobilization.

These developments in media politics occurred at a time when the government appeared, for some inexplicable reason, to be feeling weak, vulnerable and insecure. The alliance of the opposition press and the FMM was obviously viewed by the regime as a threat, one emanating from a source which the regime had no means at all of controlling or manipulating. It appears that the Premadasa administration has now entered a phase in which the control of information is being viewed as of paramount importance in securing regime interests. The information explosion, as attested to by the proliferation of independent press and means of political communication in society, has no doubt put the government on the defensive. More important, it has already led to the erosion of regime legitimacy. Despite, or rather because of, the feverish propaganda campaign personally led and conducted by Mr. Premadasa himself, his administration is suffering from a credibility crisis too. If any government faces a situation in which people begin to believe the opposition's version of events, however unreal or fanciful such versions may be, then there is a real problem for that government: it no longer commands the trust and consent of the governed. **P**

Politics of Anger

T he mood of the Head of State is often a barometer of the political pressures of the country. Going by President Premadasa's rather intemperate mood, exhibited recently in a series of public meetings, one would not be wrong in concluding that the political climate in the country was once more becoming unsettled and uncertain.

Political observers have recently noted a sense of disquiet, if not panic, among the leaders of the present administration. It is strange that Mr. Premadasa, who did not show any signs of panic in public even during the impeachment crisis, has been so vitriolic at public meetings. His acrid verbal attacks on the non-state controlled press, particularly on the Upali and Times newspaper groups, were remarkable in their political implications. Of course, when an otherwise unruffled Head of State decides to be angry before his audiences and television cameras, all sorts of political implications begin to reverberate in the minds of his listeners.

All signs indicate an ongoing struggle involving two groups of power elites—the traditional and the new. If we look for parallels in recent history, the impeachment episode of 1991 was a concrete manifestation of the resentment and hatred with which these two groups confront each other. One does not have to be a political sociologist to realise that Mr. Premadasa's rise to power has marked a class-based rupture in the political unity of the ruling bloc. An outsider came to preside over the formal political power structure; and he did not come alone, he brought in to the networks of political power a host of his own social kinsmen. Ironically, it is the JVP's onslaught on the Bandaranaike-Senanayake-Jayewardene family oligopoly in Sri Lanka's politics which ultimately paved the way for the new power elite of the Premadasas, the Coorays, the Rajapakshas and the Ranasinghes.

Mr. Premadasa's problem, as a political leader, is an exceedingly complicated one. He is a ruler without a clearly defined, readily identifiable and solid class base. The traditional bourgeois elite does not provide any class backing to the Premadasa administration. Nor do the poor masses on which the regime claims and perhaps aspires to be based. The fact that it is working in close collusion with international capital also shuts out some possibilities for the class re-location of either the UNP or Mr. Premadasa's administration. In fact, populism tends to erode the class bases of political parties and the present UNP administration is no exception.

Public displays of anger by politicians may at times expose the sudden eruption of deep-seated feelings of vulnerability and insecurity. If that is the case with President Premadasa, he probably feels threatened by the Colombo upper class elite. Hence his repeated invectives against the 'aristocrats and capitalists'—the two Wijewardene families and their kinspersons who own the Upali group and the Times group of newspapers. To be fair by Mr. Premadasa, one should admit that the traditional Sinhalese bourgeoisie has not yet come to terms with the fact that the age of mass politics enables bourgeois-plebeian alliances.

It is the plebeianist project, which Mr. Premadasa has been promoting for many years, that has now created new problems. He has probably realized that he had no effective control over the masses, because the masses read the tabloid press, not the propaganda handouts coming out of the state-controlled semi-official press. And Mr. Premadasa has no control over the tabloid press which provides the masses with what they prefer— political gossip, stories very critical of government politicians and officials, reports of high level corruption etc. So, it is a vicious circle for the President; he seeks to represent the masses, but the masses are not particularly enthusiastic about his message. The moral is simple: the political utility of the Premadasa variety of right-wing populism is fast coming to an end.

Pains of Adjustment and Impending Discontent

W hile Mr. Premadasa's populist project is losing its political momentum, the country appears to be heading towards a period of intense discontent.

Some time ago, a virile 'advisor' to the government advised Sri Lanka's press to act as an 'early warning system.' Good advice; let us also warn ourselves of certain things that may come our way in the course of what is left of the year.

The significance of 1993 will rest largely on the fact that the full impact of Structural Adjustment reforms would be felt during this year. By the end of last year, all the major reform measures had been implemented except for those concerning important areas of monetary policy. The rest are to come stealthily, but surely, well before the

budget in October. Among the measures that the government will be compelled to adopt is the free-floating of the rupee. After India free-floated its currency in February, Sri Lanka may have to follow suit; or else the tide of foreign private investments is likely to be India-bound.

What would happen if Sri Lanka's monetary policy is drastically altered? A worst case-scenario would be that inflation would rise beyond control; prices of consumer goods—imported as well as locally produced—would escalate. Despite some macro-economic indicators that may satisfy the World Bank and the IMF, the living standards of the Sri Lankan middle class populace may begin to crumble.

The government's massive expenditure on social welfare projects can in no way be considered as constituting an adequate safety network for the middle class and poorer social groups. The expectations of creating a stratum of self-employed small entrepreneurs through the various mechanisms of *Janasaviya* etc. are largely utopian; their failures are likely to germinate new forms of, at least, short term social discontent. In any case, the hostile forces of the market, that have replaced subsidies and price-controls, have already eclipsed the economic benefits brought about by *Janasaviya* and other targeted welfare programmes. Savings accumulated by poor families because of the distribution of free school text books and uniforms are immediately consumed by the spiralling price levels of essential consumer goods. Besides, the welfare programmes already in operation have given rise to another dialectic; they have gained new intensity, though unrealistic in the context of macro-economic adjustments— the welfarist expectations of the masses. Even a brief conversation with *Janasaviya* recipients would reveal that they expect continuous state support in the form of outright grants and consumer subsidies.

This scenario will have to be placed in the context of the absence of a social market approach to capitalist macro-economic reforms.

The existing safety-net approach, which targets exclusively the poorest sections of society—the so-called food stamp recipients—excludes from its considerations vast sections of middle and lower-middle class social groups. Specially hurt by the current market reforms are fixed and stagnant income groups, in the state, private, informal and self-employed sectors. They are simply abandoned to the mercy of a hostile capitalist market. The pains of macro-economic adjustment will be specifically felt by them. As these social groups are now condemned to learn the hard way, the market hath no heart.

Social despair among a range of middle class strata is growing. There may, perhaps, not be food riots in the streets of Colombo. But IMF/World Bank inspired social discontent can assume many a nasty form. In the South Asian context, the economic discontent of the middle classes is usually expressed in ethnic, religious and even caste terms. It has also had a tendency to manifest itself in election-related violence. May the text-book economic pundits of the World Bank and the IMF stay longer in Washington to regret what they did to Sri Lanka, by pushing the middle classes into economic ruin, social frustration and political despair.

One more point for pessimism. Sri Lanka's political system has begun to show unmistakable signs of deep cracks and fissures. Intra- and inter-party rivalries, deep hostilities among politicians resulting in gang battles, the entry of the underworld into the political arena, and impending elections—all these are likely to provide ground for frightening and ominous alliances among most undesirable political forces. **P**

CAMPAIGN

They had questioned him for hours. Who exactly was he? And when
He told them, they questioned him again. When they accepted who he was, as
Someone not involved, they pulled out his fingernails. Then
They took him to a waste-ground somewhere near the
Horseshoe Bend, and told him
What he was. They shot him nine times.

A dark umbilicus of smoke was rising from a heap of burning tyres.
The bad smell he smelt was the smell of himself. Broken glass and knotted Durex.
The knuckles of face in a nylon stocking. I used to see him in the Gladstone Bar,
Drawing pints for strangers, his almost-perfect fingers flecked with scum.

Ciarán Carson
From *Bitter Harvest,* An Anthology
of Contemporary Irish Verse

NOTES ON THE OPEN ECONOMY: SRI LANKA, 1978-92

W.D. Lakshman

Economic strategy in Sri Lanka today, to be properly understood, must be placed in its historical context. The strategy currently implemented was adopted in the latter part of the 1980s, after experimentation with a series of economic strategies since political independence. In 1977 there was a significant about turn in policy, which has lasted up to now, primarily due to clever manipulation of the political process. All these experiments were guided by different goals, different objective conditions and different ideologies. Each of them had recorded successes within their own parameters; however, they had all, as necessary in a democratic system, failed to deliver the results expected by the masses, even during the period from 1977 to 1988. The period since 1988 is marked by, on the one hand, a continuation of the open economy experiment introduced in 1977 and on the other, the incorporation of certain items presented to the people as capable of eliminating or at least reducing some of the iniquitous effects of a market oriented economic strategy.

I may describe these two elements - a combination not new to Sri Lankan policy making - for the sake of brevity, as (a) the modernisation (or economic growth) element and (b) the poverty alleviation (or social justice) element.

The first element aims at an advancement of production forces or more simply growth of production or GNP and the generation of a suitable economic structure for self-sustained growth through export oriented industrialisation. To use a currently over-used expression, the primary policy objective is to make Sri Lanka a NIC in the year 2000 or to double GNP per capita (real) by that year, at the same time maintaining stable price levels and relatively full employment.

The second element is a result of the perception that the pursuance of this strategy since 1977 had, in spite of the safety net provided by food stamps, left a very large proportion of the population (the poor and those living in underprivileged regions) unaffected; there was no trickle down resulting in growing poverty and malnutrition among vulnerable groups. Since 1988, therefore, there has been the recognition of the objective of poverty alleviation and deliberate action to ensure a trickle down of growth benefits to the masses. As an objective this is laudable;

I fully approve of it. However, there are two questions I wish to raise here: to what extent is this element of policy political and populist rhetoric and to what extent is it symbiotically integrated with the objective of growth?

To the extent that the second element is dictated by political expediency and short term compulsions of regime popularity, the long term objective embodied in the first element is disrupted. This policy conflict/contradiction is anyway not an unknowm phenomenon to Sri Lanka.

The strategies adopted to achieve these ends may be summarised as follows:

The Modernisation element:

(a) **integration of the economy** into the global economy (into the on-going process of globalisation of capital).

(b) the adoption of a capitalist path: private enterprise and markets and prices

(c) the provision by the state of (physical and institutional) infrastructure and the restriction of the state to the tasks of maintaining an "even playing field" and of being the "referee" where necessary.

Poverty Alleviation Element

Here the strategy demands an expansion of the state's presence in the system. Even after 1978, the state was massively involved not only in the provision of infrastructure but also in the manipulation of market systems and price mechanisms. These would, in theory, be considered unacceptable in growth terms. (Note that I am *not* presenting an argument against selective intervention by the state in the market mechanism on a planned basis. My interest here is merely to highlight the contradictions in the postures adopted in respect of the two broad elements of policy noted above).

After 1988, the state has taken on an even more extensive role evident in various measures:

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strengthening of and additions to the "safety net", bringing poor and vulnerable groups so far unaffected by the development process into the production system through self-employment; the more or less "forced" creation of modern sector jobs in rural areas (e.g. the 200 garments factories); the enforcement of "non-market" wages on these private industrialists and on the estate sector; the creation of new "welfare" measures as, for example, free school uniforms. All these measures increase the intensity of the contradictions with the modernisation strategies.

The policy instruments adopted in the interests of modernisation and growth can be summarised as follows:

* fiscal policy measures
* monetary policy measures
* exchange rate
* liberalisation from controls
* privatisation (the populist expression being peoplisation)
* state's infrastructure and institution building activities (irrigation, roads, telecommunications; BOI & FTZs; development financial institutions)

For purposes of poverty alleviation and and for creating a regional balance in developmental impulses, a different set of instruments are recognised as necessary. They are:

* creation of safety nets
* janasaviya type income transfer schemes
* promotion of self-employment, small industry/small enterprise/self employment schemes with financial and marketing incentives
* unequal (uneven) use of fiscal incentives in favour of individual enterprises, not of sectors, (as for example the 200 garment factories) and monetary policy measures (selective use of interest rates, refinancing) that go against the principle of an "even playing field"
* the use of administrative fiat (along with fiscal, financial incentives) in determining industry location
* raising funds from the business community outside the normal tax system; maintaining non-budgetary funds
* the direct intrusion of centralised authority to the lowest levels of administration.

Let us now consider the results achieved by these strategies.

The growth rates achieved and the attendant circumstances can be briefly periodised :

* 1978-82: a period of historically rapid GNP or GDP growth, usually credited to 'beginners' luck;
* 1983-89: problems in economic management (balance of payments, public finance) and social unrest arising from the ethnic conflict and other political factors stregthened by unequal distribution; the result is a slowing down of growth;
* 1989-92: some recovery in the growth process due to several factors: political stability in areas other than the Northern and Eastern Provinces: government **implicitly** making a distinction between the two elements of the strategy — let what is needed to achieve modernisation be done as long as the advisers and administrators of these modernisation instruments do not try to meddle with and adversely affect the political program of poverty alleviation: as a visible element, compare the role of Finance and Industries Ministries in the modernisation package and their low key role in the **janasaviya** and 200 garment-factory programs; one gets the feeling that these two areas of responsibility, though not neatly, are divided between two parts of the government); the government's support of the modernisation programme results in the greater availability of foreign finance, ironically for both elements of the strategy; infrastructural projects undertaken earlier begin to function; a fairly consistent management of the industrialisation package; increasing interest shown by direct foreign investments. DFI (result of previous developments - higher level of development - and various institutional changes introduced as part of SAFE and ESAF). But the North East war makes only part of the country contributing to this growth.

A major objective of the policy package was the introduction of certain structural changes in the economy that would provide the basis for self-sustaining economic growth. Unfortunately evidence of such structural change is not visible. The production and employment structures remain very much the same with continuing sectoral productivity differences. The service sector continues to dominate the economy. The share of manufacturing in the GDP is still very small. There are also problems in the structure of exports; there is a high concentration of labour intensive products, which some would argue is a necessary first step in the process of industrialisation. The import intensity of industrial production for export is also a matter of concern.

Inflation is another problem. After 1978, inflation rose to a higher level (eg. on the basis of average of annual rates of increase in CCPI: 1974-78: 5.3%; 1978-82: 18.4%; 1982-86: 10.1%; 1986-91: 13.4%; for the same periods, the

implied GDP deflator was 10%, 16.2% and 12%). The causal factors were: (a) deterioration in the terms of trade leading to continuing balance of payments weaknesses and to to consistent currency depreciation - an undesirable egg-chicken problem; (b) deficit financing leading to increases in money supply. Inflation has enormous implications for real incomes and income distribution patterns as well as for the competitiveness of export industries. It affects very adversely fixed income earners as against variable income earning business classes. One is impelled to question whether the structural adjustment policy package, in the political environment in which it is being implemented, is able to provide some solution to the basic inflationary problem.

(d) *Balance of Payments*

Developments here are obviously related to developments on the inflation front. Major causal factors have been the consistent deterioration in terms of trade [1978=100; to 1991=38] and high inflation.

A problem here is that different measures giveng different signals about performance. The trade balance, current account balance, basic balance and external resources gap as a percentage of GDP rose to their highest levels in 1980/1981. There has been a decline since then but even in 1991 these ratios were at quite high levels: 12%, 6%, 1%, and 17% respectively.

The import capacity of external assets drops from 11 months in 1977 to 2 in 1980, remaining around 3 till 1989; by the end of 1991 it goes up to 4.7 months.

The ratio of external debt to G.N.P was 44% in 1978; it rose to its highest point of 92% in 1989 and then dropped to 83% in 1991.

What should be noted are: the continuing heavy dependence on foreign aid with no sign of any dimunition of its role and the growing debt burden, even though there has been an increase in the concessionary nature of foreign funds. We need to raise in this context a few important questions: To what extent is foreign aid absolutely necessary and in what areas? Are we using foreign assistance effectively? Have we not become victims of an almost narcotic addiction to foreign aid?

Let us now take a look at the results of the poverty alleviation project, even though this is an area in which reliable data is difficult to obtain, with conflicting views coming from the government media and involved administrative agencies and from independent observers. I am yet to come across any independent intensive research on the subject. Impressionistic evidence suggests that people in the small-farm agricultural sector, particularly paddy, are doing very badly due to a kind of a scissors crisis in operation, with costs after the elimination of the fertiliser subsidy catching up with prices. Hidden tenancies and de facto loss of land holdings to rich *mudalalis* or rich farmers are other factors which contribute to the pauperisation of people in these sectors. This process is, however, ocurring without any significant capitalisation of agriculture or the development of large-holding agriculture in their hands; in effect, pauperisation without proletarianisation of farm labour.

There are also conflicting views on the impact of the limited spread of agri-business, multinational or otherwise, on the poor landless rural population. There is very little evidence, either, of the sustainability or financial viability of the numerous self employment projects in the rural areas sponsored by the government and by NGOs. What is happening to the poor in the informal urban sectors is not fully known. There is also a gradual but serious erosion of real incomes in the case of fixed wage/salary earners in the public sector; certain groups among them at the low end of the income scale may be getting pushed into the poverty category.

There are many distinct and important problems in this area. Let me mention a few. The available data base is totally inadequate to answer any of these questions satisfactorily:

(i) What is happening to the proportion of the population in absolute poverty?

(ii) Are the families in poverty constantly changing over time or do the same families largely remain in poverty over time?

(iii) How far away from the poverty line are the different families considered to be below that line?

(iv) How relatively poor are those remaining in poverty?

I would now like to draw attention, without discussion, to the important problem areas:

(a) the balance between investment and savings - currently we are investing twice the domestic savings, the balance coming from foreign grants and investments

(b) the large budget deficits that are a prime cause of inflation

(c) balance of payments position (large trade and current account deficits); growing external debt

(d) unemployment and under-employment

(e) distribution of the gains of growth and poverty

In the light of these problems, one must ask seriously what is meant by declarations of achieving NIC status by year 2000. What is exactly meant by the statement that

a certain country is a NIC is not at all clear. It does not imply any qualitatively different social system. What is referred to are mostly quantitative criteria. Let me take two such criteria: (a) per capita income level and (b) structure of the production system.

In respect of per capita income, the following are some of the comparative data today: Sri Lanka's present per capita income (subject to all weaknesses in international comparative data on per capital incomes) is about $500. Even in would-be NICs like Malaysia (about $2500) or Thailand (about $1500) per capita income is about 5 times and 3 times that of Sri Lanka. In S.Korea it is over $5500, in Singapore and Hong Kong about $11500.

The second criterion is generally based on the strength of industry, particularly manufacturing, in the production system. The manufacturing sector in some of the existing so-called NICs and some would-be-NICs is as follows:

Hong Kong 18%;   Singapore 29%;

S.Korea 31%;   Brazil 26%;

Thailand 26%

Compare these figures with Sri Lanka's 15%. Leaving out Hong Kong because of its special circumstances, how long will it take, at what rate of manufacturing sector growth, to achieve the level of industrial development, which such high manufacturing sector proportions imply ? Our GDP (real) growth rate in the 1980s averaged 4 per cent and that of the manufacturing sector 6 per cent.

Thus the achievement of some of these characteristics of the so-called NICs, even in fifteen years let alone the seven years that are left of the 20th century, is a formidable task. Pessimistically perceiving that this is an unachievable target, there is an alternative representation of this objective, that of doubling our per capita income by year 2000. This is in 7 years from today. To achieve this target, the rate of growth of per capita income has to be at an annual average rate of about 10 per cent over this period; If population grows at about 1 per cent, the GNP growth has to be adjusted to 11 per cent. The implications of this for required capital formation, the financing (domestic and foreign) of that capital formation and the growth of productivity of capital (ICOR) are formidable, given the actual growth rate of the 1980s, actual ICOR, the actual low level of domestic savings and the weak prospects for any substantial increase in foreign capital flows.

Also consider the structural conditions of the economy: the presence of a very large sector in the economy which remains unaffected by the modernisation wave; under-capitalised small holding agriculture; inadequate development of commercial farming, emphasised by the weak impact of large, multinational or otherwise, agri-business on the sector; archaic institutional framework affecting this sector (in spite of changes over time); lack of any effective land reform; unproductive small industry, small enterprise and self-employment sectors; There is also the traditional plantation sector and its low productivity; whether the combination of public ownership and private management can overcome its inefficiencies is a moot point. Unless these sectors are modernised and their productivity grows substantially, they will be a drag on the fast modernising industrial and service sectors.

An attempt to raise the growth rate of the economy beyond what the economy can sustain with its own efforts in a global environment which militates against a consistent expansion of concessional foreign assistance flows will either lead to sharp increases in the rate of inflation or to unsustainably heavy external debt burdens. Both will be counterproductive and will undercut growth efforts.

Finally consider the degree of congruence between the political imperatives of the 'second leg' (i.e. poverty alleviation) and the economic policy adjustments required for the promotion of the 'first leg' (i.e. modernisation).

As a vision and a guiding light, it is good to be thinking of a doubling of income by the turn of the century; considering the economic position enjoyed by Sri Lanka in the late 1940s when it compared favourably with most Asian societies which have since then overtaken us in the economic race, we Sri Lankans clearly deserve it. This is a particularly desirable objective if it is combined with poverty alleviation, equal opportunities for all and full employment. If we *genuinely and committedly work* hard (it is after all hard work on the part of all, which alone can produce this kind of result: there are no short cuts) towards that goal, we might at least be able to go some distance along that path. But have we so far developed that necessary hard working national ethos? Is the socio-economic system we live in today and being promoted by various elements of the current policy, the kind which is likely to promote hard work?

TOWARDS A STRUCTURAL PERSPECTIVE IN SOUTH ASIA

Newton Gunasinghe

The following essay was written by the late Dr. Newton Gunasinghe, a few weeks prior to his untimely death in October 1988. Readers will find Dr. Gunasinghe's formulations particularly useful to the understanding of the complexities of social and political change in contemporary South Asia. At the time of his demise, Dr. Gunasinghe was a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Colombo and the Secretary of the Social Scientists' Association, Sri Lanka.

Max Gluckman and his students saw ethnicity and the consciousness of identity as taking specific forms in distinct conditions.'Tribalism' was not the re-emergence in an urban context of primordial sentiments born in a former, pre-existing world of experience. It was something entirely new, founded in the political and economic conditions of a colonial industrial labour market. It bore all the marks of an individualism and a stress on identity constituted within a culture of capitalism.

> Bruce Kapferer: *Social Analysis*, No.22, December, 1987

May I commence this presentation, in the form of certain analytical formulations, that would probably work as the theoretical framework, which shall inform the discussion to follow ? In my view, the fundamental structural dynamics of the South Asian Social formations, as distinct from the other so-called "Third World Societies" and the advanced capitalist social formations may be summarised in the following manner, together with certain introductory and qualifying observations.

i. The need for a macro-social theory covering the entire South Asian sub-continent comprising India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal has existed for a long time. Yet such a macro-theory has failed to emerge. Here, it is also needed to do an exercise of inclusion and exclusion, as to what the social formations under theoretical analysis are, in order to differentiate that which is under discussion, from that which is not, although the other social formations under theoretical analysis are in order to differentiate that which is under discussion, from that which is not, although the other social formations may be geographically closely located. In addition, one is also obliged to make a certain distinction between the cultural sphere and the social structural dynamic, in order to do this exercise of inclusion and exclusion. Afghanistan and Tibet, although somewhat influenced by the Pan-Indian cultural tradition are definitely outside the general South asian Social structural framework, as these areas properly belong to the Central Asian Social formations. Although Maldivian Islands are somewhat culturally influenced by the Indian and Lankan cultural traditions, these are distinct from the sub continental social formations earlier referred to, as their structural dynamics are distinct. Similarly even though the Island of Java, currently located in the modern National state of Indonesia, while being heavily influenced by the Hindu tradition, still structurally distances itself away from, the basic and dominant structural dynamic that runs through the entire South Asian social formations. Burma although it was part of the British Indian empire, Perhaps accidentally due to imperial administrative decisions, while being "a Buddhist" society(Melford Spiro) by an large, in my view, is distinct social structurally from the South-Asian social?

ii. Given these social structural premises, I would define the macro-social field, that one would refer to as territorially comprising the modern states of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, which any one with a modicum of historical knowledge ought to realise to be creations of modern times, some of which came into formation in the post-independence period. If that is so, what is the underlying logic of these social formations which while displaying structural commonality also express regional and provincial divergences, nevertheless within the broader social formations, which while displaying structural commonality also express regional and provincial divergences, nevertheless within the broader social structural framework that covers the entire South-Asian social fabric ?

iii. Locating myself broadly in the Marxist tradition, informed by Gramsci (i.e. Southern Question in Italy) but at the same time partially using the concepts of social anthropology as formulated by Evans-Prichard, (segmentation); Max Gluckman, (Custom and Conflict); Chandra Jayawardena (Solidarity) and Louise Dumont (Hierarchy), may I make an initial attempt towards some theoretical formulations pertaining in general to the South Asian social formations, as territorially defined earlier ?

Here I shall embark on a methodological detour, which however, will eventually link up with the theme under discussion. With regard to method in social theory, one is obliged to refer to the rigorously analytical essay by Dumont on South Indian Kinship systems, as to whether there is a general underlying fundamental structure of which these are mere specific and local expressions. In other words, there are apparently patrilineal kin groups, (as among Brahmins of Tanjore) and apparently matrilineal kin groups, (as among the Nayars of Kerala); there is the practice of patrilocal, matrilocal and virilocal residence patterns in marriages. While taking into account all these divergences, Dumont formulates a concept that helps one to understand the fundamental structure that underlies these variations while accounting for differentiated segmental expressions. According to Dumont, South Indian Kinship systems at the basic structural level revolves around a crucial bifurcation between consanguines (blood relatives) which is sociologically defined, and not biologically; so that one's mother's brother is an affine, whereas one's father's brother is a consanguine. The affinal relatives are given in marriage to each other which he terms "bifurcate merging". One may also add that, the traditional Sinhala bifurcation between the 'Le Nayo' and 'Avassa Nayo' which runs parallel to the bifurcation that Dumont has referred to. This comment which may perhaps appear to be a digression from the fundamental theme of the discourse is not actually so. In addition to establishing the structural commononalities of the kinship systems in South India and Sinhala Society, I am also attempting to establish a methodological perspective in social theory; i.e. as Dumont has masterly accomplished in his essay on Kinship that variation and structural similarities could be brought within the same fabric of social analysis which explains both, thus rising above the methodological poverty of empiricism.

Here my objective in this note is to identify both variation and structural similarities in the South Asian social formations, but not necessarily within the confines of the territories of the modern "national states" as they are defined in the late-eighties of the twentieth century. To proceed further, along the lines laid down by Dumont, one should attempt to arrive at a macro- theory capable of encapsulating social processes at work in the South-Asian region as a whole, while theoretically coupling it with sub theories applicable to various other ethnic segmentations in the region, such as the Sinhala, Sikhs, Tamils, Bengalis, Gujaratis, etc. Now, I shall return back to an identification of elements of structural commonalities in South Asian social formations without overlooking the fact that these commonalities may articulate themselves in different or even contradictory forms.

(a) Caste hierarchy, which is continuing while undergoing profound structural transformations, coupled with increasing class differentiation, in the urban areas and especially in those rural areas which experienced the results of the "Green Revolution"; leading to a pronounced contradictions and modern social processes merging in the class/caste dialectic which has brought non-traditional fissures in the social structure, which was not present in the same form in the "exclusive" but geographically nearby social areas such as Afghanistan and Tibet. As the scholarly work by Federich Barth has demonstrated the social contradictions in the Pathan social,structure which covers both the modern states of Pakistan and Afghanistan,but mainly Afghanistan, revolves around clan conflicts led by different Khans, who are in search of territorial control within the context of a basically pastoral economy. Whereas, the traditional Tibetan social system and political structure revolved around the institution of the Dalai-Lama, who was a theocratic ruler combining the headship of the State and the "Church", thus politically and morally encapsulating the main social segments in his territorial domain, as implied in the accounts given by such scholars as H.E. Richardson. These observations in relation to Afghanistan and Tibet are of relevance to this discourse, as I am proceeding towards excluding these geographically adjoining social areas, from my focus of attention towards an attempt to formulate a general social theory of sub-continental social formations, which as earlier referred to mainly corresponds with the territorial area occupied by the modern states of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Now since that I have dealt with the exercise of "exclusion" let me proceed with the major structural dynamic that underlies these social formations, as I understand them.

(b) The dialectic of segmentation and solidarity, while covering certain social groups which have deposited them against each other, overcoming traditional loyalties, basically competing for economic resources and political power in social formations subjected

to capitalist growth as well as continuing under development. Here as an illustration, it would be important to consider the social and political contradictions of Tamilnad, especially after independence. According to Beteille, the caste system in Tamilnad (which in my view is a form of segmentation that results when the hierarchical system is in disintegration, not to be confused with caste strata, which although hierarchically differentiated are socially unified as the Indian anthropological literature dealing with the Joint-Family system would indicate) consists of three broad layers, the Brahmins, the middle-level castes and whom he refers to as the Adi-Dravidas, i.e. the so-called untouchables. In the post-independence period with the Congress losing power in Tamilnad and the emergence into power of the Dravidian movement, the middle level castes basically led by the agricultural castes such as Vellallar, Mudaliyer and Kallan came to the fore as political managers depending on the democratic political vote, relying on their numerical strength, pushing the numerically smaller Brahmin groups away from their control over land through land reforms as well as dismantling their political authority and ancestral dominance. What did this precisely lead to? In the first instance, the movement of the Brahmin strata from the rural areas to urban professional pursuits (such as civil servants, doctors and engineers) away from the traditional control over land; in the second instance, the emergence of the middle-level castes, principally the agricultural social strata, which were increasingly being socially differentiated into classes; and in the third instance to an economic marginalisation of the Adi-Dravidas caste groups, except for a modicum of a few family groups which rose up by using popular politics. Now I shall proceed towards the formulation of the concepts of segmentation and solidarity in relation to the Tamilnad illustration. Segmentation is a result of traditional forms of hierarchy, which are essentially unified structures of dominance, combining different layers of society, undergoing a process of social disintegration. As Max Weber has emphasised, although the Hindu caste system is hierarchical, it also tends to avoid contradictions among the layers by a process of Unification. Therefore the segmentation I refer to here has little to do with traditional caste hierarchy; but to the disintegration of it, while retaining certain structural characteristics, which also runs through the entire South Asian social fabric. Segmentation denies hierarchy while attempting to build-up parochial groups of solidarity, which at the same time softens the contradictions among the new economic strata, formed within these identity groups, using such populist slogans as that we are all Vellallars or Mudaliyars, While maintaining an anti- Brahmanic attitude, dominating the Adi-Dravidas. This creates a false sense of identity or "false consciousness" as Lukacs would have called it, which ideologically reinforces the economic and political interests of the newly emergent bourgeois sections of the middle-level caste groups, thus creating both segmentation and solidarity, which may not necessarily follow the macro class divisions, but the fissures in the social structure obtained from the archaic features of the social formation, nevertheless leading essentially to modern social and political process.

(c) The traditional Marxist problematic of the "National Question" has to be reformulated if one is to theoretically understand the South Asian social formations. Here, ethnic identity and religious ideology interact as a peculiar dialectic which perhaps was not present to the same degree in the nineteenth century Europe. Take the case of Bengal; which prior to the partition in 1947 was basically inhabited by the ethnic Bengalis, except some marginalised sections of people, such as the tribal Santals. But the Bengalis were bifurcated into two religious faiths, i.e. Hindu and Muslim. The matters were further complicated there as the big Zamindar landlords in East Bengal, basically a Muslim province, were mainly Hindus. Within this context in Bengal, in the pre-independence forties, religious ideology overcomes ethnic identity, leading to sectarian riots on the religious divide between the Hindus and Muslims, giving rise to the birth of east Pakistan. In the resultant violent social processes, the Hindus were driven away from what used to be East Bengal. But the "National Question" as the traditional jargon would have it was not yet resolved; the East Bengal Muslims found out that they had come under Punjabi dominance, within the context of this strange state of Pakistan, which had two wings geographically separated by thousands of miles. This led to the Bangladesh concept and a liberation war which was successful in achieving independent statehood. But this did not end the perennial problem relating to ethnic identity and religious ideology; although recently formed, Bangladesh was mainly religiously homogenous, but not entirely so. There were some hill tribes near the Burma border, who discovered that they were being discriminated in an Islamic state, being "Buddhist". This led to violent social conflicts, While some Islamic Bengalis "illegally" migrated to Assam for economic pursuits, territorially a part

of modern India, creating ethnic tension in that area between the local tribal groups and the new Bengali Immigrants. Thus the dialectic of ethnic identity and religious ideology, worked towards bifurcating and segmenting society, although state formations geographically shift.

(d) The traditional social formations in South Asia were socially multiple; within the context of Sri Lanka for instance, in the nineteenth century, there were a large number of social communities with "ethnic" identities, although they themselves were segmented on the basis of caste and class differences. For instance, there were the low country Sinhala, Kandyan Sinhala, Northern Tamil, Eastern Tamil, South-Western and East coast Muslim communities, who while speaking the same language or professing the same faith still felt themselves to be different "ethnic" identity groups. These parochial identity groups and their ideology was so strong, that the upper stratum of Kandyan society demanded a federal constitution in the early decades of the Twentieth Century as they felt that they had very little in common with the 'Low Country Sinhala". But this perception undergoes changes with certain social processes associated with capitalist growth; such as certain segmentary social groups coming into alliance through marital ties, which helps to cement an overall identity that however cannot overcome, the basic ethno-religious divisions. Hence, in the South Asian social formations, there is a tendency to move from multiplicity to bifurcation which is essentially associated with social processes generated by capitalist growth and underdevelopment. These social processes tend to overcome parochial social groups while giving rise to bifurcation. Let me further illustrate the case with reference to Punjab; before partition in 1947, Punjab was fairly evenly inhabited by Punjabi speaking people of three different faiths; i.e. Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. The partition led to a bifurcation, where the Hindu and Sikhs were on one side and the Muslims were on the other. As a result, on the wake of the partition the overwhelming majority of the Muslims were driven away to the Pakistan side of the newly established border. During this period, the Hindu Sikh contradictions, did not surface as it was overdetermined by the basic bifurcation between the Hindus and the Muslims. But in a situation where both Hindus and Sikhs are driven to the new Indian province of partitioned Punjab, a new bifurcation between the Muslims the Hindus and Sikhs emerge. This is accentuated by the very success of the "Green

Revolution" in Punjab, which has created a powerful stratum of kulak farmers, basically from the Jat Sikhs, who in order to maintain their control over the subordinate Sikhs have merged with a separatist slogan. Is it possible that there is a structural parallel between the Sinhala/Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka and the Hindu/Sikh conflict in Punjab, which is basically generated by the social transformation from multiplicity to bifurcation?

If one is inclined to summarise these complex social processes from a sub-continental perspective, it is absolutely necessary to outline a social theory that is capable of grasping the underlying social structural commonalities of the South Asian social formation. May I reiterate these commonalities as follows, as the previous discourse has already provided concrete illustrations?

(a) Caste hierarchy, subjected to social change which still retains some of its archaic features, while the social formations under investigation are also subjected to profound processes of class differentiation.

(b) Segmentation that was present in the traditional social structure, assuming new forms of articulation under uneven capitalist growth, while not submerging, give rise to modern forms of solidarity, which may not necessarily run parallel to differentiation among various economic strata.

(c) Both ethnic consciousness and religious ideology in the subcontinental social formations have been expressing themselves while dialectically interacting with each other. Ethnic consciousness ideologically attempts to embrace and define basically a linguistic community, whereas, religious ideology attempts to demarcate a field of "true believers", or a moral community as Durkheim would have identified it. Yet within the South Asian social formations, one could be Bengali and be either Hindu or Muslim, be Punjabi and adhere to Hindu, Muslim or Sikh faiths, or be Sinhala and proclaim Buddhist or Christian identities. Hence the interaction between ethnic consciousness and religious ideology has been sometimes overlapping and sometimes contradictory.

(d) The transformation from multiplicity to bifurcation, in modern South Asian social formations has created a great degree of social tension as the Punjab and Lankan examples would illustrate. But unfortunately social homogeneity is not possible in a segmented social formation; hence the contradictions generated by uneven capitalist de-

velopment would inevitably tend to express themselves, through bifurcation whether these contradictions run parallel to class contradictions or not.

To conclude I wish to raise certain questions, which I feel to be of importance in the current socio-political conjuncture, where South Asian social formations are located. Is it possible that one is situated in a modern conjuncture where non-traditional macro groups such as macro castes; ethnic groups; linguistic communities etc. are in formation, which, overcome old parochial and kin-group loyalties, while blunting class consciousness. These perhaps would have been at a higher level three or four decades back? Class contradictions, (intensified in a period of accentuated social differentiation) in the absence of class consciousness are being reflected through segmenting divisions, such as ethnicity, religious groups, macro-castes and provincial loyalties. Thus they question all social theories that lay down a unilineal and uni-directional path of change, which in the last analysis derives from Comte's positivism.

PUNISHING THE VICTIM

Rape and Mistreatment of Asian Maids in Kuwait

Since the restoration of the Kuwaiti regime in March 1991, to the present, nearly two thousand women domestic servants, mainly from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India and the Philippines, have fled the homes of abusive Kuwaiti employers and sought refuge in their embassies. This mass exodus of maids is the culmination of a longstanding problem: the abuse of Asian women domestic servants occurs at a time of general hostility towards foreigners that has escalated since liberation.

Large numbers of Sri Lankan women have sought employment in the Middle-East including Kuwait. The abuses that some of these women have been subjected to have been highlighted in the press but the general framework of law and custom that makes such abuse possible has not been brought to light. Neither has this situation received adequate attention from the government.

In April 1992, *Middle East Watch* and the *Women's Rights Project,* both divisions of *Human Rights Watch,* conducted a two-week fact-finding mission in Kuwait to investigate reports of abuse of Asian women domestic servants.

We reproduce below excerpts from the report.

T he abuse and mistreatment suffered by Asian maids in Kuwait is occurring in the context of hostility towards expatriates that has increased since liberation in 1991. By 1990 , prior to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, foreign workers and their dependents, also referred to as expatriates, accounted for nearly 62% of Kuwait's population. Large numbers come from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and the Philippines.

Until the mid-1970s, Asian women came to Kuwait as dependents of their husbands, fathers or other male relatives, but were not themselves a significant percentage of the foreign labor force. Since then, increasing numbers of Asian women have joined Kuwait's labor force in their own right, growing from 1,000 in 1965 to over 72,000 in 1985. By 1992, the number of Asian maids reached roughly 75,000 to 100,000, approximately one for every seven Kuwaiti citizens (men, women and children).

In the wake of its liberation, Kuwait has embarked upon a concerted campaign to rectify what it sees as a dangerous imbalance in its population. A report prepared by the government's Higher Planning Council concluded that the high numbers of expatriates are "a threat to national security" because they out number Kuwaiti citizens. The government, by taking steps to limit immigration of foreign workers and curtail employment benefits for expatriates, is actively seeking to invert the pre-war population ratio so that by 1995 Kuwaitis will constitute 60% of the population.

New politics restricting immigration of foreign workers include women domestic servants. The government has reportedly stopped granting permission to bring over more maids to families that already have one or more. However, this new restructuring apparently has yet to significantly affect the number of Asian maids in Kuwait. Asian women domestics are in increasing

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demand as more Kuwaiti women enter the work force or choose to employ a maid and much of Kuwait's social structure remains dependant upon the presence of domestics who care for the homes and children of Kuwaiti families.

To some degree, however, these new policies do reflect what the maids we interviewed perceived as a sea change in the way their employers treated them. Of the women who spoke to us, those who worked in Kuwait both prior to and following the Iraqi invasion cited a marked deterioration in their treatment after the war's end. This heightened abuse may have accounted, in part, for the flight of the maids to their embassies, a phenomenon that occurred in pre-invasion Kuwait, but increased dramatically in the post-war period.

We found that while not all domestic servants in Kuwait suffer at the hands of their employers, there exists a significant and pervasive pattern of rape, physical assault and mistreatment of Asian maids that take place often with impunity.

One third of the sixty cases we investigated directly involved rape or sexual assault, including kicking , beating with sticks and pipes, slapping, punching and pulling hair. Almost without exception the women we interviewed spoke of non-payment of salary, passport deprivation and near total confinement in their employer's homes. All of these abuses are illegal under Kuwaiti law, but have gone unheeded by the government.

To our knowledge, only a handful of the charges against abusive employers have ever been investigated or prosecuted. We have submitted formal requests for information of cases in which allegedly abusive employers have been prosecuted, but the Kuwaiti Government has yet to respond to those requests. Rather than investigate or prosecute alleged abusers, Kuwaiti authorities often detain maids seeking to report crimes to the police or simply return them to their employers. Worse, there have also been credible reports of abuse of women domestic servants in police custody that likewise goes unpunished.

In addition to failing to provide abused domestic servants with justice under applicable criminal and civil law, the government of Kuwait has explicitly excluded them from the country's labor law. Kuwait's Private Sector Labour Law No.38 of 1964 governs working conditions for most workers— including expatriates— in the private sector. The labor law contains rules governing the maximum daily and or weekly hours an employee can be required to work, employees' entitlement to overtime, and provisions for weekly and annual leave. If employers violate these requirements, the labor law provides workers with access to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour to air their grievances about working conditions and have them investigated or arbitrated by the Ministry.

The exclusion of domestic servants from this protection has created a widespread attitude that the maids are not entitled to the same rights as other workers. This renders them not only especially vulnerable to the abuses but also largely powerless to combat them. As a group, women domestic servants have no right to organise. no power to bargain for fair employment terms or to enforce the terms their employers agreed to when they were hired. Nor do they have access to the government facilities for arbitration of employment disputes. This has clearly created an atmosphere in which the maids can be, and often are, overworked and ill-treated by their employers at whim with little expectation that the state will intervene.

Ultimately, abused maids had little alternative but to flee to their embassies or to shelter with friends. Many sought to settle their disputes or to find new jobs or return home. Initially, the AL-Sabah government flatly denied exit visas to many maids seeking to leave. The result was that, unless the maids could find informal means to resolving their difficulties, they languished in their embassies in ever increasing numbers.

Eventually, in the week prior to our mission, Kuwait deported over 8006 maids, mostly from their embassies. The deportation while relieving an immediate problem, raised a number of prominent concerns. Prior to deportation, the Kuwait government made no systematic effort to document abused women's criminal complaints or civil claims. Upon investigation, we found these had been effectively dropped. In addition, for those women desiring to remain in Kuwait,alternatives to deportation like job transfer, were never made available, despite the fact that they had had a legitimate rationale for leaving their employers. Finally, deportation seems to have allowed the Kuwaiti government to wash its hands of the maids' problems without addressing the underlying causes of their abuse. The government has yet to punish known abusers or implement the legal and practical reforms necessary to ensure that the pattern of abuse and mistreatment of Asian maids with impunity does not recur. According to sources in Kuwait, new maids seeking refuge appear daily at the Asian embassies.

According to information we obtained from embassies, Asian diplomatic officials, journalists, the U.S. Department of State and Kuwaiti government officials, over 1,400 Filipinos—between 14—20% of the estimated number of Filipino maids— fled their employers between May 1991 and April 1992. During the first four months of 1992, we determined that at least 300 Sri Lankan maids ran away from their employers to the Sri Lankan

embassy, most of them complaining of rape and mistreatment. The Bangladesh embassy sheltered 20 women a day, while there were ten to twenty women at the Indian embassy at any given time.

One third of the sixty cases we investigated directly involved the rape or sexual assault of maids by their employers or a man with access to the employer's house. Well over two thirds involved physical assault. Almost without exception the women we interviewed spoke of non payment of salary, passport deprivation and near total confinement in their employer's homes. Asian embassy officials and other sources reported to us that these findings held true across the larger population of maids who fled their employers.

We found every indication that such abuses are under-reported. Impediments to the maids' reporting abuse or mistreatment, such as confinement in the homes of their employers or police refusal to investigate their complaints, as well as the social stigma attached to certain types of abuse, particularly sexual assault, present serious disincentives to reporting employer abuse to the authorities.

The abuse of Asian maids is not limited to sexual or physical assault. Underlying abuses, such as debt bondage, passport deprivation and confinement are also common and create conditions for the maids to suffer assault in near total isolation from the outside world.

Debt bondage, prohibited under international human rights law, is a situation in which a debtor pledges her or his personal services against a debt she or he owes, but the person to whom he or she owes it fails to deduct the value of the debtors services from the debt, or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited or defined. Kuwait's labor law requires that no more than ten per cent of wages due may be deducted for settlement of debts owed the employer. However, because domestic servants are excluded from this law, they cannot invoke this provision. The result is that employers often do not honor the ten per cent limitation. In many cases investigated, large percentages or, in some cases, the entirety of the maid's salaries had been with held by employers, allegedly to settle the maids debts. The women workers appeared to have no say in the amount attributed as loaned to them or in the decision regarding salary proportions to be deducted towards their debt. In many cases we investigated, debt had the effect of placing women in bondage to their employers. It was used as a means of forcing the women to endure prolonged working hours, inadequate food and sleep, no days off, and no time to attend a place of worship, for fear of never getting paid or of losing their jobs.

The effective bondage of the women workers is further enforced through the taking of their passports. Almost every maid's passport is taken from her by her employer upon arrival in Kuwait. Passport deprivation by employers is illegal, but the government appears to see this practice when applied to Asian maids, as benign. However while the government tolerates the taking of the maids' passports, it rigorously enforces the Aliens Residence Law specifically requiring foreigners to carry their passports at all times or be subject to immediate arrest and fine or detention. Thus if a maid flees without her passport, she is very likely to be arrested or detained. Passport deprivation was also a barrier to a maid's ability to leave Kuwait. The Kuwaiti government requires an exit visa to be stamped on the passport of all departing aliens. Most maids who fled abusive employers did not have their passports and could not obtain the necessary exit visa. Thus, the government at first prevented them from leaving Kuwait, in violation of the internationally guaranteed right to leave any country.

Debt bondage coupled with the taking of the woman's passport, often result in the illegal confinement of Asian maids by their employers. Confinement may be limited or total. Limited confinement has meant that a maid may be permitted to accompany the family on an excursion, or to go to a public place of worship. In total confinement, employers have refused maids any contact whatsoever with the outside world, including by phone or mail. In many of the cases we investigated, the abused woman had experienced such total confinement, sometimes including being locked in the room in which she slept. One woman described to us how her employers ensured that she would not be able to communicate with anyone about her situation. When they left the home, they unplugged the phones and locked her into one room. Then they locked all the windows and the front door behind them. The woman eventually escaped early morning by climbing over the wall of the garden when her employers were just getting up.

The effect of isolating the maids from the outside world is that no one is aware of the of the employers' abusive practices and it is nearly impossible for a woman to report abuse to the police — presuming they would be responsive — or to her embassy, unless she is able (and courageous enough) to take the drastic step of running away. In some cases, the maids became so desperate they went to any lengths to escape. Some women jumped out of windows or off balconies two or more stories high to get away, while others tried to commit suicide following intolerable abuse. These women often ended up at hospitals, with injuries typically associated with jumping from a great height, such as broken ankles and heels, fractured pelvises and broken vertebrae.

Rape and Physical Assault

I t is impossible to say what percentage of all the maids working in Kuwait have been sexually assaulted by their employers. As a result of the pervasive use of debt bondage, passport deprivation and confinement, no one outside the family would necessarily know what is happening to the maid and it would be extremely difficult for her to escape. Even if she does manage to escape, this act brings with it the risk of arrest for being out without her passport or for other offenses. Increasingly, it also involves the possibility of deportation. Furthermore, even if the maids do manage to overcome all these obstacles, they may be reluctant to report that they had been raped or sexually assaulted.

Nonetheless, our investigation of reported cases revealed a disturbing prevalence of rape and sexual assault claims that demands the immediate attention of the Kuwaiti authorities. Some of the Asian maids we interviewed were subjected to a number of forms of extreme violence in connection with being raped or sexually assaulted, including being beaten during a rape by their employer. Others were beaten when they refused to consent to sex with an employer or his male relative. Still others were subjected to violence or its threat to coerce them into sexual intercourse.

In the most egregious cases, the rape itself was violent enough to require the woman's hospitalisation. In several of these instances, the physical and emotional trauma was so severe that the women became catatonic and psychologically, as well as physically, damaged. In some cases, the woman received appropriate medical care, but a number of escaped maids in the embassies or the government deportation center, whom we interviewed, showed unmistakable signs of trauma that had not received any medical attention.

Physical Abuse

A s noted, physical abuse was more widely reported by maids than sexual assault and appears to be pervasive. Over two-thirds of the cases we investigated involved complaints of physical assault, including kicking, beating with sticks and pipes, slapping, punching and hair pulling. Asian embassy officials, Western diplomatic sources and local human rights activists independently corroborated this finding, noting that the vast majority of the Asian women who have run away to their embassies since May 1991 claim to have been beaten or otherwise physically assaulted in some manner. In some cases physical assault was severe enough to require hospitalization of the woman victim.

Some women who had not run away from their employers who also reported being slapped in the face, hit on the back of the head with a shoe, or kicked in the shins for "transgressions" as minor as not moving fast enough. Male and female employers of every social background were cited as assaulting their maids.

Conclusions and Recommendations

T his report documents a pervasive problem of rape, physical assault and mistreatment of Asian women domestic servants by their employers. The Kuwaiti government has both failed to investigate and punish such abuse and to ensure that maids receive adequate protection from it under the law. As a result of the government' failure to enforce — and in some cases, to reform — the law, abused Asian maids have been left with little alternative to enduring abusive employers but to flee, largely to their embassies. From there, they have usually been deported.

While deportation appears to have resolved the immediate problem of maids languishing in their embassies, the present deportation procedure does nothing to address the abuse that caused maids to flee. Nor is it an adequate substitute for ensuring that the pattern of abuse and mistreatment with impunity does not recur.

The al-Sabah administration should undertake the following steps to eliminate unpunished abuse and mistreatment of Asian women domestic servants and meet its international human rights obligations to guarantee the Asian maids due process and equal protection of the law:

1) **Law Enforcement**

We call on Kuwait to enforce existing laws fully and fairly, by

* Investigating and prosecuting all reports by Asian maids of rape and assault;

* Punishing debt bondage, passport deprivation, and confinement as required by law;

* Ceasing the wrongful arrest and detention of Asian maids who complain about or flee from abusive employers;

* Honoring the provision of the Aliens Residence Law that allows temporary travel documents and replacement passports to be issued by embassies when a woman is unable to retrieve the passport that was unlawfully taken from her; and

* Preserving the testimony or evidence regarding abuse or mistreatment, in such a manner that police and prosecutors can follow-through the investigation and pursue the maids' cases irrespective of whether the woman is still present in Kuwait.

2) Legal Reform

We call on Kuwait to reform existing laws to guarantee Asian maids adequate protection against abuse, by

* Amending the Aliens Residence Law to include abuse by an employer as cause for proper termination of an employment contract, giving rise to the employer's duty to bear the cost of the employee's repatriation;

* Amending the Aliens Residence Law to provide that maids abused by employers can seek alternative employment, should they so desire, without the need to obtain their first employer's permission or running the risk of deportation;

* Amending the Private Sector Labor Law to remove all undue restrictions on expatriates' freedom of association;

* Enacting the proposed employment agency regulation law; ensuring that it will regulate the fees employment agencies can charge employers, and forbid employers from recouping those fees by deducting them from the salaries of their domestic servants without a signed prior agreement by the employee;

* Promulgating standardized employment contracts for domestic servants that can be enforced in the courts of Kuwait or through other official administrative channels, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour; and

* Amending the private sector labor law to include domestic servants within its protections, which include limits on hours, days off, deductions from salary and other working conditions and provide for formal arbitration of employment disputes. Short of amending the labor law to include domestic servants, the government should provide otherwise effective and simple legal mechanisms for Asian maids to resolve employment disputes and utilize the legal system where necessary.

3) International Obligations

We call on the government of Kuwait to demonstrate its commitment to eliminating abuse and providing Asian women domestic servants with due process and equal protection by

* Signing the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; and

4) Social Assistance

We urge Kuwait to assist all maids in resolving employment disputes and working under safe, unoppressive conditions by

* Establishing a shelter for maids who experience abuse or mistreatment where women can stay while their status is being determined so that maids do not have to choose between remaining with an abusive employer, being held in jail, or languishing in their embassies; and

* Allowing women who are staying in the shelter full freedom to contact their embassies, the police or any other authority they may deem necessary for the full resolution of their situation. Kuwaiti authorities may wish to post officials from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor and the Ministry of Interior Department of Investigations in such a shelter to facilitate resolution of abuses or problems experienced by Asian maids.

There is an important UN Convention that has recently come into force - the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. This Convention seeks to establish international standards to be observed by all states with regard to the rights of migrant workers.

We call upon the government of Sri Lanka to accede to this convention and then to work to persuade the countries of the Middle-East also to accede to it. To establish international standards and then make it incumbent on states to observe those standards is the only possible way to reduce the abuses that have been chronicled in this article. **P**

MASSACRE OF MUSLIMS AND ITS MEANING FOR TAMILS

Rajan Hoole

I. Minorities: Their Historic Role

The three citizenship acts of 1948/49 which deprived the Hill Country (Indian) Tamils of the vote and virtually consigned them to serfdom were supported by most MPs from the other two main minority communities—the Ceylon Tamils and the Muslims. Had it not been for this betrayal of a fellow minority community, the UNP government would have found it exceedingly difficult to justify and secure the passage of these acts. Ironically, the intellectually incisive and strongest opposition came from the predominantly Sinhalese Left opposition. Two Tamil MP's broke away from the Tamil Congress, protesting against its support for the disenfranchisement of Indian Tamils, and founded the Federal Party. The Federal Party challenged these bills in court. Although it tried to defend the hill country Tamils on the basis of their being Tamils, it could not consistently articulate their interests in a meaningful way. More important, they were ineffectual in checking the Ceylon Tamils' (especially the Jaffna Tamils') consciousness of being superior to hill country Tamils. Although the Tamil leadership may not have openly articulated such sentiments, it never challenged those unhealthy aspects in the dominant ideology of Tamil nationalist politics, which arose partly in reaction to Sinhala nationalist ideology centered on Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism. By default, it allowed those incipient Tamil chauvinist elements to survive and indirectly legitimised them. A manifestation of this failure is the Eelam Resolution of 1976.

A similar situation now prevails with regard to the Muslim community. Even today, as a matter of political necessity, the moderate Tamil leadership might condemn the atrocities against the Muslims; yet, they will not take any initiative to counter ideologically the anti-Muslim prejudices prevailing among the Tamils. The younger generation of Tamils, especialy those in the Eastern Province, have developed, for various reasons, an anti-Muslim stance which forces them to see Muslims in a stereotyped fashion. They are unable to understand the fears of the Muslims or the interests of different Muslim sections. Rather than indulging in top level discussions and designing structures to obtain the support of Muslim parties, they should first address the problem of widespread anti-Muslim feelings prevailing among the Tamils.

When the Muslim Congress called for a *hartal* to protest against the LTTE's massacre of Muslims in October 1992, the TULF in Colombo supported it. That is fine, although if it was more astute, it would have initiated the *hartal* on its own. But the speeches made at constituency level meetings in Batticaloa by the TULF MP, —an active and concerned person— did not reflect this moral indignation; the fare as usual was 'the charms and glories of the Tamils'. The significance of the hartal itself, was, largely ignored, thus passing lightly over an ominous portent. This says much about the present nature of the minorities and their leadership. The fact that most Ceylon Tamils would date the beginning of evils to 1956 (the Sinhala Only Act) or the early 70s (standardisation & the 1972 constitution) signifies a dangerous self-centredness.

The oppressive character of the state implicit in the acts of 1948/49, was not simply a problem for the minorities but also, for the vast majority of Sinhalese themselves, as recent tragedies have shown. As the first victims of the Sinhalese chauvinist politics, the minorities had a historic liberating role to play on behalf of all the people of Sri Lanka.

However, the character of the minority leadership was one of sycophancy towards the Sinhalese state combined with a mafia type approach at home, using a mixture of patronage and thuggery to preserve their local authority. The first task of liberation was to expose such leaders, and unite the minorities behind common secular values and liberating goals. Why did this not happen? Why, instead, did the leading Tamil group take to destroying a fellow minority, the Muslims, in addition to a significant section of its own community? Why a repetition of the folly of 1948/49 in this most obnoxious form?

As Tamils, it is imperative that we answer these questions and distance the Tamil cause from the deeds of those who act in our name.

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Politics of Servility and Drift to Fascism

Ultimately, the question of whether a particular form of politics is liberating or not is judged not by slogans, provocative and defiant as they may be, but by its capacity to empower the people and give them dignity and control over their lives. If it fails in this test, it is bound to lead to tragedy and then to servility towards the state, or to external powers or to both. Indeed, slogans with regard to the problems of Hill Country Tamils, Muslims and the depressed castes have been raised in Tamil politics, but these were only skin deep, scarcely going beyond immediate political compulsions. The TULF's resolution for a separate Tamil state in the North-East in 1976, drawing the attention of the nationalist popular mind to irrelevant symbols such as the 'Kingdom of Jaffna' and those pertaining to the imperial Cholas, showed gross opportunism. These symbols are not as harmless as they may seem. They pandered to Jaffna's high-caste complacency. The Eelam Resolution by its very nature, weakened the cause of the minorities by leaving the Hill Country Tamils out in the cold. When Muslims, Eastern Tamils and depressed castes showed a lack of enthusiasm for the Tamil cause as articulated by the Jaffna elite and this in turn was reflected in the TULF's electoral fortunes, they were treated with suspicion. Denigrative cliches about them were allowed to spread and enter the popular consciousness. The state encouraged and used these differences to further its ends. The primary task of liberationist politics should have been to raise the consciousness of people so that the state's machinations could have been defeated. Similarly, a political ideology and practice, capable of uniting the minorities, should have been nurtured. What happened instead was that we put forward a set of narrow, emotive slogans, void of content and positively alienating many communities; we made no attempt to understand and to come to terms with the feelings of others. When others did not fall in line, we expressed surprise and treated them as mere traitors.

We need not look far to understand today's attitudes of Tamils towards Muslims. The unwritten history of caste oppression in Jaffna, as Sinnathamby Velayutham points out in his column in the *Thayagam*, was far more violent and humiliating than is admitted. Velayutham cites the case of K. Daniel of the Mass Front for Removal of Untouchability which had since 1966 become a force to reckon with. It had publicly opposed the JVP; however, in 1971, at the time of the first JVP insurrection, following a staged explosion, Daniel was betrayed to the police as a JVP activist. He was held for a year and released without charges. There was little, if any, voicing of public indignation that such an important Tamil activist was the victim of caste motivated treachery.

M. C. Subramaniam, was once described as a traitor worthy of an abject death, by Kasi Anandan, now the LTTE's poet laureate, on a TULF platform in 1972. Subramaniam, then leader of the depressed castes, however, was no traitor. He had been one of the more service-oriented MPS who did not use his position to enrich himself. He did not even accept gifts. A humble bicycle remained his only mode of transport. Though it was predominantly the high castes who went to him for favours, few cared to ask him why he felt as he did.

The LTTE today wears the insignia of the main strand of Tamil nationalist politics. Its slogans have convinced some foreign observers that it stands for caste emancipation. But its real position on the matter is a pointer to its attitude to Muslims. It was commonplace for LTTE supporters to campaign against the EPRLF by associating it with the low castes. When Varadaraja Perumal was chief minister of the North-East, posters appeared in Jaffna referring to his Indian Tamil origins to denigrate him. The LTTE never condemned these; nor did it ask for criticism to be based only on the actions of individuals or organisations. It was, to say the least, happy to stay silent, using anything that served its short term ends. It was this fundamentally weak cause, that made a virtue of insensitivity, duplicity and treachery, that turned the LTTE to the massacre of Muslims. The same insulate and degenerate social values of the Tamil elite, prevented them from having a sense of moral indignation or feeling remorse at the dragooning of children into becoming engines of death; and the sordid history of caste oppression, has now made it easy to rationalise the massacre of Muslim women and children.

LTTE and Muslims

The LTTE has consistently denied the massacre of Muslims. *Kalathil*, the LTTE journal published in Paris, has in its August 7, 1992 issue, an unsigned article titled 'The Tamil Liberation Struggle and the Muslims of Tamil Eelam'. It gives a version of events with several gaps. Massacres of Muslims for instance are not mentioned. Muslims are collectively accused of ganging up against the Tamils, first with the Sri Lankan state, then with 'Indian imperialism' as represented by the IPKF and again with the Sri Lankan state since June 1990. The article repeatedly stresses that (the vast majority of) Muslims collectively regard Tamils as their enemies and have indulged in atrocities against them. It is implied that entire Muslim villages acted as informants to the forces. The article concludes:

> It seems that the Muslim people believe that their freedom, identity and dignity will be best protected by their destroying Tamils... What we Tigers wish to say here is simply this:

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WHO IS OUR ENEMY? WHO IS OUR FRIEND?.....

The Muslims who are a part of the Tamil Nation are not enemies of the Tamils. They are meant to live in unity with the Tamils. The real enemies of the Muslims are Sinhalese chauvinism and Indian expansionism. They must realise this truth and repent their feeling of enmity towards Tamils. Their future lies in unity with the Tamils.

The context of the article leaves no doubt that this is the authentic position of the Tigers. The Tigers have frequently made it clear that there is only one treatment for enemies and traitors. (See, for instance, p.6 of *Kalathil*, 19.9.92.) Notwithstanding denials, the Tiger policy is to massacre Muslims, including women and children. The old attitude of the Jaffna Tamil elite towards other minorities, ('while we have been lenient, generous and considerate, others have been treacherous and ungrateful to us') has passed unchanged to the Tigers. This is in fact the mirror image of the Sinhalese chauvinist attitude towards Tamils.

Such stereotyping of Muslims or any group of people runs contrary to the whole spirit of the liberation struggle, and is as execrable as Sinhalese communalists subjecting Tamils to collective violence. For the Tamils to see treachery in Muslim homeguard violence is very similar to the stance of Sinhalese chauvinists towards the Tamil militancy. They closed their eyes to July 1983 and all that preceded it and saw the Tamil militancy merely as an Indian ploy. When Sinhalese communalists insisted that we Tamils were Sri Lankans, we felt strongly that we had to say NO! How is it that many fail to understand why many Muslims, depressed castes and Eastern Tamils say NO to the Jaffna elite vision of the Tamil Nation? **The unity of the peoples of Sri Lanka has to be worked for by a politics of understanding and healing.** The same is true for the unity of Tamil speaking peoples.

Recent contacts of the UTHR (Jaffna) with Muslims in the East leave me convinced that the overwhelming majority of Muslims desire normal, peaceful and friendly relations with Tamils, and disapprove of the actions of home guards. The same holds for the Tamils, who have little control over the LTTE. Both communities are trapped in a politics of permanent conflict and destruction.

LTTE's Version of Events

T here can be no case for unleashing murder on a community. But, in appearing to make a case, the Tigers advance certain claims and give their own version of events. How true these are will be a pointer to whether their politics is one of strength or one of deceit, desperation and destruction. The LTTE claims that Muslims were first agents of the Sri Lankan state, then of India and the IPKF, and then from June 1990, again of the Sri Lankan state. Let us see what really transpired.

There have been simmering tensions between Muslims and Tamils in certain areas of the East, as was to be expected. In many places, for example, Eravur and Nintavur, there are no previous records of tension. Muslim youth were part of the Tamil militant struggle in the early 80s. In the mid 80s sections of Tamil militants started becoming rough in their dealings with Muslims and making extortionist demands; the state used this to foment communal violence, particularly in 1984 and 85. Nevertheless, the Muslims largely went along with militant demands, maintained relations with them and paid 'taxes.'

There had been, as mentioned, friction between some neighbouring Muslim and Tamil communities; these, in the normal course of events, erupted and subsided without leaving permanent scars. In 1984 special units of the Sri Lankan constabulary and agents were inducted into the East to foment violence with a view to making these local differences permanent. Attacks on Tamils were led by agents of the state, the worst being at Karaitivu and Navatkudah, near Kattankudy with sizeable damage to Tamil life and property. The second attack was led by a police armoured car. Agents had spread rumours and had announced that Muslims in Kattankuddy were about to be attacked.

But it was precisely the task of a liberation struggle to understand the roots of fear and suspicion between communities and politically isolate the few that thrived on them.

That Muslims were collective agents of the IPKF is totally unhistorical. Owing to the conduct of the Sri Lankan forces in the past, it was the Tamils more than the Muslims who welcomed the IPKF. Following the outbreak of hostilities between the LTTE and the IPKF, it was the Muslims in the East who suffered most. About 40 Muslims were killed in the first IPKF reprisals in the East in November 1987; the LTTE had fired at an IPKF convoy and had run away (deliberately, according to local observers) through the Muslim village of Oddaimavady. Upto a 100 Muslims were killed at Kattankudy during December 1987 in LTTE reprisals, following a few individuals attacking the local LTTE agent.

When it became apparent that the IPKF was there to stay, leaders of both communities co-operated with the IPKF. But, because of the attitude of pro-Indian Tamil militant groups towards Muslims, many Muslims helped

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the Tigers; Muslim youths were recruited and thus became the main support base of the LTTE in the East, ensuring their survival in the region. When the IPKF withdrew from most parts of the East in late 1989, the main victims of LTTE killings were Tamils. But friction with Muslims increased as the LTTE pushed its brand of authoritarianism. Greater discomfort developed as Muslim leaders politely reminded the LTTE of the pledges it had made to visiting Muslim representatives in India during 1987, promising autonomy for Muslim religious and cultural life. Yet, taxes or contributions were faithfully paid.

The outbreak of the war in June 1990 was marked by the LTTE murdering over a hundred Muslim policemen who had surrendered along with their Sinhalese colleagues. Anger among local Muslims was used by the government to mobilise Muslim hoodlums in anti-Tamil violence. Even then the Batticaloa district remained calm, and Muslim traders continued to feed stranded Tamil civilians. With deliberate calculation the LTTE de-stabilised the Batticaloa District by massacreing Muslims in Kurukkalmadam, Kattankudy and Eravur from 12th July to 12th August 1990.

At this time there were a large number of Muslim cadres in the LTTE, including a hundred from Eravur. At first the LTTE told them that the Muslim civilians had been massacred by the Sri Lankan forces. But doubts began to emerge. It later transpired that even some Muslim families who had been close to the LTTE and had materially supported them had been eliminated at random. The Muslim cadres began to fear that the LTTE would next act against them. Most of them deserted and surrendered to the Sri Lankan forces. Some, who were afraid to surrender and remained in hiding, were handed over to the SL forces and, it is believed were eliminated (*UTHR (J), Report*, No 8, Ch 4]. What an irony - who should accuse whom of treachery now?

The government, playing the same game as the LTTE, mobilised Muslim hoodlums in the Batticaloa District, as well, in violence against Tamils. Given that the Sri Lankan state is what it is, this was the case of a bankrupt 'liberation group' preying on fomenting destruction and making the people powerless, merely to ensure its own survival.

Against the LTTE's unsustainable claim that Muslims were collective agents of the Sri Lankan and Indian states, let us examine the LTTE's own strategy. Having weakened the Tamil struggle militarily by wiping out other groups in 1986, the LTTE was desperately looking for Indian patronage. The LTTE then boasted that it had given India a foothold in Sri Lanka (*The Broken Palmyra*, vol II, chapter 6). There is testimony from other militant leaders as well as circumstantial evidence to suggest that the LTTE carried out the Anuradhapura massacre of April 1985 at the behest of the Indian RAW, in a bid to become India's favourite (*Time*, April 1989). Then later, as Sri Lankan patriots working closely with the Premadasa government from April 1989 - June 1990, the LTTE, with the connivance of the Sri Lankan forces, cracked down on Tamil and Muslim opposition, largely passive, through murder and imprisonment. The roots of treachery and deception thus lay elsewhere; the LTTE represents, far more prominently, what it accused its victims of. This brings us to the question, why really did the LTTE turn its guns on the Muslims?

Nemesis of Violence

As pointed out at the beginning, the strength of a particular form of politics is not to be judged by its slogans, Prabakaran's Suthumalai speech, by its capacity to shoot or intimidate opponents, the length of its hit lists, or by its ability to frustrate and destroy, but in the sound human values, dignity, and confidence in personal and collective strength. A politics that is weak is driven to servility by the logic of the ground situation. If the politics of the minority leaders in 1948/49 was servile and unprincipled, that of the LTTE which shares that tradition was even more so. Its dealings with the Sri Lankan and Indian states, while showing an air of defiance, was ultimately servile in a very real and more desperate fashion. This is the thrust of the charges made by the late Dr.Rajani Thiranagama (*The Broken Palmyrah*, vol II, ch.6).

The logical culmination of the LTTE's politics is the attempt to survive by making people weak, servile and insecure, and preying on their fears and worst instincts. It thus needed to create division and hatred. Stirring up extreme Tamil-Muslim animosity became a ready means of accomplishing its aims. The pattern of events shows that by August 1990 this had become deliberate policy.

Commenting on the long term effects of this policy, a young man with a 20 year long committment to the struggle had this to say: "In January 1974, 9 persons died of electrocution when the police charged into the International Tamil Conference in Jaffna. We were then doing our A Levels. The event consumed our youth and distorted our rationality for years. Just imagine what the deliberate masscre of over a hundred worshippers at the Kattankuddy Mosque would do to the Muslim youth."

This politics needed stereotyped enemies, and the fact that Muslims fitted the bill is partly accidental. The LTTE in the past had displayed paranoia when dissent or disenchantment was associated with a village or

communal group. The LTTE, as mentioned, has shown a readiness to use caste and people's origins in campaigning against opponents. Caste had been an emotive issue in Jaffna in the latte '60s with the government trying to cash in, as with Tamil-Muslim differences in the East in the mid-80s. The issue is still only papered over. With a politics so depraved, had the Muslims not been there, some other communal division could just as well have easily served the LTTE's purpose. A glaring consequence of its destructive violence is that the LTTE's vision of Tamil Eelam, in the name of which thousands

have been and are being sacrificed, has become totally untenable.

If this vision is to be realised, the LTTE, even if it can manage the Tamils, has to enact a Bosnian scenario where the Muslims are concerned. This is practically beyond the LTTE's capabilities. The rhetoric, however, remains, together with its associated human sacrifice. This obnoxious vision of Eelam too leads a shadowy twilight existence in the minds of prominent LTTE supporters, albeit with a huge dose of amnesia.

II. Tamils In Sri Lanka: A Nation In Limbo

In July 1991 the LTTE launched a massive attack on the army camp at Elephant Pass. Posters went up in Jaffna describing the camp as the last enemy position on the soil of Tamil Eelam. This was neither accidental nor an isolated slip; and it represents the progressive mental transformation of the promoters of leading Tamil chauvinist ideology. It has come to be taken for granted that Tamil Eelam consists of the truncated portion of the Jaffna peninsula under Tiger control. They talk as if Eastern Tamils do not exist, the Hill Country Tamils having been forgotten long ago. The Eastern Muslims may as well have been a barbaric horde in Bosnia or in the Caucasus. Tamil professionals abroad casually maintain that they must go on backing the LTTE. While sending their children to astronomically expensive Western private schools, they close their minds to children at home, exploited, perverted, cornered into becoming walking grenades, and finally mangled to serve their egos and the destruction of their community. Massacres of Muslims are either rationalised or are blamed on the Sri Lankan forces, the press being accused of distortion. They do not even listen to the LTTE, or more significantly, to what it does not say. The long article about Muslims in the LTTE journal 'Kalathil' of 7th August 1992 does not mention a single massacre of Muslims, even if only to blame it on the Sri Lankan forces.

A good sample of this amnesia comes in two recent published interviews given by a Jaffna dignitary, well received in foreign circles and closely associated with the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism. The first, published by the WCC's Ecumenical Press Service in July 1992 and strongly critical of the government, made no mention of what is being inflicted on the Muslims, notwithstanding a commitment to oppose racism and further inter-religious dialogue. The second, published in the Kalathil of 10th July 1992, would have sounded incredible if it did not reflect the tone of the first.

Asked about the extent of support for the Tigers among Tamils, he replied: "Those who do not support the Tigers have left the land (Nadu). Those who remain largely support the Tigers..." Asked whether the Tamils through weariness will not gradually withdraw from the national liberation struggle, he replied: "Even without electricity, food and medicine, people have demonstrated a clear will to live. The deprivations imposed on them have only strengthened their resolve...". Even allowing for distortion by Kalathil, such answers do a clear disservice to the people of Jaffna, not forgetting the expelled Muslim population, who have suffered much, share deep anxieties about their children and thousands among whom are political prisoners of the Tigers, including for living the Christian faith. What these interviews reveal, both on the part of the dignitary and the editors of the official Tiger organ, is that the East, including its Tamils, in practice do not count.

A struggle based on the social values of an insensitive and decadent elite, has shrivelled morally, mentally and geographically, driving a whole people into a state of limbo. It is a social rather than an individual disease, where the widening gap between the claims of ego and reality, has transformed a sizeable section of the Tamil elite into virtual vampires.

As for the Tigers themselves, this is not to say that they are more concerned for the people of Jaffna than for the Tamils in the East. Balasingam, their spokesman, told the foreign press earlier this year that should the army come into Jaffna, they would vanish into the jungles. His mention of the large number of civilian casualties 'which the government would not like', made clear what he had in mind. Those with first hand knowledge of the debacles in Jaffna of October 1987 and in the East of June 1990 could have no illusions. A politics that has destroyed every real strength in the people could only use them as

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corpses for propaganda. Children and young men from the East alienated by the barbarity of Sri Lankan forces may give their lives for this cause. But what is at stake has nothing to do with people, but with the power of a mafia leadership - again Balasingam's description.

The sacrifice of hundreds of other people's children to the quasi-religious ideology of the Tigers, is extolled as new heights of Tamil valour. That in reality child-sacrifice is the symbol of cause cannibalising what is left of a people is not understood. The use of children points to a people, weakened, divided and disillusioned by a politics of destruction, distancing themselves from the Tiger cause as best as they could.

Political Consequence of Moral Decay

How did it become possible for a small group of power hungry men to hold an entire people hostage? Some of the causes were sketched earlier. As early as 1972 Alfred Duraiappah and M.C. Subramaniam were declared traitors worthy of an abject death from a TULF (FP) platform. Both, for their services in a limited capacity, had a considerable following. The first was killed. As time went by, the killing came to be rationalised. The process of turning nationalists into vampires was underway.

Against this, it was possible for the TULF and then the Tigers to sit down to tea with UNP governments, discuss unsavoury deals, and pass themselves off as Tamil patriots. Such hypocrisy is an accepted part of Tamil life at the top. Well to do Tamils in Colombo could even today have good relations with the ruling establishment, garland Southern dignitaries whose records are seriously wanting, articulate Tiger interests, even boast of good contacts with them, and get along fine. What was then particularly treacherous about Alfred Duraiappah and M.C.Subramaniam? Their main crime was to be a challenge at home and an embarrassment to the TULF, whose political programme lacked cogency and conviction. Its successor, the LTTE, whose record of blood and misery was even less defensible, carried the 'traitor' ploy to even greater lengths in a bid to avert accountability. The mildest criticism or a hint of dissent, came to mean death or imprisonment. Apart from countless murders, the LTTE holds about 4000 political prisoners.

The LTTE finds itself in a position where it cannot face any form of open accountability. It cannot thus mobilise international support for a settlement which would involve the risk of open political activity and hence a need to come to terms with dissent as well as with Muslim and Sinhalese minorities in the North-East. Its politics of division has weakened the Tamils to a point where it cannot hope to deliver militarily. It must therefore keep the people in limbo, allowing attrition to run its course. Even if a few in Jaffna and others abroad could delude themselves, there are no illusions in the East.

The East : Walking On Hot Coals

The May 1992 issue of the London based Sri Lanka Monitor, whose editor was in the country at the time, reported two singular incidents in the East. In separate incidents a train and a bus were stopped by the Tigers and the Tamils were ordered to separate themselves from the Muslims. The reasons were clear. In the first the Tamils refused and the Tigers went away. In the second, a Tamil who refused was gunned down when the Tigers opened fire. These and other testimonies make it clear that the Tamils want their alleged leaders to stop killing Muslims. It reveals an irony that while many well placed people around the world, including leading churchmen, treat the Tigers as the sole representatives of the Tamil people, an important segment of the Tamils has given clear indications of their disapproval. Leaders must be seen to arguably, if not demonstrably, represent the interests of the people concerned, holding out some prospect of a human existence. What results from international concern of this kind is clearly a disservice to the Tamils.

The opening of the Eastern University was a boon to Eastern Tamils as well as Muslims, long handicapped in education. Recent developments have threatened the basis as well as the development of the university. Some dons recently asked the Tigers for an assurance of security for Muslims students attending the Vantharumoolai campus. They were told that they (the LTTE) had no objection, but that some incident may take place and things may get out of hand. Incidents there are, such as bombs viciously planted in Muslim areas. Boxed into small villages, deprived of means of livelihood and employment and subject to unforseen and vicious attacks, the Muslims have become a hunted people. It is hardly surprising that Muslim areas have become seedbeds of resentment and militancy. These developments made both ordinary Muslims and Tamils anxious. Whenever the two communities tried to talk, they often found that they had no control over events. If Muslims could not restrain their lawless elements, the position of the Tamils was even more pitiable. They had no influence over their so-called leaders. In the meantime life in the East becomes increasingly unbearable.

Thus the 'leaders' of the people could survive only by making people powerless and denying them any control over their lives, thanks to the incompetence and brutality of the state. These developments are not accidents or mistakes as some Tamils maintain. Some tried to ration-

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alise earlier attacks on Muslims as mistakes made by second rate, undisciplined Eastern cadre. No doubt, the LTTE is happy with such explanations, as with other 'mistakes' attributed to 'low caste cadre' in Jaffna. The LTTE is not such an organisation. Whenever competent and respected leaders of Eastern origin posed a challenge to the Jaffna leadership, no mistakes were made. Their authority was swiftly neutralised. This was the case with Kadavul who in 1986 opposed the order to massacre members of the TELO. So with Francis in 1987 who opposed the order to attack Sinhalese in Batticaloa who were part of the community. They had both maintained that there were hard facts about the multi-ethnic East governing the long term interests of Tamils which could not be ridden over roughshod.

While many Eastern Tamils have a soft corner for the LTTE because of the actions of the state, there is growing universal disapproval of its actions. There is little doubt in the minds of Eastern Tamils that they are being used as a human shield to protect the egos and unsustainable ambitions of demented leaders in Jaffna. To this end many Eastern Tamils face the prospect of being permanent refugees in the land of their birth, thus playing into the hands of Sinhalese chauvinists. The latter, have long connived at displacing Tamils to facilitate colonisation.

How Will It End?

There is always the outside chance that the LTTE or the government would have a change of heart and will act with greater wisdom, or that something utterly unpredicted would happen. If not, the Tamils face the dismal prospect of long being leaderless and not having their interests voiced rationally or cogently. Much that is lost, particularly lives, will be irrecoverable. There is perhaps a small ray of hope. The legacy of the past that led to a fascist culture and tragedy is being questioned by an increasing number of young articulate Tamils. That politics is not something to be discussed over beer, but a serious matter involving issues of life and death is also being understood. Many young people, in reaction to the long-drawn tragedy of their community have rejected the traditional notion that professional studies are the highest form of educational attainment. Several, with good science backgrounds are turning to the study of the humanities and a serious approach to politics. Moreover, rejecting the notion that life abroad is the done thing for those good enough, they are determined to live in Sri Lanka. These are good signs. While a sound leadership may be a long way off, much can be accomplished through broadening the work on human rights. It will distance the Tamil struggle from its atrocious and repellent associations. A broad-based move cannot be derailed as was the aim of the assassins of my friend and colleague, Dr. Rajani Thiranagama. Meanwhile it is to be hoped that the Tamils will soon see an end to the political legacy well captured in John Dryden's satirical description of the Earl of Shaftesbury:

> In friendship false, implacable in Hate:
> Resolved to Ruine or to Rule the State.
> To Compass this, the Triple Bond he broke;
> The Pillars of Public safety shook:
> And fitted Israel for a Foreign Yoke.
> Then seiz'd with Fear, yet still affecting Fame,
> Usurp'd Patriot's All-atoning Name.

To be clear, in the course of realising a just order, the Sri Lankan state's historic predilection for brutality and insensitivity, that was ultimately responsible for this tragedy must be challenged and exposed. In doing this, in effect for all the people of this country, a liberation struggle must uphold higher values and must be responsible by all concerned. A struggle that is bankrupt and relies only on its capacity to destroy, degrades everything around, allows no point of reference, and legitimises in the end an incomparably more repressive state. The people are in turn sold into misery and servility. Such a force that masquerades as a liberation movement and uses that mantle to fool the world, is dangerous. This, while challenging the state, must be exposed.

The more one learns the more one knows,

The more one knows, the less one obeys.

Satyajit Ray

EDUCATING FOR PEACE
A TAMIL PERSPECTIVE

Charles R. A. Hoole

In the current climate of heightened tension and open hostilities, the need to develop a new initiative in educating for peace is very apparent. Its aim must be to create a climate of thought within which political leaders will be spurred on to work for the resolution of conflict between warring parties through non-military means. It must also be a climate conducive to foster reconciliation between estranged communities, so that Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims can once again live together as neighbours and friends —as they have done for centuries. Indeed, in the present atmosphere in which killing is so routinized, it is no longer adequate to educate toward the goal of avoidance of conflict or warfare. What Sri Lanka needs in this hour of crisis is a new and certainly a more inclusive vision of humanity, which could offer a basis for positive peace making. Parents, teachers, journalists and community leaders have much to contribute to this process.

Peace making on the other hand cannot expect to gain ground, without also struggling against the prevailing, and indeed popular ideology of 'us' against 'them', that is, the collective notions of identifying 'us' Tamils as against all 'those' non-Tamils and 'us' Sinhalese as against all 'those' non-Sinhalese. This ideology continues to inflame the distinctions between the peoples of Sri Lanka, which frequently manifests itself in the 'politics of hatred' and the 'politics of purity', the twin expressions of identity politics.[1] The popularity of this ideology is to be explained by the fact that its proponents use age old materials, for example, the *Puranas* and the *Mahavamsa*, in new ways. Therefore, to be effective in dealing with this ideology, educators for peace must be able to identify these sources and also the channels through which the ideas are transmitted.

Here I give a Tamil example of how the ideology that underlies the 'politics of purity' and the 'politics of hatred' is fashioned, by the use of old and new materials, making it a potent weapon wielded by communalists.

Images of 'them' from Ancient Puranas

In a recent work Rajmohan Ramanathapillai has shown how puranic and epic symbols of the past

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continue to operate intimately within Sri Lankan Tamil society, motivating people, shaping their conduct and instilling a sense of dharma; consequently giving meaning to social and political actions.[2] One of the strongest ideas which the puranas and the epic convey is the notion that evil doers will ultimately be destroyed by good people, even with the aid of violence. This dominant idea found in the stories, has been disseminated widely through school text books, newspapers and cinema, as well as through ritual enactments (*curan pur ceremony*), recitations (*kathapirasangam*) and theatrical performances (*natakam, nattu kuttu, villu pattu*).[3]

The Tamil puranic view of the fate of evil- doers was based on the earlier Gupta Puranas, composed by brahmans. The Gupta Puranas portray a world in decline due to the corrupting and heretical nature of the Kali Age. In these works we would find sharp and contemptuous denunciations of the heretics (*nastikas*) and the barbarians (*mlecchas*), followed by a confident assertion that they would all be exterminated at the end of the Kali Age, when Dharma would again be restored. This theme was borrowed and popularised by the authors of the Tamil puranas during their disputations with the Jains and the Buddhists, from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries A.D. We would at this time find the terms 'heretic' and 'barbarian' being used in a sense that is familiar to us today.

First, in the atmosphere of emotional, bhakti religiosity, heresy was very much in the eye of the beholder. Once the early heretics, the Buddhists and the Jains had largely disappeared from the Tamil scene, we would find that to the Saivites the Vaisnavites became heretics, and vice versa. As Wendy O'Flaherty has observed, from the sixth century onwards, "Hindus came to use the term 'heretic' as a useful swear word to indicate any one who disagreed with them, much as the late senator Joseph McCarthy used the term "Communist".[4] In the current politically charged atmosphere, the same emotional approach to dealing with heretics is being re-enacted in the Tamil politics of denunciation. Anyone who politically disagrees is turned into a heretic: he or she would be condemned as a **Thesa thurohi** (betrayer of a nation), and be subject to either banishment or extermination.

Secondly, from the tenth century onwards when the caste system had become fully developed in the Tamil country,

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anyone who did not observe the *muraikal*(the rules), was regarded as ritually impure, an uncivilised barbarian who deserved social exclusion. In following this medieval puranic distinction between the civilised and the barbarian, the Jaffna Tamils, as Bryan Pfaffenberger has shown, regard the veddahs and anyone whose lifestyle resemble theirs, such as the nalavars and the pallars, as **kattumirantikal** (barbarians), "deemed to be not only low caste but also thoroughly evil and dangerous (*kettavarkal*,bad people), possessing a propensity to create disorder.[5]

When these vellarlar-brahman standards of civility are pressed a little further, the Sinhalese, Tamil speaking Muslims and Batticaloa Tamils could also become classed as barbarians. Such a development is only to be anticipated. From a Jaffna Tamil point of view:

> Sinhala people appear to be very easily angered and potentially violent, a character trait that, in Tamil ethnophysiology, is thought to stem from a lack of sexual and ritual diligence. What is more, Jaffna Tamils believe very firmly that the other Tamil speaking groups of the island —the Tamil-speaking Muslims, the so-called Indian Tamils of the central highlands, and the East Coast Tamils- are also less diligent than Jaffna Tamils in keeping up the ancient ways,and on this account Jaffna folk rank them lower and refuse to marry them.[6]

It would indeed be surprising if such a powerful concept does not enter into the current political discourse. When, for instance, Jaffna Tamils refer to the EPRLF, an East Coast based militant group, as *Eelattu pallar*, they are in fact saying that "those" people are barbarians, *kettavarkal* (bad people), and dangerous, and not to be politically trusted. The term clearly has powerful religious, social and political connotations. It is this perception that led to, and justified, the savage attacks on them in Jaffna, in December, 1986; when a large number of them were killed and the rest expelled from the peninsula.

Images of 'us': from Modern Historiography

W hile the *Puranas* have been useful in defining "those" non-Tamils, modern historiography, since the publication of Rasanayagam's *Ancient Jaffna* in 1926, has served to define "us" Tamils, by presenting a separate and distinct past, often in conflict with the Sinhalese past.[7] Rasanayagam, through selective use of available data, tried "to prove that not only was Sri Lanka's Tamil history the history of Jaffna, but that practically the whole history of the island was Tamil-hindu or Dravidian history, or at least widely influenced by Tamil history".[8]

Also, by connecting the Aryacakravarti rulers of the Jaffna Kingdom to brahmans, he bestowed Tamil ancestry with a sacred and prestigious origin.[9]

Padmnathan's claims were more modest. In the Kingdom of Jaffna(1978) he too, presents a Tamil Hindu past, although it is a version of the Tamil past that is separate from the Sinhalese Buddhist past, and from this premise, he made an important claim that "the Hindu tradition,along with the Tamil language, forms the bases of Tamil identity".[10] This same image of "us" was propagated more vigorously by Satyendra: to be a Tamil is to speak Tamil, and to be a Saivite; which for him is echoed in the saying, *"Thamilum Saivanum, Saivanum, Thamilum"*.[11]

It is difficult to avoid the feeling that Tamil nationalist historiography has in so many ways been directly influenced by Sinhala Buddhist nationalist writings and speeches, where it is frequently affirmed that Sri Lanka is *Dhammadipa* and *Sihadipa*, the alleged historical bases of Sinhalese identity. On the other hand there are definite limits to such influences. The Tamils have no written document along the lines of the *Mahavamsa* to authenticate their singular and separate historical identity, and therefore, the Tamils are in one sense, free to choose and to present many versions of their past.

So far, however, the history of Sri Lankan Tamils has been written from a Jaffna *vellalar* perspective which authenticates their distinctive values and the prestige of their institutions.The independent traditions of the *mukkuvar, vanniyar, karaiyar* and the *veddhas* has been either excluded or made subordinate to the vellalar history.

Educating for Peaceful Co-existence and Co-operation

W e have noted how historical and mythical materials are currently being used to construct stereotypes of "us" and "them", a distinction which offers a basis for the politics of purity and the politics of hatred. Identity politics in turn is reordering Sri Lanka's pluralistic cultural landscape, and in consequence reinforcing these homogenous stereotypes.

Despite these ominous trends, educators for peace can take encouragement from the fact that heterogeneity and not homogeneity is the characteristic expression of Sri Lanka's many traditions. As such they continue to serve us as models of co-operation and co-existence. Take for instance the *Rajarata* civilisation[12], where many of Sri Lanka's traditions did at one time intersect, presenting us with a significant model of co-operation and co-existence. *Rajarata* civilisation embraced most of the dry zone, an agricultural zone comprising the capital province, centered

around Anuradhapura (and later Polonnaruwa), and several more or less autonomous outer principalities over which the centre exercised symbolic or ritual overlordship. This sort of highly decentralised state is typical of many contemporary states in South and Southeast Asia.[13] As a result it was able to accommodate a variety of peoples; Buddhists. Hindus, Christians, Muslims and also the unforgettable veddhas, who would have no difficulty in retaining their corporate identities and lifestyles, while also actively co-operating with others to create a common civilisation.

For many Tamils, the *Rajarata* example simply reiterates the obvious: that there have always been strong pluralistic elements within the Tamil speaking people. In Tamil Nadu, where most Tamil speaking people live, religion and territory have never been considered essential components of the Tamil identity. In part because Buddhists Jains, Christians, Muslims and Dravida-atheists in addition to the majority Hindus, have made substantial contributions to the development of the Tamil tradition.

The best known example is the Tamil literary tradition, which developed over a period of two thousand years through the collective efforts of all these groups of people. Here is a sample of their works.[14]

(i) Tirukkural (100-400 A.D.): The most celebrated Tamil ethical work. The author, Tiruvalluvar is probably a Jain, since the work reflects Jain moral code and its theology.

(ii) Manimekalai (200-550 A.D): A well known Buddhist epic. The heroine Manimekalai preaches the Buddhist ideal of serving all living beings with detachment.

(iii) Cilappatikaram (200-450 A.D.): An account of the rise of Kannaki-Pattini cult, which is popular throughout Sri Lanka, particularly in the East Coast.

(iv) Tempavani (1720 A.D): An epic dealing with the legendary life of St Joseph. The author, Beschi, a Jesuit priest, is known to the Tamils as Viramamunivar.

(v) Cirappuranam (1715 A.D.): The author, Umaruppulavar gives an account of Prophet Muhammad's life in a Tamil setting. Regarded as the basic text for Tamil Muslim religious life in Sri Lanka.

(vi) Iratcaniya Yattirrirkam (1882 A.D): A Tamil adaptation of John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress, written by Krishna Pillai.

This literary evidence shows that the Tamil tradition, when taken as a whole, remains a powerful witness to the multiculturalism that has always been the hallmark of the Tamil heritage. The educators' task is to make this tradition of co-operation and co-existence more explicit and obvious to all Sri Lankans, by exploring creative methods of expressing those models, and in consequence to challenge those who are in actual fact inventing a monocultural tradition which never existed.

Notes

1. Edward W. Said, 'The Politics of Modernity and Identity' *The Bertrand Russell Peace Lectures* no.2, McMaster University, December 4 1992.

2. R. Ramanathapillai, *Sacred Symbols and the Adoption of Violence in Tamil Politics in Sri Lanka*, M.A Thesis, McMaster University, 1991.

3. Ibid., p. 33.

4. W.D. O'Flaherty, 'The Image of the Heretic in Gupta Puranas', in B.L. Smith (ed.), *Essays on Gupta Culture Delhi*: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983, p. 116.

5. B. Pfaffenberger, Caste in Tamil Culture, Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1982, p 121-122; R. Thapar, 'The Image of the Barbarian in Early India', *Ancient Indian Social History*, Delhi: Orient Longman, 1990, pp.152-192.

6. B. Pfaffenberger, 'The Cultural Dimension of Tamil Separatism in Sri Lanka', *Asian Survey* vol.XXI no 11, Nov. 1981, p.1149-1150.

7. Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam, 'The Politics of the Tamil Past', J. Spencer (ed), *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*, London: Routledge, 1990, pp. 107-124.

8. Ibid., p. 111.

9. S. Pathmanathan (1978) and S. Gnanaprakasar (1928) have on the other hand favoured a ksatriya connection. All these discussions on genealogy and varna status are highly speculative, but a maravar connection would seem more realistic in the light of linguistic and historical evidence. The Aryacakravartis of Jaffna were also known by the title Cetukavalan, meaning, the lord of the bridge — connecting Mannar and Ramesvaram. The Cetupatis of Ramanad, the traditionally acknowledged guardians of the bridge, not only bore the same title but have been known to have earned the title Aryacakravarti through allegiance and service to the Pantiyan kings. These Cetupatis were descendants of maravars, the martial predators dominant in the Ramanad district, who have a long record of engaging in predatory wars in Sri Lanka. See E. Thurstan (1909) on Maravar.

10. S. Pathnanathan, 'The Hindu Society in Sri Lanka: Changed and Changing', J.R. Carter (ed.), Religiousness in Sri Lanka, Colombo, Marga Institute, 1979, p. 158. For a different view on this issue of identity see R. Coomaraswamy, 'Politics of Ethnicity' *The Ethnic Conflict* (1984), p. 179.

11. Cited in R. Ramanathapillai, 1991: 7-8. For a critical analysis of this issue see S.Ratnajeevan Hoole, 'The Tamils: A Definition and their Religion and Culture through Change', *Indian Church History Review*, vol. 36, 1992, pp. 88-135.

12. An account of Rajarata civilisation from a non-sectarian, non-colonial perspective is, to my knowledge, still to be written. This is a probable outline of that account.

13. B. Stein, 1980: 23, S. J. Tambiah, 1976: 113.

14. Mu. Varadarajan, *A History of Tamil Literature*, Delhi, Sahtya Akademi, 1988., K. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, Wiesbaden, 1974.

REIGN OF TERROR

Anjali

There is no need to speculate about who was responsible for the carnage in Bombay which began in the second week of January: Bal Thackeray proudly claimed responsibility for the organisation he leads,the Shiv Sena (i.e. the Army of Shivaji, a Maratha leader who successfully fought the Moghals in the seventeenth century and established his own kingdom).

The violence was sparked off by a number of stabbings of Hindus on the 6th and a gruesome case of arson on the evening of the 7th in which a Hindu Maharashtrian family's home was set alight, killing five people and seriously injuring eight others. It has not been established who exactly was responsible for these crimes, but two observations can be made. Firstly, it was more than unlikely that ordinary Muslim residents of Bombay, only too aware of their vulnerability after the recent attacks on them in December, would have made such a suicidal move. Secondly, the highly organised and systematic character of the retaliatory onslaught completely belies any claim that it was spontaneous and suggests, on the contrary, meticulous planning. In a city where different communities are closely intermixed, Urdu journals and newspapers, Muslim-owned shops, restaurants, timber marts, industrial units, homes and vehicles were targeted. *The Times of India* (January 13th) echoed the sentiments of many observers and residents when it noted that 'Bombay is currently witness to the ruthless implementation of a carefully crafted strategy to intimidate, with fear and violence, the city's Muslim community... The pattern of killing, arson and looting suggests that the objective of the perpetrators is to strike so much terror in the hearts of the minority community that its members have no choice other than to flee... Bombay has not seen such barbaric behaviour during its 300-year-old history as a metropolis.'

Jeeploads and gangs of Shiv Sena cadre attacked Muslim residents in all parts of the city—from the poorest shanty-towns to the most upper-class areas-shouting 'Jala do, jala do!' ('Burn them, burn them!') Men and boys were forcibly stripped, and killed if they were found to be circumcised; a teenage girl was raped and hacked to death before her mother's eyes and a youth who went to their rescue was burned to death; gangs invaded hospitals and killed patients in them, whole families were slaughtered. By January 12th, a *Times of India* correspondent counted 650 bodies of victims in Bombay hospitals. There must have been even greater if some Hindus had not sheltered Muslims neighbours and helped them to escape. Hundreds of thousands of terror-stricken Muslims fled Bombay by train while others, unable to leave, flocked for safety to public halls and railway stations converting them into vast refugee camps.

This was not a 'riot' in any meaningful sense of the term: it was a genocidal pogrom. Asghar Ali Engineer, a Muslim scholar who has consistently and courageously opposed Islamic fundamentalism, remarked, 'Muslims in India now feel exactly the same way Jews felt in Nazi Germany'. Bal Thackeray, asked for his response to this remark, said, 'Have they behaved like the Jews in Nazi Germany? If so, there is nothing wrong if they are treated as Jews were in Nazi Germany'. There is nothing wrong, in other words, with exterminating people for the "crime' of belonging to a religious or ethnic minority.

There is another parallel with Nazi Germany: the complete impunity with which the gangs committed every conceivable atrocity. The police, which in December had been so quick to fire on Muslim demonstrators, killing hundreds, watched passively while the looting, burning and killing went on in front of their eyes. Where they did swing into action, their intervention took a bizarre form. Residents, both Hindu and Muslim, complained that when they called the police because their building was threatened by thugs, the police arrived only after the thugs had gone away...and then proceeded to confiscate whatever the residents had got together for self-defence, and arrest and take away all the able-bodied young Muslim men! Even when the army was called in, they were not given power to act against law-breakers except under the orders of a police officer; on one occasion when they arrested some culprits, the police promptly released them.

While the police have been completely compromised by these events, it is also notable that Chief Minister Sudhakarrao Naik, Defence Minister Sharad Pawar and Home Minister S.B. Chavan, all of whom were in Bombay during the pogrom, did nothing to halt the violence. The tragic irony of the whole situation was underlined by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's brief visit to the city on the 15th. On the one hand he received a delegation from the BJP (Bharathiya Janatha Party) calling on him to throw out Pakistanis and Bangladeshis illegally resident in Bombay. Every Bombay resident knows there are no such people: the Muslim residents of Bombay are bona fide Indian citizens. But if called upon to provide documentary proof of citizenship, most of them — like the vast

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majority of Hindu citizens— would be unable to do so, thus, becoming vulnerable to deportation out of their own country!. On the other hand, a delegation from the Ekta (Unity) Forum suggested that minorities should be protected — a suggestion which may sound obvious and banal, and yet one which the Prime Minister showed no signs of acting on. The BAI (Bar Association of India) subsequently passed a resolution saying, 'The BAI views with alarm and despair the complete lack of will on the part of those responsible for maintaining law and order to prevent willful killings of innocent people.'

How did this situation arise? Maharashtra, the state which has Bombay as its capital, has a long tradition of militant Hindu chauvinism ('Hindu chauvinism' being defined in this instance as the attempt to turn India into a 'Hindu Rashtra', i.e. and exclusively Hindu nation). Hedgewar, the founder of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) in 1925 and its leader Golwalkar were Maharahtrians, as was Savarkar, the founder of the Hindu Mahasabha; to this day, the headquarters of the RSS is in the Maharashtrian town of Nagpur. Golwalkar was arrested and the RSS banned in 1948 after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by one of its members, Godse; but these measures were reversed in the summer of 1949. In late 1951 the RSS formed a parliamentary front, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, which later became the BJP. Their brand of Hinduism was seen as the crucial ideology for combatting communism; as K.R. Malkani, editor of the RSS paper the *Organiser* wrote, 'Communism can be combatted and conquered in Hindustan by the hindus only through Hindutva.'

When the Shiv Sena was formed by Bal Thackeray in 1966, it added an element of regional ethnic supremacism to anti-communist hindu chauvinism: not just 'Hindu Rashtra', but 'Maharashtra for the Maharashtrians' and 'Mumbai Amcha Ahe' (Bombay is Ours) — a 'sons of the soil' slogan which boded ill for the non-Maharashtrians who formed 58 percent of the city's population. (Apparently he didn't stop to consider what would happen to all the Maharashtrians in other parts of the country if a 'sons of the soil' policy were strictly followed!) In fact the first campaign launched by Thackeray was against South Indians, and the general elections of 1967 provided him with a perfect target: the 'crypto-communist' 'lunghiwlal' ('lunghi-wearer'—i.e. South Indian) V.K. Krishna Menon, who stood as a independent to retain a seat he had won in the previous two elections as a Congress nominee. The Shiv Sena succeeded in defeating him, with the support not only of the Jan Sangh but also of the Congress, thus setting a pattern for the future. In the 1958 local elections, Congress abstained from contesting seats in predominantly Maharashtrian areas in order to help

Shiv Sena candidates defeat Communist Party rivals— which they did, getting 42 seats and becoming the second largest group in the Town Hall; subsequently they have moved up to first place, thus gaining control over the city's administration.

A few months after the 1968 local elections, the Shiv Sena set up the BKS (Bharathiya Kamgar Sena, or Indian Workers Army), its own 'union'. Among its exploits was the killing of a prominent Communist Party trade union leader, and the burning of the office of the CP-affiliated Girni Kamgar Union (Textile Workers' Union), after which Thackeray announced, 'I am proud of the Shiv Sainiks who fought the Reds'. Summing up BKS ideology, he said'I am against strikes and go-slow tactics. The most important thing is production. Management and labour are two wheels of industry, and they must move smoothly. A trade union should work as a lubricant. Actually, there is non need for a trade union if management behaves sensibly.' Not surprisingly, many employers turned to the BKS for help with breaking strikes and smashing militant unions, and reciprocated by funding the Shiv Sena. While the majority of Bombay workers remained justifiably skeptical of its ability to represent their interests as workers, it is undeniable that the aggressive presence of the BKS has divided workforces and weakened the labour movement in a city renowned for its strong unions and industrial militancy.

The campaign against South Indians resulted in a major violence in 1969; Thackeray was arrested, but was unrepentant: 'Yes, I am a dictator, why should we have so many rules?' he asked. 'Why should India want democracy? It is a Hitler that is needed in India today'. Understandably, South Indian Hindus have been among those fleeing Bombay in the current bout of ethnic cleansing.

While there has always been an ideological affinity between the Shiv Sena and BJP, they have organisationally moved much closer together in the course of the 'Ram Janmabhoomi' (Ram's birthplace') campaign, forming electoral alliances and campaigning jointly for a 'Hindu Rashtra'. Jaibhagwan Goyal, president of the North Indian branch of the Shiv Sena, claimed in an interview that Shiv Sainiks had carried out the entire planning for the demolition of the mosque at Ayodhya, trained for it and led the assault on it. While this may be an exaggeration, it is certainly true that they were central to the operation. On the other hand, BJP-related organisations have participated in the violence in Bombay; for example, an attempt by the Bombay University and College Teachers' Union to screen the award-winning anti-communalist film *Ram ke Naan* (In the Name of

God) was disrupted by the ABVP (Akhil Bharathiya Vidyarthi Parishad), the student front of the RSS; and journalists of the Marathi newspaper *Hamara Mahanagar* who protested against their strong-arm tactics were stabbed and assaulted so brutally by the ABVP that several had to be hospitalised and one nearly died.

Clearly, the issue in Bombay is not antagonism between 'Hindus and 'Muslims', but a clear attempt by totalitarian organisations to control the whole life of the city. Many Bombay residents of all communities, proud of its cosmopolitan character and the ability of its diverse communities to live together peacefully and harmoniously, have been horrified and shattered by recent events; they have made attempts to restore peace and provide relief to the surviving victims of the pogrom. But the grim truth is that they are simply not equipped to deal with the armed, organised violence of the Shiv Sena. The situation in Bombay is that those who have the will to restore peace lack the power to do so, while those who have the power to restore peace lack the will to do so. As long as this situation lasts, Bombay will remain in the grip of a lumpen fascist reign of terror.

CRICKET, NATIONALISM, AND THE SUBCONTINENTAL FAN

Sankaran Krishna

"Cricket is an Indian game, accidentally invented by the British", thus begins Ashis Nandy's brilliant meditation on cricket, modernity and the post-colonial predicament (see his *The Tao of Cricket*). I agree with Nandy, with the minor proviso that "Indian" in that quote be substituted with "South Asian". Afterall, the main reason that Nandy adduces for his claim that cricket is quintessentially an Indian game is precisely its obdurate and ornery refusal to let itself get codified along the oppressive and hyper-rational lines of late modernity. The quality of open-ended-ness, the rules that are discovered more in the course of play than in the rule-book, the taboos that produce a revulsive shock *after* the fact of their violation but draw no attention to themselves *before* the fact, the amount of leeway accorded an umpire in adjudging an LBW decision, the relative under-emphasis on producing a "result" and declaring a winner and a loser, all these and more are appreciated by Nandy as instances of whimsical humanity in a world engulfed in utilitarian calculi. And whimsy is a quality which I firmly believe characterizes the sub-continent and not merely India.

Nandy ends his book on a rather melancholic note, observing that the juggernaut of a narrow technical rationality is inexorably sweeping all before it, including cricket, even the sub-continental variety. The rise of the one-day game, the elaboration of specific rules governing the over-rate, the methodical onslaught of super-fast bowlers, the decline of the leg-spinner, helmets, television over-coverage and slow-motion replays, and now the presence of an omniscient "third umpire", have all minimized the role of chance and human folly.

Ambiguity is being forcefully disciplined everywhere and cricket is no exception.

This little piece is in some ways an exercise in nostalgia. I wish to reflect upon a peculiarly sub-continental phenomenon, what I describe as the strange inconstancy of the South Asian cricket fan. I argue that this inconstancy of the fan is an indicator that the Taoist qualities

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that make cricket what it is continue to flourish and prosper in our part of the world.

Predicting the allegiance of this fan can be a very tricky business. Consider the following:

* when India plays Pakistan, I understand that most Sri Lankan (*both* Sinhala and Tamil) fans support India. I wouldn't have been very surprised about this fact, except that the series that I am talking about was going on when the IPKF had an overbearing presence on Sri Lankan soil.

* despite (or, perhaps because of?) India's role in the "liberation" of Bangladesh, my friends from there assure me that both before and after 1971, Indo-Pakistani series found the local populace firmly in support of the Pakistani team.

* in the recent World Cup in Australia, once India lost, most Indian ex-patriates in Australia as well as sizable numbers of Indians in India were firmly behind Pakistan in their quest to win it all. Imran Khan, the Pakistani captain, expressed his thanks for the unstinting support accorded his team by the entire South Asian diaspora in Australia and especially the Indian community there. This at a time when India and Pakistan were, as usual, sabre-rattling over Kashmir.

* in contrast to the above, when Pakistan lost in the semi-finals of the last World Cup cricket tournament, crackers were burst in Indian cities to celebrate their defeat. (A friend has a very secular explanation for this: the crackers had been bought in anticipation of an Indian victory in the World Cup. Once India lost, in the other semi-final match, the crackers had to be burst at an "appropriate" occasion rather than go waste. The Pakistani defeat became the excuse. I find the explanation compelling: one should resist the temptation to over-politicize all celebrations).

What is one to make of this rather jumbled up set of preferences ? A neo-classical economist trying to order them along some principle of transitivity will give up in futility. Perhaps most importantly, the fans' support does not follow lines that might be predicted if one took

into account geo-political factors, the state of relations between the countries or other such political explanations. Fans seem to be both attentive to, and capable of rising above, the ever-changing characteristics of regional affiliations and politics in their support for teams. I suppose there are deep-rooted cultural, religious and historical factors that possibly explain this set of preferences: I just can't seem to fathom what they might be.

Let me turn now to the question of the sub-continental fan's support of teams outside the region. Here, the patterns seem to be slightly more predictable. In India, there seems to be a rough pecking order: when England plays the Aussies, we're usually behind the Aussies; New Zealand is usually favored over whomever it plays outside the sub-continent (I suppose the relevant rule is the one that says support the under-dog in any match up); when Australia plays the West Indies, Indians support the latter (what might be the reason? race ?); and when England plays the Windies, again, usually we back the latter.

My sense is that this ordering is, by and large, true for both Indians as well as more generally, the sub-continent. Assuming that my sense is empirically founded, what does this show ? Well, one thing it does show is that England is pretty much near the bottom of the barrel as far as subcontinental fans are concerned. I hasten to add that this in no way prevents fans in the region appreciating the talents of a particular cricketer. For example, I would wager that the stylish and graceful David Gower is more popular and revered in Mylapore (Madras) than he seems to be presently in his own home country. The other is that the West Indies are pretty much near the top as far as South Asian fans are concerned (ignoring, for the moment, the underdog rule).

While it would be tempting to array these preferences along racial and imperial lines (West Indies top and England at the bottom), once again I suspect the reasons are somewhat less "politically correct". The West Indies are probably more popular in the sub-continent simply because they are invariably the most exciting team at any point in time. Barring a brief period under Clive Lloyd's captaincy (when they began to resemble a well-oiled, super-efficient and ultra-modernist team), the Windies have always been known to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory just as frequently as they do the reverse. The sheer exuberance of Caribbean cricket, along with its dangerous unpredictability, I think accounts for their popularity here, rather than complex racial-colonial-historical explanations.

By the same token, barring a Botham or a Gower, English cricket more often than not evokes its equally bland cuisine. It is hard to get terribly excited about a Boycott or Amiss or a Gooch: even after they have accumulated a century, one often finds it difficult to recollect a single stroke made on the way towards it. The Aussies can always be counted on for a terrific fight: I have lost count of the number of times opponents have run through the top-half of the Aussie batting only to find the bottom half slogging away to more than a respectable total. It will be interesting to see the effect that the re-entry of South Africa will have on the subcontinental fan's preference orderings. Again, rather than emphasize the racial composition of the team or that country's history of apartheid, my prediction is that if the Springboks can produce another generation of the likes of Barry Richards or Graeme Pollock, they will be immensely popular, no matter who history might "necessitate" that we support.

At this point, it might be valid to enquire whether all this indicates the south asian fan's historical amnesia, his inattention to questions of race and colonialism and the history of imperialism and apartheid. My response to that is somewhat counter-intuitive. I would argue that cricket is one of the few domains wherein the subcontinental middle-class sometimes reveals a refreshing ability to both laugh at itself and deal with a society such as England without the edgy defensiveness that is a hallmark of the colonized. I think one has to see the standing ovation given an Ian Botham after his brilliant counter-attack in the Jubilee Test in Bombay as a moment in decolonization. The crowd was reacting on that occasion on a purely aesthetic basis: this ability to put in abeyance our highly problematic historical relationship with Britain and appreciate Botham's innings for what it was worth is an ability that is worth cherishing, if only because it is all too rare.

To summarize, the strange inconstancy of the South Asian fan's preferences is paradoxical only if viewed exclusively through the lenses that we have been all too well trained to wear: the lenses of a defensive post-colonial rationality that over-emphasizes issues such as geopolitics, religious and ethnic differences, and the complex narratives of colonialism, imperialism and racism. The fact is that the cricket-crazy publics in our part of the world have revealed repeatedly the ability to effortlessly transcend these narratives and appreciate the game for what it is: a game, no more and no less. It is perhaps a sad commentary on our times that one has to seek out residual evocations of such transcendent humanity in domains as trivial and peripheral as cricket. But, of course, anyone even remotely familiar with the sub-continent knows that cricket here is neither trivial nor peripheral.

HISTORY AND COUNTER-HISTORY

Sharad Patil

Though it is of dead people, history does not die. The reactionary side always carries history along with it like a shadow. For it is the former that has written it. The country is experiencing the horror which follows when the progressive side is not able to rally counter-history behind it. Ambedkar had warned that they who do not understand history, are unable to change it. How can counter history be formulated without changing established history?

To propagate counter-history means disseminating the enlightenment of social transformation. Ambedkar had asseverated that there can be no social revolution in thought, i.e. without enlightenment. The true followers of Phuley and Ambedkar wanted to accomplish the revolution of caste annihilation, and that is why they tried to formulate a non-brahamanical history. Though it proved to be negative, nobody can say that it was not a counter history.

All non-BJP parties and semi-political outfits have justified the ban on communal organisations and have admitted that it is negative. Nevertheless, enlightenment according to them is no more than impressing upon the people the fanatic, anti-constitutional, undemocratic, anti-judiciary character of the Hindu fundamentalist parties and organisations. Yet any thoughtful person will agree that this 'enlightenment' is not counter-history at all.

The strength of the BJP can hardly be estimated from the votes it secures in the elections. 99% of the Hindus, who do not vote the BJP, worship Rama. Traditional communist parties still believe by implication that all problems, even of those of enlightenment, can be solved by economic or class struggles. Sharad Joshi is a new votary of this dogma. He also asks "Why is Sharad Patil digging up corpses buried thousands of years ago". But the Puranic Rama has risen to down Shetkari Sanghatana's mass dharana against the import of wheat, and thus the corpses of thousands of years old have mounted on the neck of every kind of emancipation like vampires.

Rama Against Rama

During the discussion on the no-confidence motion brought by the BJP in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, Mahabharat was used as an arsenal from which weapons were hurled against each other by both the sides. It was quite natural for Atal Behari Bajpayi to cite brahmanical history. The same is expected also from Arjun Singh and Balram Jakhad. But the National Front (NF) and the Left Front (LF) did not make any effort to counter brahmanical history even by brahmanical history.

It does not mean that the NF and LF do not use brahmanical history to rebut brahmanical history. In the Maharashtra State Conference in Defence of Reservation held in Bombay, Sharad Yadav argued that Rama was a champion of Sudras and women. Participating in the discussion on the no-confidence motion against the V.P Singh government, the CPI(M) MP Somnath Chatterjee indirectly eulogised Rama by condemning Ravana and the Rakshasas as demons and evil incarnate. The CPI leader A B Bardhan drew applause from the peasant audience who had congregated in the Shetkari Panchayat at Pune when he quoted 'Tulasidasa's 'Rama-canta-manasa' to say that while Ravana was seated in a golden chariot Rama was without a chariot and likened them to L.K Advani and V.P Singh respectively!

Religious Suppression

Official figure of the people killed after the demolition of the Babri mosque was 1,119. More than that were killed during the foundation ceremony ('sila-nyasa') at Ayodhya. Far more serious than Ayodhya are the problems of Mathura and Kashi. Archaeologists have not been able to clinch the dispute as to whether Rama temple was demolished in order to build the mosque. Indian Express has been reporting since 19-12-92 that the pillars, stone inscriptions, etc. of the demolished mosque belong to the prior existence of temples at Kashi and Mathura. The great Muslim savant Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi states in his *Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* that Aurangzeb destroyed the Visvesvara temple at Kashi in August 1669 and the Krishna temple at Mathura in January 1670 and built there mosques (pp 396-397). He goes on to say this decision of Aurangzwb was not religious but political; for he pulled down those religious institutions which had sheltered Shivaji after his escape from Agra on August 28, 1666. He adds that 'no general order for the demolition of the temples and

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schools was ever issued. The Brahmins, and the Hindu and Jain scholars continued to receive patronage and charities even after 1670". He points out that the Satnami bairagi rebels and Rana Kunwar Bhimsingh destroyed mosques (pp 396-397). The Sikhs did the same thing.

The tradition of mental suppression of the defeated by destroying their religious buildings was not started in India by the Muslim conquerors. It was started by the Aryans whose heritage the Hindu fundamentalists claim. The Sabhaparva of Mahabharata states that the peerless Sabha of the Pandavas was built by the Asura architect (visvakarma) Maya, not only according to the plan of the Asura king Vrshaparvas assembly hall but also by carting its building material— The site from where Maya brought the building material is so inaccessible still (Uttarena tu Kailasam Mainakam parvatam prati/III 2), that it is evidently mythical. The ruins of the Naga tribal kingdom ruled by Takshaka were still smoldering and hence Maya must have brought the building material of Takshaka's sabha destroyed by the Pandavas. We are further told by Mahabharata that 8,000 Kinkara slaves, formerly owned by the Naga kingdom, toiled day and night for more than fourteen months to build Pandava's Sabha, from which it becomes clear that the Naga tribe had not remained a backward Adivasi tribe, but had become a tribal kingdom whose wealth was produced by the Kinkara slaves But, may it be the Asura Vrshaparva or the Naga Takshaka, they were non-Aryans.

Indian history attests to the fact that the Buddhist kings patronised all religions, and the standing testimony to their religious tolerance is that the Indian republic has adopted the wheel of Asoka as its national symbol. But, as less a person than P.V. Kane declares in his monumental 'History of Dharmasastra' that the brahmanical kings treated the Buddhists with utmost cruelty — '...King Pushyamitra of the Sunga dynasty is charged with having proclaimed that whoever would bring to him the head of a sramana would receive one hundred dinaras. Mihirakula, king of Kashmir, is accused by Yuan Chwang (-Huan Tsang) with having overthrown Buddhist topes in Gandhara, with destruction of monasteries and the slaughter of myriads of Buddhists; king Sasanka is said by Yuang Chwang to have destroyed the Bo tree (Bodhidruma), replaced the image of Buddha by one of Mahesvara and to have destroyed the religion of Buddha and dispersed the order. King Sudharvan is supposed to have issued at the instigation of Kumarita that he would put to death any servant of his who did not kill the Buddhists—' (Vol. V, p II 1024).

It is for the emancipation of the same Buddha temple at Bodhgaya that the conflict between the Hindu mahant and the Buddhists is assuming the dimensions of Ayodhya. Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has intervened here also.

The same VHP, which has drenched the country in blood for Ayodhya, is not prepared to hand over the Buddha temple to the Buddhists. BNS Yadav throws more light on the fanaticism of Brahamanism in his 'Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century'—

> A Fuhrer has reported about 47 kheras or deserted sites of fortified towns in the Aldeman pargana of Sultanpur district (UP), which he considers as the "ruins of Buddhist cities destroyed by fire when Brahamanism won its final victory over Buddhism. Further, the Tibetan tradition informs us that Kalcuri Karna (11th century) destroyed many Buddhist temples and monasteries in Magadha the Badaun stone inscription and an inscription of a feudatory chief of the Caulukyas speak of persecution. The Sunya Purana also informs us that the followers of the Dharma-mangala cult were persecuted by the Hindu priests to such an extent that they welcomed the invading Turks as the saviour Bodhisattvas. The Tibetan text pad-sam-jon-zang contains a doubtful tradition of the library of Nalanda by some Hindu fanatics...(p 346).

According to a tradition Nagarjuna's great vihar at Nagarjunakonda was destroyed by Sankaracarya. Sudraka's (A D 100) Sanskrit drama 'Mricchakatika' says in Act VIII that the Buddhist order was persecuted during the reign of the brahmanical king Palaka of Ujjayini.

This is the counter-history vis a vis brahmanical history which demands destruction of disputed non-Hindu religious edifices. But, even this counter-history cannot go beyond demanding the implementation of the act promulgated by the Rao government that the *status quo* of all the religious structures should be observed.

But the BJP affirms that Rama, Krishna, etc. are not matters that can be decided by law courts. Being matters of religious belief they are beyond the purview of law courts and constitutional means. Hence, the above-mentioned act is not binding on it. And Advani has already announced the further programme of building Krishna and Visresvara temples (Indian Express, 2-12-92).

That is why the struggle for counter-history does not stop at the period of Baber, but goes up to the periods of Mahabharata (B C 900) and Ramayana (B C 1000). Before taking up the Phuley defamation campaign, Dr Bal Gangal had undertaken the Buddha defamation campaign. After that Maratha Mahasangh and Shiv Sena launched a mass political campaign for deleting the appendix 'The Riddle of Rama and Krishna' from Vol V Dr Ambedkar's 'Writings and Speeches' entitled 'Riddles

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in Hinduism' on the one hand, while Durga Bhagwat and M.G Vaidya conducted an ideological campaign for the deletion on the other. This double-edged campaign was opposed by Dalit parties and organisations only by conducting a mass political campaign, while the Sanskritist Dr Rupa Kulkarni and the historian Dr Y.D Phadke tried to rebut the ideological campaign independently. Though the appendix was incorporated by the Maharashtra government, the Hindu fundamentalists succeeded in turning the alienation of the OBC from the Dalits into antagonism. Kulkarni and Phadke proved to be unequal to the task. One reason is that they are not political workers and the other is, that instead of showing also the limitations of Ambedkar's negative non-brahamanical enlightenment they made utmost efforts to justify it.

The left parties did not intervene even politically in this conflict. The real reason why they did not intervene in it ideologically is that they have not a single scholar who is capable of doing it.

Negative non-brahamanical and Ambedkarist methodologies did not take into consideration the revolutionary contributions made by Rama and Krishna to the societies of their time. On the contrary, damning them to be completely reactionaries, upheld Ravana as against Rama and Kamsa as against Krishna. It is this that has antagonised the Hindy OBC. This does not at all mean that Rama and Krishna should not be shown as ruthless protagonists of caturvarnya and women's slavery. But if Marx's remark that man has drunk the nectar of social progress out of a human skull is a historical truth, then VK Rajwade's conclusion that Indian society made unprecedented progress through the establishment of caturvarnaya has to be considered a historical truth. It is on this criterion that Rama, who established caturvarnaya society, proves to be a revolutionary. Similarly, Krishna, who established the first ever oligarchy (a-rajata) in India that stopped reckless holocaust of numerous agnostic slaves and innumerable animals in sacrifices and abolished the Brahmana varna and the post of priest-king (rajarashi) who had interest in the sacrificial religion (karma-kanda), has to be considered a revolutionary relatively. If this relative revolutionism of Rama and Krishna is brought out before showing how their glorification today is fatal for the struggle for total equality, the alienation of the Hindu masses can be overcome. For though the Hindu masses worship Rama and Krishna, they also want caste annihilation,. This positive non-brahmanical enlightenment can definitely reach the grass roots if it is taken up by writers and artists.

Courtesey, *Frontier*,
February 13, 1993.

I see nothing quite conclusive in the art of temporal government,
But violence, duplicity and frequent malversation.
Kings rule or barons rule:
The strong man strongly and the weak man by caprice.
They have but one law, to seize the power and keep it,
And the steadfast can manipulate the greed and lust of others,
The feeble is devoured by his own.

T.S. Eliot
Murder in the Cathedral

ILLUSION

I jogged
Weighted down by endless
Argument
Along dusty winding roads of
Narrow difference.
Rifle of prejudice in hand
I crept under
Bloody imagined fences of
Ideological? conflict— a
Powerless, powerful pawn in
A perpetual game.
I waded through
stagnant lakes of
Ethnic hostility
Swung from branch to branch
Like a trapeze artist,
Learned to shoot the perfect
Target.

I trained to be
Another word for killer
Though I was never really
Concerned at all

...YESTERDAY AT A WELL ATTENDED CEREMONY, SEVERAL
WIVES AND MOTHERS OF SERVICEMEN KILLED IN
OPERATION — WERE COMPENSATED BY THE MINISTER OF —
"THOSE WERE MOTHER LANKA'S TRUE PATRIOTS, HER
HEROES" HE ADDED.

Did tears mingle with pride
When you bowed your silver-streaked head
Reverently
As the minister paid you for my life ?
In that desert of wasted
Youth
And dried up blood
Isolated— torn apart I
Died screaming, terrified
Yearning to live

You know
Mother
I was never
Really a hero at all

Vivimarie
October 1992