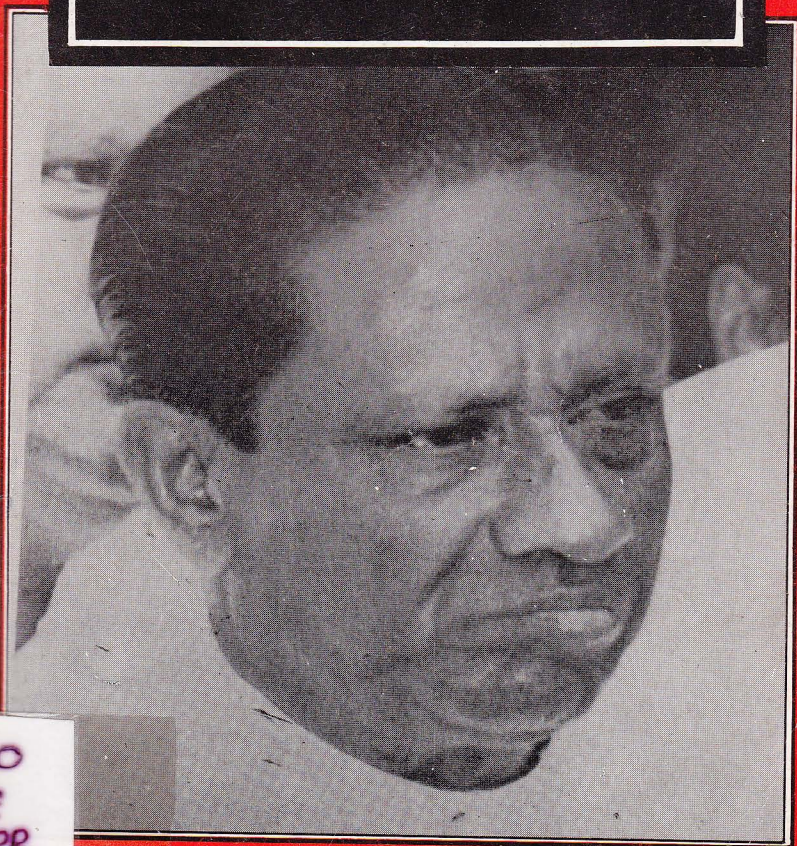


# PREMADASA OF SRI LANKA



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what Bradman Weerakoon did not say

# PREMADASA OF SRI LANKA

( What Bradman Weerakoon did not say )

320  
PRE  
SLIPR.

By R.W. PERERA

*R. W. Perera*

*26<sup>th</sup> September, 1993.*

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கொழும்பு தமிழ்ச் சங்கம்

நாடகம்



"Wicked people will have their way,  
if good people remain silent"



In memory of my friend

Richard De Zoysa

who was brutally murdered and thrown into the sea  
by the Premadasa Government.



கொழும்புத்

குமிழ்ச் சங்கம்

கொழும்புத் தமிழ்ச் சங்க நூலகத்திற்கு  
தனித்திருநதி/பென்வீ

இராஜமணோகர் புலவந்திரன்

அவர்கள் நன்மொலையாக அளித்தது

திகதி 09.08.2004

This book is dedicated to

General Denzil Kobbekaduwa and thousands of our valiant soldiers who have died as a result of the arms and ammunition given by President Premadasa to the Tigers;

The ten Parliamentarians of the UNP who led the impeachment motion against Premadasa, risking their lives and sacrificing their seats in Parliament;

The Free Media Movement and the fearless individuals and organisations that strive to ensure the freedom of the news media in Sri Lanka, denied our people by President Premadasa;

The people of Sri Lanka, many of whom live in mortal fear of a dictatorial regime of a political murderer and thug.



## PREFACE

For most of my life I served as a public servant in Sri Lanka. I am now retired and live with my family in England. During my career as a public servant in Sri Lanka, I was intimately associated with the machinery and administration of government. Since joining public service in 1952, I served in several ministries and later in two public corporations. Until Ranasinghe Premadasa became President of Sri Lanka in 1989, I had never imagined that a leader so ruthless, dictatorial and brutal could ever come to power in Sri Lanka, given its long history of democratic tradition.

I was also amazed at how the government news media (Lake House papers, television and radio), almost entirely either controlled or intimidated by Premadasa, succeeded in implanting in the minds of the Sri Lankan people a convincing picture of humility and benevolence, both of which were entirely alien to his true character. The reality of the matter is that Premadasa is a monster. Worse, that he exercises power under the guise of a Buddhist of such extreme piety that even his close admirers say in jest that he is in imminent danger of becoming an *arahat* (enlightened being) and disappearing into thin air.

Although I am now living in England, I keep abreast of events in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan newspapers (including those regularly attacked by Premadasa) are freely available in London. I also travel to Sri Lanka at least twice every year. Many of my friends, some of whom are still working in the public or corporation sector, have informed me about the sad things that are happening in Sri Lanka.

Since I have no job to lose and do not live in fear of Premadasa, I do not wish to remain silent, as most of my countrymen are forced to do. I have a wealth of experience of, and information about Premadasa which I wish to record for posterity for the benefit of our people.

As always with biographies, one has to justify their being written. Premadasa has benefitted from a wealth of biographical notices by way of newspaper articles. The public is inundated with reportage on the working habits of the President (18 hours a day), his simple clothing, his vegetarian and teetotaling habits, and even his celibacy. In fact, every possible positive attribute that could be given any man was given this God King of Sri Lanka by his media Goebbels, A.J. Ranasinghe and the Editor of the *Sunday Observer*, H.L.D. Mahindapala. The only information not vouchsafed us has been the regularity of his daily bowel movements and the subject matter of his dreams.

Premadasa was a living lie, invented by himself for himself. The reasons for this are primarily that although he made his humble beginnings an issue to his political advantage, he was deeply ashamed of them and resented anyone knowing the true facts about his past. He therefore invented his past, his schooling and even his ancestors. This was one of the most elaborate acts of political fiction ever foisted upon an unsuspecting public. But where it came apart at the seams was when Premadasa, like his predecessor J.R. Jayewardene, began to make it known that he was destined for nirvana after this life. He had painted of himself portraits without sin. He has cultivated a thick growth of hair lovingly dyed black and dresses in impeccable white clothing. A life that, to the public, was puritanical, austere, unassuming and almost godly. Anyone

making any attempt to make known any part of the truth of his real character or his past was immediately picked up and usually shot or disappeared without trace.

While Premadasa was able to ensure to a large degree that the Sri Lankan public could be fooled all the time, the international public was more difficult to appease. He was very concerned that Mrs Sirima Bandaranaike was still by a long chalk the Sri Lankan best known internationally. He was also aware that his predecessor J.R. Jayewardene's image as an elder statesman of Asia could not be challenged or matched by himself. For these reasons, Premadasa wanted, while he still controlled events, to have published an "authorized biography" of himself. As evinced by the fact that it was written in English (later translated into Sinhala), this was meant largely for the international readership and the SAARC leaders and observers. The fact that no respectable Sri Lankan publisher was willing to publish it (it was eventually published in New Delhi after several approaches to Sri Lankan publishers failed) speaks for itself.

Bradman Weerakoon, a long time crony of Premadasa's, whom I know quite well, was chosen to write it. Weerakoon has merely written of the "facts" as Premadasa wished them to be presented, and the "author" was little more than an amanuensis in the production of the book. Even the title was determined by the President: *Premadasa of Sri Lanka*. But there are many important things about this great personality that Weerakoon omitted to mention: whether that was by accident or design only he can tell, and the public can only guess.

It was mostly for this reason that I decided to title this book *Premadasa of Sri Lanka: what Bradman Weerakoon did not say*.

Many of the facts, events and stories related in this book have been published at one time or another in many Sri Lankan and international newspapers, journals and books (other than the Lake House Group, which is controlled by Premadasa). The others are a matter of documented public record. Since much of the information has been previously published and Premadasa took no action to correct it or file legal action for defamation against the publications concerned, we can safely assume that he will not now take action to stop the circulation of this book. If Premadasa bans this book or orders the police to investigate its publication, it will only sell more. No one, not even Premadasa, has yet invented a form of sales promotion superior to that of prohibition.

I have also read many of Premadasa's speeches since he became President in January 1989. He is a master of personal and political invective and abuse. He enjoys belittling and insulting his critics and opponents, and even their wives and children. The time has now come for a simple person like me to tell the country the truth about him. Let us hope that we will not end up on one of his tyre-pyres or suffer the same fate that befell my journalist friend Richard de Zoysa and Dehiwela municipal councillor Lakshman Perera who were both killed for allegedly being critical of Premadasa. They were also writing a satirical play, allegedly about him. We also hope we will not be assaulted like *Aththa* newspaper cartoonist Yoonoos or its sub-editor Bennet Rupasinghe.

One further point of relevance in my writing this book is as a challenge to Premadasa's future official biographers, for indeed, there will be many. There is a Bradman behind every Benz at Sucharitha and they will be queuing up in droves to write up the official biography of their hero. Let them answer what I

have said here if there is no truth in it.

Almost all the material presented in this book represent independently verified facts. In a few instances I have presented information that has not been verified but have been received from sources very close to Premadasa. In these latter cases, I have always made it clear in the text that the material is unverified by use of phrases such as "it is said" or "I am informed by a source close to Premadasa." Obviously I cannot divulge the names of these sources. They know the truth about him and they know the lies that Premadasa frequently utters about his personal life. All these sources have provided me with affidavits or documentary agreements that they will give evidence substantiating their stories in court if Premadasa decides to take legal action on this book.

My only objective is that this book will give the Sri Lankan public a better understanding of this "great man" who is now ruling the country like a dictator and destroying it. I am also thankful to several officers of the Sri Lanka Customs and other public servants who helped to import the printed book to Sri Lanka.

To Bradman Weerakoon I have this to say. I have sought here to provide future historians with a base from which they could erase the falsehoods and lies you have uttered and embellished in your biography of one of the most vile and vicious politicians whose wickedness it has been the lot of this nation to bear. Rarely in our long and eventful history have we been visited by such a personification of evil. It is not just the widows, the orphans and the countless mothers whose sons never came home who know in their hearts the truth of this man. His life haunted our homes more than his death ever will.

Soon, as with Hitler and Idi Amin, history will sweep Premadasa and his legacy under its extensive carpet. But we owe it to ourselves and our children not to allow this nation ever to forget. Few who opposed him survived. For the thousands of innocent people in Sri Lanka who endured and waited these long years for this curse to be taken away from amongst them, who waited for the dawn of the 1st of May 1993, their longing has found fulfillment. I have written. Challenge me if you will.

To those who wish to speak or write eulogies of Premadasa my simple message is a quotation from Tennyson,

The moving hand writes, and having writ moves on,  
Not all your piety nor wit can rub out one word of it.

As the author, I am dispensing with the copyright to this book. Accordingly, anyone is welcome to print or photocopy additional copies and circulate this text as widely as possible.

5th April, 1993  
R.W.PERERA



## IMPORTANT NOTES TO READERS FROM THE AUTHOR

This book was written prior to April 1993 and was intended for release in early May.

On 23rd April, 1993, Lalith Athulathmudali the leader of the Democratic United National Front was brutally gunned down and killed when he was addressing a political rally at Kirillapona – a suburb of Colombo.

The Premadasa government was widely accused of complicity in the murder of Athulathmudali. Public opinion in Sri Lanka is that Athulathmudali's murder was politically motivated and that it was executed with Premadasa's knowledge by hired killers in a conspiracy involving Sirisena Cooray and the Dehiwela Mt Lavinia Mayor Susil Jayasinghe. The OIC Kirillapona Police admitted in court that orders had come from above not to provide protection or security for Athulathmudali's meeting at Kirillapona on that day.

Barely a week after the killing of Athulathmudali, on May Day, Premadasa himself was killed in a bomb blast at Armour Street in his own Colombo Central electorate. Ironically, another person who died in the same bomb blast was SSP Ronnie Gunasinghe who, allegedly under orders from Premadasa himself, killed the well known journalist Richard de Zoysa. For me personally, as a close friend of Richard's, and for his mother Dr Mrs Manorani Saravanamuttu, there is an element of poetic and divine justice in this. SSP Ronnie Gunasinghe was not officially attached to the President's Security Division, but on that fatal day gods saw to it that he was beside Premadasa so that two murderers went with one bomb.

The new President, Mr D.B. Wijetunga, has already dismantled and abolished a number of illegal and improper institutions established by Premadasa. The following are some that number among them:

- (1) The illegal Gestapo-style police "investigating unit" that functioned under former DIGs A.C. Lawrence and his kinsman Sylvester Joseph has been abolished. It is only now that victims of these monsters are emerging, with tales of horror, sadism, thuggery, abduction and even murder.
- (2) The tapping of telephones by the National Intelligence Bureau of political opponents and critics has been stopped. Premadasa lived on and enjoyed this illegal activity, receiving daily transcripts of what his opponents were saying on the telephone.
- (3) *Tamashas* and "celebrations" that were conducted by Premadasa at huge expense to the government have been done away with. Premadasa's annual birthday and wedding anniversary (23rd June), popularly called the *Gam Udawa*, have been dispensed with.
- (4) The State media – especially the Rupavahini and SLBC – have been given a measure of freedom, which Premadasa never permitted and new appointments of impartial officers have been made to both institutions.
- (5) The one-man show that Premadasa ran has been done away with. The new President has correctly directed that each cabinet minister and his secretary should

exercise the constitutional powers vested in them with regard to the administration of their ministries without interference from the executive.

- (6) On a smaller scale, President Wijetunga has also taken away the replica of the gilded royal throne and footstool of the kings of Sri Lanka, which Premadasa had manufactured in gold in Singapore at a cost of more than Rs 12 million. Mr Wijetunga has also disposed of the form of address relished by Premadasa: "Srimath."

Despite Premadasa's death, I decided to publish this book which had already been completed by the end of April, 1993. I felt that in the interest of the nation and as a warning to future political leaders, Premadasa's death should not prevent me from exposing the wicked, illegal and crude things he did.

There are grave doubts as to who killed Premadasa, and why. It is known that his Presidential Security Division comprised more than 300-elite commandos. Despite this, he was killed by an assassin at a range of less than 10 ft. His own security were unable even to identify his corpse: the government-controlled television showed them throwing his body into a van together with the bodies of others who died in the bomb blast. Premadasa's body was eventually identified only as it lay with several other bodies at the police mortuary. This is a tragic indictment of the officials responsible for the President's security. But in fairness to them it may be said that Premadasa used his security people for other work of a political nature and they forgot the main purpose of their job - namely to guard the life of the President.

Another disturbing feature is that the man suspected of killing the President (Weerakumar alias Babu) was a Tamil person well known to President Premadasa. For over two years he was an accepted visitor at *Sucharitha* (Premadasa's private residence) as a friend of the President. He had travelled throughout the country with the President, even in the presidential helicopter, and even gone to his private estate (Kahabiliyawatta) at Ambanpola in the Yapahuwa area. Babu had even bathed with Premadasa in village streams and slept in adjoining rooms when Premadasa travelled out of Colombo. An impartial inquiry will reveal that in fact, Babu was the LTTE liaison officer assigned to Premadasa by Prabhakaran, to ensure close contact between the Tigers and the President at all times. For over two years, since the middle of 1989, Babu was the contact and go-between with Premadasa and Prabhakaran.

Then why should Babu kill Premadasa? The motive appears to be that Premadasa had reluctantly agreed to India's request at the Dakha SAARC meeting of April 1993 to declare Prabhakaran as being officially wanted in connection with the murder of Rajiv Gandhi. Prabhakaran is the first accused in that murder trial now going on in Madras. He could not forgive Premadasa's betrayal and therefore ordered Babu to kill Premadasa. So Premadasa, who befriended the LTTE and gave tons of arms and millions of rupees in aid to the LTTE, was ultimately killed by them, giving further truth to the adage that "Those who live by the sword also die by it."

One would recall that Prabhakaran never forgave Rajiv Gandhi for humiliating him & forcing him to agree to the Indo-Lanka Accord in 1988 and decided that Rajiv must die. A suicide bomber later took Rajiv Gandhi's life. In a similar manner, Prabhakaran killed Premadasa for agreeing to betray him.

The other version is that Babu was used by important people within the UNP government to kill Premadasa because the people were critical not of the UNP but of Premadasa personally. Accordingly, there was a conspiracy within the government to dispose of Premadasa. The names of the conspirators are well known to the public. People talk of the Sinhala movie "Maru Sira" when they now want to refer to what is rotten inside the UNP.

After Premadasa's death, the other members in the UNP intensely disliked by the public are his close henchmen like Housing Minister Sirisena Cooray, Colombo Mayor Ratnasiri Rajapakse, Dehiwela Mayor Susil Jayasinghe and the Janasaviya Minister Mallimarachchi. These persons they say are the 'Mafia' or the thugs and criminals within the party. They also object to Ministers like A.J. Ranasinghe and Azwar but they are not taken seriously, but were regarded as court jesters.

The public are also pleased that President Wijetunga has kept Hema Premadasa in check. Her unsolicited offer to enter government at Premadasa's funeral was spurned. Hema's conduct at the funeral ceremony, where she unexpectedly took the microphone and delivered a long-winded political speech instead of a vote of thanks, was viewed by the general public with contempt and distaste but such is her nature and upbringing.

Hema Premadasa, together with the Hubert Jayakody financial empire of her son-in-law, is regarded as the Imelda Marcos of Sri Lanka. While Hema and daughter Dulanjali wept at Premadasa's coffin, son-in-law Rohan Jayakody kept his flower shop *Shirohana*, next to the Holiday Inn Hotel wide

open during 1st May to 7th May (during which an official period of mourning was declared and all other businesses closed) and did a roaring business in selling flowers and wreaths for the father-in-law's funeral. The Jayakody's are regarded as financial vultures and did not hesitate to make money even on the remnants of a corpse while the public saw them on television apparently weeping with emotion at the slain President's coffin.

As repeatedly shown on Sri Lanka television, Premadasa went to his grave pleading "Assassinate me if you wish, but do not assassinate my character." However, people know that it was Premadasa who was the greatest character assassin in living memory. Here are some illustrations:

- (i) It was Premadasa who abused the character of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike from 1956 until Bandaranaike was assassinated in September 1959. Premadasa called him "Sevala Banda", "Sevalaya" and "Depitu Kattuwa" but he invited both Mr and Mrs Bandaranaike as chief guest to *Sucharitha*.
- (ii) It was Premadasa who in the early 1960s spoke disparagingly about Srimavo Bandaranaike's entry into politics saying that the seats of Parliament will have to be washed once a month if she wins.
- (iii) It was Premadasa who alleged that Anura Bandaranaike was not S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's son but the offspring of Duncan de Alwis who was a Secretary to Mr Bandaranaike, thus alleging that Anura was an illegitimate child and that Mrs Bandaranaike was party to adultery.



- (iv) It was Premadasa who cursed Upali Wijewardena in Parliament in December 1992 saying that a person whom he curses will never survive. Just four months later Upali died when his Lear Jet, which had taken off from Kuala Lumpur, exploded mysteriously over the Andaman Sea (remember, that Sirisena Cooray had, a short time earlier, been Sri Lanka's High Commissioner in Malaysia).
- (v) It was Premadasa who character assassinated Lalith Athulathmudali in Parliament (24th September 1991) by saying that Lalith was in the pocket of Israel as a Mossad spy.

From the above, it is clear that the best-known post-independence political character assassin of Sri Lanka was Premadasa. And, when he pleads with others not to character assassinate him, one is reminded of the man who killed both his parents and pleaded for mercy on the grounds that he was now an orphan.

Premadasa's acid tongue and filthy language and his art of character assassination is too well known. Indeed, it was sweet revenge and hubris or god's will that the guilty party was forced to beg of others not to do unto him what he had done to others all these years.

This book is not an attempt to assassinate Premadasa's character, such as it was. It is merely an attempt to place before the public the true facts concerning the life of this man, which, as presented to the public by his propaganda artists such as Bradman Weerakoon, was almost in its entirety, a work of fiction.

### Who killed Lalith?

Most Sri Lankans point the accusing finger for the murder of Lalith Athulathmudali at Premadasa himself. They say that it was done on the direct orders of Premadasa. Another version is that Premadasa himself did no plan it or know of it but the murder was committed by those close to him "in the belief that the boss wanted it done." But when Premadasa got the news of Lalith's killing he was horrified and is said to have held his head in his hands and cried out "What have they done?! This is my end!"

This second version is reminiscent of the wish of King Henry VI of England to be rid of his one time friend the Archbishop of England (Thomas Becket) who had later turned against him. The King is supposed to have said: "will no one rid me of this turbulent priest." Some noblemen loyal to the King had then killed the Archbishop thinking that the King had wanted him killed. Similarly, in more modern times, army generals close to the former President Marcos of the Philippines are said to have killed Opposition leader Aquino in the belief that Marcos had wanted him killed. Could a similar situation have arisen in Sri Lanka in the cold-blooded murder of DUNF leader Lalith Athulathmudali?

### Corruption of the Premadasa family

Premadasa's death resulted in massive revelations of nepotism, corruption and abuse of privileges by family members. Mrs Premadasa had been using over 47 luxury state vehicles – the latest models – ranging from Mercedes Benzes to BMWs and Jaguars, and also had a large security staff. Valuable items (antique furniture, priceless paintings, etc) had been 'lifted' or 'stolen' from official residences like Temple Trees and President's House occupied solely by Mrs Premadasa. The First

Lady also had 42 telephones for her private use, several of them with IDD facilities. The bill for one year alone exceeded Rs 3.5 million. We have given in the appendices to this book a list of the telephones and the telephone calls together with details of costs. Also found in the appendices is the monthly provisions list for her household. It shows that while she pretended in public to be a vegetarian, the bill for mutton alone was enormous. Rosy Senanayake, the former beauty queen and fashion adviser to the First Lady, made enormous profits by being also the official confectioner to the First Lady.

The independent Press also reported that over Rs 300 million rupees (in Rs 1000/- and Rs 500/- notes) was found at *Sucharita*, the President's private residence. This entire sum was taken away by Mrs Premadasa although the monies consisted of 'political funds' handed over to Premadasa by well-wishers. Some papers put the cash found at over Rs 500 million. These amounts are not difficult to imagine because over the four year period the public will recall newspaper and *Rupavahini* news items where Premadasa was seen receiving well over Rs one million each from businessmen (both local and foreign) and other benefactors and dignitaries.

But if the money at *Sucharita* was a 'political fund' how did Hema Premadasa take it? It should have gone to the Party. That is the issue.

Premadasa had always maintained that he was a common man – the poor man's President. He had not inherited wealth like the Senanayakes, the Bandaranaiques and the Jayewardenes. He was never employed or was not in a profession. His 43 years of political life – first as a Municipal Councillor, then MP, Cabinet Minister, Prime Minister and President, would not

have officially earned him a wealthy salary. Accordingly, the Premadasa family cannot claim to be wealthy unless they were corrupt. It would be interesting for Mrs Premadasa, son Sajith and daughter Dulanjali – all of whom were never employed – to file a declaration of Income and Assets to see their net worth individually. 'Sucharita' and their Rosmead Place house – both private residences have been superbly and exorbitantly done up into huge and magnificent mansions presumably by the use of state funds. Who will investigate all this? Not only should there be an impartial Commission of Inquiry as to how and by whom the President was killed but also as to the accumulated current wealth of the Premadasa family. Elsewhere in the text there is an account of the Jayakody empire.

The 12th May 1993 issue of *Asiaweek* carried a cover story of Premadasa's reign under the title "Rule of Fear – Behind the mask of the People's President." The import of this issue of the magazine was foolishly banned by the government, but the independent Press carried it in full both in English and in Sinhala translation. Later Opposition Parliamentarians got the entirety of it incorporated in Hansard by quoting it verbatim with the Speaker's consent. Here are some excerpts from *Asiaweek*.

"Premadasa had presided over one of the most violent periods of the country's 2500 year history. In him was the key to understanding everything that was good and evil about contemporary Sri Lanka. Anyone who looked could find equal measures of both in the man. But in the end, it was the dark side that won out. "The whole nation was angry", says a longtime political

analyst. "We needed someone to focus our anger and hatred on. Premadasa had to die."

Poet, author and visionary, Premadasa believed in all things mystical. A vain man, his black hair dye would often drip down his face in the hot sun. A champion of the free market, he thought he could provide everyone with a home, and education and a chance to rise, as he did, above the caste system that dominates Sri Lanka. Paranoid and ruthless, he would stop at nothing to achieve his dream.

For many, the dream turned to a nightmare. When his death was announced, hundreds across the country lit firecrackers in celebration. Still, some wept. Thousands of mourners filed past his casket at his house on Sucharita Road. It was fitting that his body was taken there first rather than to the elegant Presidential House, where his higher caste wife, Hema lived without him.

Until late in his career he tried to suppress any mention of his *padu* caste –designated for village laundrymen – which is near the bottom of some 60 Sinhalese castes. When he first became president, journalists were warned that anyone who named his caste would be "out of the country in 24 hours." He liked to compare himself to the great Dutugemunu, the ancient Sinhalese ruler who killed the Tamil King Elara. But only at his house in Kehelwatte, one of Colombo's oldest and poorest neighbourhoods, could he be himself. "His heart was (there)," says a long time friend. "These were his people."

Within the sleazy lanes of sheds and shacks of his youth, double-cross was an art and scams a way of life. He learned both and with brilliant organising skills tried to use them for good.

Early in his career Premadasa was befriended by several powerful businessmen. One was S. Rajendram, the Tamil founder of the Maharajah Organisation, today one of the country's richest groups. Another was Sinhalese land developer A.K. Dharmadasa. Both prospered under the UNP's economic liberalisation program. More recently Dharmadasa and Maharajah's son Killi became known in business circles as "the forces." They had access to Premadasa's close confidant, Secretary of Finance R. Paskaralingam, a Tamil who was considered the second most powerful man in the country. UNP politicians used the emergency rule to take out political opponents, while Premadasa turned a blind eye. Some say he gave the orders.

One such case was the murder of journalist Richard de Zoysa. Police suspected de Zoysa had friends among the JVP students at Colombo University, the movement's urban base. On the night of Feb 18, 1990, Ronnie Gunasinghe, a senior superintendent for police and a confidant of Premadasa, was having drinks with Deputy Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne. At one point, says a senior police officer, Wijeratne called Premadasa and told him of a plan to pick up the journalist. The next day de Zoysa's tortured body was found floating off a beach south of Colombo. Wijeratne was killed in a car bomb explosion in March



1991. Gunasinghe died with Premadasa in the explosion last week.

In thirteen months of talks in Colombo, Premadasa offered the LTTE more than any other Sinhalese leader had. The Tigers used the time to regroup, while the Sri Lankan army was confined to barracks. In June 1990, four months after the Indian troops withdrew, the Tigers accused the president of "saying one thing and doing another." War broke out again, and Premadasa was blamed. "Every time one of my men gets his leg blown off," said an army captain in 1990, "I think of our President."

In his last speech just days before he died, Premadasa pleaded for mercy. "You can assassinate me," he said, "but don't assassinate my character. I am not a murderer. They accuse me, but they have no proof." People made their own judgements. Said one embittered oppositionist regarding Premadasa's murder: "We are Buddhists. We believe that you have to suffer the consequences of your crimes, either in this life or another one."

I had at the outset dedicated this book to individuals and institutions that had wanted to preserve democracy in Sri Lanka. Without changing that page of dedication, which has already gone to press, I would like to add the name of the late Lalith Athulathmudali as one of those to whose memory I dedicate this book. If Premadasa called Lalith a conspirator, I would say that "Lalith was the noblest of them all" and he had every reason to do what he did in his fight to oust Premadasa and his evil empire of thuggery, murder and coercion.

### Premadasa: an urban product

"A planning expert, who was a Sri Lankan and who had worked in several countries under an international organization expressed his desire to be of some service to his own country. He had approached an internationally well known Sri Lankan economist and indicated this wish to him.

"At that time (1968) I was the Minister of Local Government. The said economist (Dr Gamini Corea) who himself had later held a top job in the United Nations sent this expert to me with a strong recommendation.

"I asked this planning expert three questions:

- '1. Have you walked on a gravel road in a village?'
- '2. Have you bathed in a stream or river running through a village?'
- '3. Have you spent a night sleeping on a mat in a village hut?'"

His answers to all three questions were in the negative.

"Then I told him 'you are not fit to do any planning for the masses of rural Sri Lanka.'"

The above statement is extracted from the book *Peramaga Lakuna* (Early Signs) written by Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1976. The book was an outline of Premadasa's socio-political philosophy.

This is the mind of His Excellency Ranasinghe Premadasa, Executive President of Sri Lanka. He has been President of Sri Lanka for more than four years now, since 2nd January 1988. To repeat Premadasa's views "if you have not walked on a gravel road in a village; if you have not bathed in a village stream or river; if you have not spent a night sleeping on a mat in a village hut;" *then*, whoever you may be, you are not fit to do any planning for the masses of Sri Lanka. If you do not possess these qualifications you have no place in the development of Sri Lanka with its seventeen million people with a recorded history of over 2500 years.

This is the thinking of our Leader who has now become a self-proclaimed "One Man Show" or (as has been said) a "One Man Showman." Since independence we lesser mortals have known political leaders like D.S. Senanayake, our first Prime Minister, his son Dudley Senanayake, Sir John Kotalawela, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, Sirimavo Bandaranaike and J.R. Jayewardene. They – each and all of them – also understood the masses or rural Sri Lanka. They also felt for them and did much more for them. But *they* did not express the view that unless you have walked on a gravel road in a village, bathed in a village stream or slept in a village hut – you were unequipped, inexperienced, unknowledgeable, useless and unwanted to work for the masses of rural Sri Lanka. But His Excellency President Ranasinghe Premadasa thinks so. He is the oracle. The last word. Only an individual with a "cult mania" would express such a view. This type of absurd thinking can be ignored if not for the fact that the man behind the thought is today the Executive President of our country.

What is most interesting is that the person who talks of village life and experience as an essential qualification for national

planning was himself not born in a village. Premadasa did not live in a village or sleep in a village hut. He did not, as a child, walk on gravel roads in villages or bathe in village streams. It is equally interesting that unlike D S Senanayake, Dudley Senanayake, Sir John Kotalawela, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike – Premadasa has never contested a village or rural constituency – except for an unsuccessful bid for the Ruwanwella seat in 1956 in which he was roundly trounced.

Basically, Premadasa is a urban product. Born in Colombo – all his early life experience in Colombo – both at a social and political level. In local politics it was the Colombo Municipal Council that nurtured him. In national politics he contested and won as a member for the Colombo Central constituency which has always been a UNP stronghold. So while our former leaders contested rural electorates – D.S. Senanayake and Dudley Senanayake (Mirigama), Sir John Kotalawela (Dodangaslanda), S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike (Attanagalle) – Premadasa was not born in a village and also never contested and won a village or rural seat in his entire political career. This alone shows how deceptive and false he can be. Because when he gave the advice referred to above to the planning expert – the recipient of that advice would naturally have thought that the man giving such advice would indeed have been born and bred in a village and acquired his political maturity and experience in a rural electorate. The exact opposite was the truth.

As stated earlier, this little anecdote was taken from one of Premadasa's own books, *Peramaga Lakuna* (Early Signs) published in 1976. This anecdote was examined and analysed at some length merely to show that Premadasa continues with

this habit of making absurd and untruthful statements – which if not challenged or examined – the general public accepts as the truth. It was Adolf Hitler's propaganda chief, the notorious Dr Goebbels who said that if a lie is uttered often enough and goes unchallenged, people will believe it to be true. It is also said that a well told lie is worth a thousand truths. Falsehoods uttered by people like Premadasa must not be allowed to thrive by going unchallenged.

#### Illustrations of Premadasa deceiving simple village folk

Let us give a more recent example of Premadasa's ways of deceiving innocent people. In January 1993 Premadasa was the chief guest at the opening of a new garment factory – his latest craze – which also requires a clock-tower to satisfy the monument-fixation of this great development-orientated leader. To this ceremony in a rural area, he had taken along with him Professor Cyril Ponnampereuma – a Sri Lankan physicist who had become rather well known in the USA for his scientific achievements. At this opening ceremony, Premadasa introduced Prof. Ponnampereuma to the audience as if the Professor had recently arrived in Sri Lanka from America and that the Professor had been so impressed with Premadasa's development programme and his garment factory idea that he had accompanied Premadasa to this ceremony. That was what the rural audience on this occasion believed, because that was what President Premadasa told them.

But the actual facts were just the opposite. Cyril Ponnampereuma was not a new comer. He had not arrived recently in Sri Lanka as Premadasa made out on that occasion (and as broadcast later that day over SLBC and Rupavahini). Prof. Ponnampereuma had come back to Sri Lanka from America as far back as 1978. He had offered his services to

President J.R. Jayewardene who had gratefully accepted the offer and made Prof. Ponnampereuma National Advisor on Science and Technology. Thus from 1978 onwards Prof. Ponnampereuma had been in Sri Lanka and had been associated with Sri Lanka's development programmes.

But, Premadasa omitted out all these facts when he spoke about Prof Ponnampereuma being present with him on the occasion of the opening of the new garment factory. He deceived his simple rural audience and made them believe that Prof Ponnampereuma had just come to Sri Lanka and was fully supportive of his own (Premadasa's) programmes. This is another illustration of how Premadasa conducts his campaigns of subtle deception: simple but ingenious. Unless checked and exposed, he will continue in this fashion. The people around Premadasa either stooze him or are too frightened to correct him or advice him against this type of deception.

There are many other statements of Premadasa's which are equally deceptive and untrue but before we expose them, let us briefly take a look at his origins, his background and his rise to political power. Let us also make a critical assessment of what he has done for the past four years as Executive President of Sri Lanka. Obviously, this is not an eulogy of him. Every King has a court jester for that, and God knows Premadasa has his fair share of jesters. Failing the Hon. A.J. Ranasinghe or the Hon. Mr Azwar, His Excellency can always now call (even at 4.00 a.m. in the morning) on H.L.D. Mahindapala. Like the well known battery, Mahindapala is the EVEREADY editor of the *Sunday Observer*. The man with the poison pen. A man who (for journalistic purposes at least) can be trusted with a "hit list."

சொழிப்பு தமிழ்ச் சங்கம்



### The "hit list" explained

Some readers may not understand or know the meaning of the term "hit list." It is a term used by hard-core criminals. Sometimes criminal leaders decide to kill, dispose of or merely injure and hurt those who oppose them. Such persons are then placed on a "list" and the criminal leaders hire people to "hit" or cause harm to those on the list. Hence the term "hit list."

From the criminal underworld, the term "hit list" has now moved to the political world also. In certain countries where democratic ideals do not properly function – like currently in Sri Lanka – those that oppose the political leadership can be placed on a "hit list." Such persons can be members of the political opposition, businessmen or even journalists.

Without killing people outright, there are other ways of frightening and taming your political opponents and rivals. Another device is to kidnap or abduct them, keep them hidden for a number of days and assault them and beat them up during their period of captivity and then release them. This has a severe psychological effect on the person kidnapped and his immediate family, his wife and children and their immediate friends. It also seriously affects the political leaders for whom the kidnapped person may have been working or supporting. During the period of captivity, every one of them is tense and kept in suspense – not knowing what has happened to the kidnapped person – whether he is dead or alive. Under Premadasa's government several such abductions and kidnappings are taking place.

The best known case of a Sri Lankan journalist in a hit list under the Premadasa government is the case of Richard de Zoysa. Everyone now knows what really happened to poor

Richard de Zoysa, a highly respected Sri Lankan journalist and human rights activist who was also an international correspondent for a well-known French newspaper. He was suspected of "anti-government" (read "pro human rights") activity in 1990 and was murdered supposedly by a Assistant Superintendent of Police on the orders of President Premadasa. There have been several court cases on Richard de Zoysa's murder and his lawyer Batty Weerakoon has also published a book on the subject. The truth will only come out after the end of the Premadasa government. Then only can there be a full, open and impartial inquiry into the murder of Richard de Zoysa. Ironically, ASP Ronnie Gunasinghe who killed Richard and was positively identified by Richard's mother, Dr Mrs Manorani Saravanamuttu, as her son's abductor (she was a witness to the abduction) instituted defamation proceedings against her. On the basis of these proceedings, Premadasa ordered the government to halt the inquiry into Richard's murder on the grounds that it was sub-judice! The police officer who was in charge of the inquiry, Superintendent Gamini Perera was hounded out of the police force because he insisted on producing Ronnie Gunasinghe before a magisterial identification parade. Despite a warrant being issued for his arrest by the Moratuwa magistrate, Ronnie Gunasinghe not only refused to appear in court but continued normally with his police "duties." For his loyalty to Premadasa he was given an unprecedented, illegal and unprocedural double promotion to the rank of Senior Superintendent of Police, thereby outranking the police officer who was investigating the charges against him and forcing the latter to resign. After SP Gamini Perera's resignation he continued to receive death threats against him and his family, as a result of which he is now a political refugee in Canada. *O tempora, O mores!* This can happen only in Sri Lanka.

### Bradman Weerakoon's book on Premadasa

Among the most recent newcomers to write eulogies on Premadasa is his former Secretary and International Affairs Advisor turned Biographer – namely Bradman Weerakoon. Once a respected Sri Lankan and International civil servant, Bradman Weerakoon has now written the most recent biography of Premadasa. It is well known that this biography was hurriedly written for distribution at the aborted SAARC Summit that was due to be held under Premadasa's chairmanship in Colombo in November 1991. Premadasa got a nasty surprise when the SAARC meeting had to be postponed because India and Bhutan refused not attend. The biography, which had to be printed and published in India, was nevertheless released.

The book you are now reading is also about *Premadasa of Sri Lanka*. But it is not a self-serving eulogy like the one written by Bradman Weerakoon. Unlike Bradman Weerakoon, I have received no benefits or privileges from Premadasa. Bradman Weerakoon worked for many national leaders including Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike. But from 1978 when Premadasa became Prime Minister, Weerakoon has always served him. In 1984 he retired from the Sri Lankan public service and accepted an international job in London in matters relating to family planning. In 1989 he resigned from this job saying that he was returning to "Work for the rural people of Sri Lanka." His first appointment under Premadasa as President was as chairman of Air Lanka. This was a far cry from working for the rural people of Sri Lanka. Bradman Weerakoon was uncomfortable at Air Lanka because even as chairman he had to contend with the R. Paskaralingam – the all powerful boss of the Treasury who is Premadasa's Number One Hit Man and also Rohan Jayakody, then Premadasa's son-in-law elect, who

was and still is a director of Air Lanka. Bradman Weerakoon then became the Advisor on International Affairs to Premadasa. He has done well for himself. His son (who is married to Foreign Secretary, Bernard Tillekeratne's daughter) also has a good job in Sri Lanka's foreign service and is presently First Secretary at the Sri Lankan Embassy in France. Bradman also used his influence with Premadasa to get an appointment for his brother Ronnie Weerakoon as Sri Lanka's ambassador to Egypt.

It is equally interesting to note that Bradman Weerakoon wrote his biography of Premadasa while on a state-sponsored "holiday" in Cairo and in Paris. He acknowledges this fact in the Preface to his book. When his brother Ronnie Weerakoon completed his three year term as Ambassador and returned to Sri Lanka in 1993, Bradman had Ronnie Weerakoon appointed as chairman of the Sri Lanka Tea Board. Indeed, there are more and more favours that his faithful servant and biographer can get from his master. The court of arms of the Weerakoon family is now the familiar fox terrier that has been immortalized by the record company label "His Master's Voice."

Later on in this book we will look further into Bradman Weerakoon's biography of Premadasa. Initially, we are grateful to Weerakoon for suggesting part of the title to this book. We felt it would be good if we related to our readers some important biographical facts about Premadasa which Bradman conveniently omitted to state in his book. That is why we have titled this book *Premadasa of Sri Lanka – what Bradman Weerakoon did not say*. We think it is a good title. We trust our readers agree.

This book is a critical assessment of Premadasa's four year tenure as Executive President. It also deals with his political career and also refers to the Impeachment Motion brought against him by the Sri Lankan Parliament in August 1991. None of Sri Lanka's national leaders since independence in 1948 used the *Dhammapada* or other Buddhist texts for political purposes. Premadasa has been the one exception. Very few of his speeches misses a quotation from the *Dhammapada*. His Presidential Manifesto in December 1988 made full use of this well-known Buddhist text. But recently Premadasa quotes the *Dhammapada* less in his political speeches and has chosen to quote western leaders like Abraham Lincoln – one of the best known American presidents. But let us remind Premadasa that it was the same Abraham Lincoln who said that "You can fool some of the people all the time, and all the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all the people, all the time."

When engaging in his day to day political propaganda over the government-controlled media – the Lake House newspapers, Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, Rupavahini and ITN – Premadasa should take heed of the above words of wisdom of Abraham Lincoln's – you cannot fool all the people all the time. This will indeed be Sri Lanka's final verdict on the Premadasa administration.

#### **Premadasa's Early Days**

No doubt Premadasa's rise to the top in Sri Lankan politics came through hard work and a considerable amount of patriotic dedication. Born on 23rd June, 1924, Premadasa was the eldest son of a middle class trader, Richard Silva, in Keselwatte in the St. Sebastian area in the heart of Colombo Central. Richard Silva originally came from Kosgoda in the Galle District. Premadasa's mother, Ensina Hamine, came from Batuwita,

Horana in the Kalutara District. Although, Premadasa now refers to his father as Richard Ranasinghe, there never was an ancestor of his by the name Ranasinghe. This is a recent invention of Premadasa's. We will say more about this matter later on in this text.

#### **Stories about Premadasa's birth and lineage.**

The brief account of Premadasa's birth and parentage which we have given above is the official version given in books published about him. However, it is relevant to mention that there are many other current stories and rumours surrounding his birth and ancestry. One of the most popular of such stories is Premadasa's connection to the family of Asoka Gunasekera who is at present Secretary of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications.

#### **Premadasa's link with Asoka Gunasekera**

According to reliable information Premadasa is an illegitimate child of Asoka Gunasekera's father. It happened as follows. Today, the Hayleys Group have a large warehouse behind Ananda College, Colombo. In the period 1900 – 1930, those premises were the residence of Adrian Soysa – a wealthy businessman of Colombo who had amassed considerable wealth as a wholesaler of tobacco and cinnamon. There is an account of Adrian Soysa in the famous book *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon* edited by Arnold Wright and published in 1907.

A trader who purchased tobacco from Adrian Soysa for re-sale in the Balapitiya area was Andiris Mudalali. This Andiris Mudalali was Asoka Gunasekera's father.



In those days many domestics for household work in Colombo homes, came from the Horana area and Ensina Hamy (Premadasa's mother) who was born in Batuwita, Horana worked as a domestic in Adrian Soysa's mansion in Colombo. On his visits to Adrian Soysa's house, Andiris Mudalali (Asoka Gunasekera's father) had developed an intimate relationship with Ensina Hamine which resulted in an illegitimate child (Premadasa). Because of this Ensina Hamine had to leave Adrian Soysa's employment. She was assisted by the Reverend Medananda who was the chief priest of the temple at Keselwatta. Rev. Medananda (like Andiris Mudalali) also hailed from Balapitiya. It was Rev. Medananda who later also helped Ensina Hamy to marry Premadasa's 'official' father Richard Silva, a native of Balapitiya.

Although Premadasa never spoke well of his mother and did have serious altercations with her (which aspect is discussed elsewhere in this text), his mother's background as a servant in a Colombo household resulted in an attitudinal complex. One recalls that one of his pet political speeches was to attack Colombo-based families that employed rural people as domestics. "I will soon put an end to the day when young women from rural areas are brought to Colombo to work as servants in the households of the rich. They are not only lowly paid but are often sent home with rounded bellies [meaning made pregnant]." Subconsciously, was not Premadasa thinking of the sad fate that befell his own mother Ensina Hamy, when he repeatedly expressed this view? Was Premadasa's determination to eradicate domestic employment of young girls (as opposed to employment in garment factories) based on what happened to his own mother?

It is said that because of this close (and illegitimate) family link, Asoka Gunasekera has enjoyed high public office and its privileges, which all seem rather unusual. Perhaps he is the only secretary of a Cabinet Ministry who is not a public servant. By career, Asoka Gunasekera is a lawyer. In September 1977, he had wanted to be the Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication in the J.R. Jayewardene government but the Cabinet had not approved the appointment due to doubts about Asoka Gunasekera's conduct as a lawyer associated with a financial transaction relating to monies misappropriated from stamp fees entrusted to him by a client.

Premadasa (who was then the most prominent cabinet minister under J.R. Jayewardene) pressed for Asoka Gunasekera's appointment at that Cabinet meeting but Jayewardene stood firm in his refusal and prevented Asoka Gunasekera becoming Additional Secretary of a Cabinet Ministry. This was done by the Cabinet deciding that no person other than from the traditional public service can be appointed to the post of Additional Secretary of a Cabinet Ministry. Secretaries could be so appointed but not Additional Secretaries. And since Asoka Gunasekera was not from the public service, he could not be appointed Additional Secretary.

But Asoka Gunasekera continued in the Ministry as Coordinating Secretary. Even though the Minister changed, he continued and functioned lastly as Co-ordinating Secretary to Minister D.B. Wijetunga who was then the Minister in charge of Posts and Telecommunications and later the Prime Minister. Regardless of this, the Minister and Secretary to the Ministry were instructed to take orders only from Gunasekera.

It is known that even D.B. Wijetunga protested mildly (any other form of protest would have resulted in purgatory) at the appointment of Asoka Gunasekera as his Co-ordinating Secretary in the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. Premadasa insisted however, that he retain Gunasekera as Co-ordinating Secretary and Wijetunga's acquiescence was part of Premadasa's rationale in making him Prime Minister.

In the latter part of 1987 Asoka Gunasekera went abroad with his wife and family and lived abroad until Premadasa became President. No one knows why he left. He had said that he had been the recipient of death threats from the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). But the truth will be known only to him and to Premadasa.

After Premadasa became President, one of his first appointments was Asoka Gunasekera as Secretary to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. Thus, from being a co-ordinating secretary for 12 years from 1977, Asoka Gunasekera now became a permanent secretary in January 1989. It is significant that he is the only non-public servant to hold such a post in the Premadasa government. Few people realized at the time Premadasa's motives for doing this.

#### **Tapping telephones of political opponents and critics**

As Secretary of the Ministry of Telecommunications, Asoka Gunasekera was responsible for purchasing from a Paris-based multinational expensive and highly sophisticated equipment for surveillance and tapping of telephones. It is said that it is this sophisticated equipment (for which Gunasekera pocketed a handsome commission), that has been installed and used by a Political Secret Service team that operates from a the headquarters of the National Intelligence Bureau at No. 10,

Cambridge Place, Colombo 7 tapping telephone conversations of cabinet ministers, opposition leaders, political critics of Premadasa and anyone Premadasa feels is less than totally loyal to him. The officer in charge of this operation was Superintendent of Police Deva Corea. Every morning Premadasa is given a transcript of relevant telephone conversations that have taken place the previous day. A copy of the same transcript was also given to Mahindapala to be used against his opponents in the observer. He even has his wife's conversations taped because he wishes to keep a tab on what Hema Premadasa is up to – both in relation to her moral conduct and her business dealings.

Premadasa attaches the highest significance to intelligence on the activities of his political opponents and critics from these taped telephone discussions. According to police officials, Premadasa's daily mood depend on what is contained in the transcript of the taped conversations that are put before him. One recalls that President Nixon faced impeachment in the United States some years ago not only because he attempted to bug the headquarters of the Opposition Democratic Party, but also because he had taped conversations within his White House office.

It is also noteworthy that Asoka Gunasekera's brother – also a lawyer – was made a President's Counsel by Premadasa. If one looks at portraits of Premadasa taken in his younger days, there is an unmistakable resemblance to Asoka Gunasekera. However, there is no valid proof of the above statements concerning any link between Premadasa and the family of Asoka Gunasekera. These matters are left to the public to form their own conclusions. In his political career, Premadasa has also related many stories about individuals about which there

is no valid proof. Accordingly, he must not get hurt if others do the same thing about him. As stated earlier, there is also the well known saying: "There is no smoke without fire."

All these rumours can be cleared up by the production of Premadasa's birth certificate. Some say that his birth certificate is not available. He was born on 23 June 1924. So his birth certificate is not an old one and should be freely available to clear any doubts and to confirm the official version of his birth and lineage. Surely, Premadasa has with him, a copy of his birth certificate and can use it to demolish these rumours. In fact it is surprising that he was able to be nominated as a presidential candidate without producing his birth certificate as the Constitution requires that candidates prove that they are citizens of Sri Lanka. Premadasa however had his nomination accepted without adducing such proof.

#### **The Ranasinghe part of Premadasa's name**

It is also noteworthy that as a habit Premadasa did not use the name Ranasinghe until quite recently. He always went as "R Premadasa." He also signed all documents as "R. Premadasa" and subsequently invented his father's name, Richard Ranasinghe. The Felicitation Volume published when Premadasa became Prime Minister in 1978 also gives his father's name as Richard Ranasinghe from Hegalle, Kosgoda, in the Galle District.

It is said that the "Ranasinghe" part of Premadasa's name has been commenced for numerological reasons. The name "R Premadasa" by itself was not lucky in numerological terms. From the point of view of numerology, the letters were not long enough to add up to a lucky number. Hence the current

use of the name *Ranasinghe Premadasa* in all references to him. It was for similar reasons, they say, that Premadasa got the official print media – the Lake House Papers and all Government publications to change from *Sri Lanka* to *Shri Lanka*. This is an unconstitutional act because the constitution uses the word "Sri." But Premadasa could not care. It was a Presidential fiat.

#### **Premadasa's father**

As regards Premadasa's father, although Premadasa's references to him now go as Richard Ranasinghe, his correct name was Richard Silva. This is evident from his obituary notice that was published in the *Dinamina* newspaper of 5 August 1959. (Premadasa's father died on 3 August 1959). The said obituary notice was as follows;

"*Silva*. The death is announced of R. Richard Silva Mudalali (businessman). The husband of J.A. Ensina Hamine, father of R. Premadasa, R. Sangadasa, R. Rupawathie, R. Somawathie and R. Ariyawathie. Cremation to take place at the Kanatte Cemetery Colombo on 5 August at 5 pm. All relations and friends please take notice. (No. 15 Sucharita Place, Colombo)."

This death notice of Premadasa's father identifies the name of his own brother – R Sangadasa and his three sisters – R Rupawathie, R Somawathie and R Ariyawathie.

While Premadasa's brother Sangadasa works as a Public Relations Officer (PRO) for cabinet minister Vincent Perera, little is known or heard of his living sisters.

The strange thing is that Premadasa says he is a common man



and a friend of the poor. But on the other hand, he wants the public to believe that he is descended from a high class respectable family. This is the irony. Many attribute this attitude to a mental complex of Premadasa's. As G.M. Premachandra of the DUNF publicly states at political rallies, it is a sickness on Premadasa's part. (Ledak, ledak).

On 13th September 1991 in Yapahuwa, one of Premadasa's close business stooges, Mr (now *Deshabandu*) Kumar Dewapriya - Chairman of Tri Star Apparels, named his garment factory opened by Premadasa as The Richard Ranasinghe Memorial Garment Factory.

In the Daily News supplement of 13 September 1991 commemorating the factory opening, there is a photograph of Premadasa's father. In this photograph the father's head has a comb attached to it. Combs were worn in Sri Lanka in those days by people of higher standing and social status. Without disrespect to Premadasa's father, the story goes that this comb has been deftly set on the father's head by an artist at the behest of Premadasa. There was no comb in the original photograph of Richard Silva but Premadasa had got the comb put in later to show his higher social status and lineage. So both the *comb* and the *Ranasinghe* name are Premadasa's introductions. Again it must be emphasized that this analysis is done not to disparage or ridicule Premadasa's parents but only to show a fraud that Premadasa has very cunningly perpetrated.

#### **Premadasa's mother**

Premadasa's mother died several years after the death of his father. There are rumours to say that there were altercations between his mother and Premadasa and the mother had left

Premadasa's home at Sucharita and gone to live with her daughters who were living in Dehiwela.

The much spoken of story is that Premadasa did not care for his mother and neglected her. On one occasion the mother in financial desperation had sold the old newspapers that were in the house. Premadasa had been furious because he had preserved those papers for the political events they contained. Also, some of those newspapers contained articles and speeches written and made by Premadasa on various occasions. Premadasa had been so angry at this loss that he had hit his mother for this foolish act and hurt her arm badly. The mother had then filed a case against Premadasa in the Magistrate's Court at Hulftsdorp for assaulting her. People talk about this case but there is no available court record. Thus this story cannot be proved and has to remain a rumour. On the other hand, if there was a court case, Premadasa and others close to him will know about it. It is noteworthy that in books and felicitation volumes published about Premadasa there are several references and tributes to his father, but there is little or no mention of his mother except to give her name and that she hailed from Batuwita in the Horana district. There is also no reference in the felicitation volumes to the death of his mother.

In other parts of this text we have related several stories that Premadasa has related in public speeches about his parents - all of which are so strange that they are unbelievable.

#### **Why discuss Premadasa's lineage?**

Why is the truth about Premadasa's lineage important? Truly, the issue is not whether Premadasa is a man of low birth, or low caste. Those facts are not in issue. In modern day society

and especially in politics, such criteria should not matter. What is important is a politician's integrity and honesty. It is indeed creditable for a common man to achieve the highest position in the land. But he need not lie about his lineage and ancestry. It is in that respect – and that respect only – that this issue is discussed in this book. It is not an attempt to sling mud at Premadasa because he is not from a well-known family or from a high class or caste like the former leaders of this country. The crucial issue is whether the President has lied about his birth and origins – his ancestry and his lineage? If he has lied, then it is a serious charge that can be levelled against him. A person who is ashamed of his origins and who has lied to cover up his origins cannot be trusted and relied upon to lead a nation.

On the 8th of June 1993, Anura Bandaranaike, speaking on the vote of condolence on Premadasa in Parliament stated:

He was born without a silver spoon in his mouth. Unlike previous rulers of this country, D.S. Senanayake, Dudley Senanayake, my father, my mother and J.R. Jayewardene, who all came from highly-placed families, born to great wealth and fame from birth, formally educated at the best local schools – Premadasa was born to an ordinary poor family with no wealth and no family background. He was also handicapped by caste. However, he turned these disabilities into strength by sheer will, determination, courage and grit.

### **Premadasa – the common man's President**

When we speak later of Premadasa's schooling and education, we will examine in detail the assertion that he was an "old boy" of St. Joseph's College Colombo. As regards his birth and lineage, we do not wish to embark on such a close examination because we feel that it is unnecessary for the purpose of this book to do so. The objective of referring to some of the rumours about his birth and lineage is not to denigrate or try to disparage Premadasa by saying that he was not born to a well-known or influential family like the Senanayakes, the Bandaranaiques and the Jayewardenes, who have held the highest political office before him. Premadasa himself has campaigned on the basis that he is not from a "Walauwa" and that he is a common man from among the masses. That his rise to power was like that of Abraham Lincoln's – "from log cabin to White House." It is, however, interesting to note that after he became President in December 1988 Premadasa stopped talking about being a product of the masses. In a book written about the impeachment motion against Premadasa, S.B. Dissanayake, SLFP MP for Nuwara Eliya District says (at p.44) "Although Premadasa has said he is from among the common people and from a poor family, he has always concealed from the people all facts about his birth and lineage."

### **Replica of King's Throne installed at President's House**

People now know that Premadasa got for himself a replica of the throne used by the last King of Kandy Sri Wickrema Raja Sinha. The original throne is in the Sri Lanka Museum in Colombo. Premadasa got an exact replica made in Singapore at a cost of more than Rs 12 million. It is on this that he sits when receiving ambassadors from foreign countries. The public has seen pictures of him on Television and the newspapers

(with the representatives of the three service chiefs standing behind him) while he is seated on the 'royal throne'. It is pertinent to ask why as a common man, (which Premadasa claims to be) he wants a replica of the throne of the last King of Sri Lanka and why he wants all this pomp and pageantry of the three services Chiefs standing behind him when accepting the credentials of new foreign ambassadors.

None of our earlier leaders did this. They did not sit on make shift thrones and get the service commanders to stand behind them. They also accepted credentials of foreign ambassadors but did it in a simple way without all this ceremony that Premadasa demands. (It is well-known that television viewers were amused when they saw this small man seated on a replica of a royal throne in this fashion and then getting up to accept the credentials of foreign ambassadors). Even the Foreign Minister (Harold Herat) and Premadasa's secretary (K.H.J. Wijedasa) have been asked to stand stiffly to attention to show their obedience to "the King" and the whole event looks so ludicrous. The ambassadors must be having a hearty laugh at Premadasa's small-minded insistence on such pomp and pageantry. Sri Lanka is a poor third world country. Why should we insist on such unnecessary ceremony when accepting foreign ambassadors. Some of these ambassadors represent countries which are aid donors to Sri Lanka and every year we depend on them to fund our development programmes. Our people remember with what simplicity President Jayewardene performed this same task. But that is not the way and thinking of Premadasa – the common man's President!

### Premadasa's early education

Little is known about Premadasa's formal education. A Felicitation volume published in 1978 when Premadasa became Prime Minister, breaks down his education into two main stages, namely early education from 1927–1931 and formal education from 1931–1943. According to this same Felicitation Volume, his early education was at his own home and at the temple and at Sunday School.

As regards his formal education, the Felicitation Volume states that Premadasa first went to Harvard Girls' School in Pettah, Colombo and thereafter, he had gone to Lawrence College, Maradana, Colombo. The exact dates of entry to either of these schools is not known and is not specifically stated in the Felicitation Volume. The book merely says that he attended these two schools between the period 1931–1943.

About Premadasa's schooling at Harvard Girls' School and Lawrence College, there is no dispute or doubt, because there are a few Sri Lankans of Premadasa's age who remember him as a school boy at these two institutions.

However, grave doubts have been cast when Premadasa claims (as does the Felicitation Volume) that after Lawrence College. He had his secondary education at St. Joseph's College, Darley Road, Colombo.

Was Premadasa's alma mater St. Joseph's College, Colombo?

This has remained a big question mark in Premadasa's life. Premadasa has done his utmost to show the public of Sri Lanka that his *alma mater* was St. Joseph's College, Colombo. Recently in December 1992 at the Royal College prize giving



he had said that old Royalists normally monopolised the position of Chief Guest and as a "Old Josephian" he was gracing the occasion. But past students of St. Joseph's of Premadasa's vintage cannot remember him at all, at St. Joseph's.

The purpose of casting doubt about Premadasa's so called schooling at St. Joseph's College is not to denigrate him or to ridicule him. On the other hand, Premadasa himself claims that he is a common man of humble beginnings and we should all be proud of this fact. But what is regrettable is that the man who claims to be a commoner is unnecessarily trying to assert that he was an old boy of St. Joseph's and that this school was his Alma Mater. Premadasa could do well without insisting on this claim which is clouded with serious doubts. More will be said later about this matter. But if the leader of a country were to lie about a matter such as his schooling, there is very little left to believe in him thereafter. As an anecdote and for purposes of humour, it is now well known that there are several old boys of St. Joseph's College who have offered an open bet or wager of Rs One million to any member of the public of Sri Lanka who can conclusively prove that Premadasa attended St. Joseph's and was an old boy of the school. Up to date, no one has come forward to claim this bet.

Some critics who have been more charitable to Premadasa on this issue suggests what could have happened about Premadasa's claims to have attended St. Joseph's. According to them, it may have happened as follows:

"It is true that Premadasa was educated at Lawrence College, Maradana. The records however reveal that Lawrence College was closed down as an educational

institution a few years after Premadasa entered it. Thus, for a short time students who were attending Lawrence College had to be resettled in other educational institutions. St. Joseph's College was situated close to Lawrence College. In this way, it may have happened that for a very short period of about six months or one year, Premadasa - a student of Lawrence College found himself at St. Joseph's College. But it is unlikely that Premadasa would have spent many years at St. Joseph's and the major part of his schooling would have been only at Lawrence College."

#### Is Premadasa's schooling important?

People may well ask "Does it really matter which school Premadasa attended?" Why are people making such a fuss over this issue? What does it matter whether he went to St. Joseph's or not? After all, Premadasa who is now 69 years has often proudly said that he is a full-fledged graduate of the University of Life or *jivana takshalawa*.

On the other hand, we are not here challenging Premadasa's competency or his ability as an individual. We also readily concede that he is well read both in Sinhala and more recently in English and that he is a very able speaker whatever the occasion. All such matters are not in issue. The issue is one of honesty, integrity and credibility of the individual. Has Premadasa lied about his schooling? And here the basic question is, was St. Joseph's College, Colombo his *alma mater* as claimed by him? There is no dispute that Premadasa had his early childhood education at the temple and Sunday school. There is also no dispute that he had his primary and post-primary education at Harvard Girls School, Dam Street, Pettah

and at Lawrence College, Skinners Road, South Maradana, Colombo. The only issue is about his secondary education at St. Joseph's College.

In the Felicitation Volume referred to earlier, it is said that he went to St. Joseph's at the age of fifteen years. That would be in 1939, since he was born in 1924. The same Felicitation Volume states that he started his formal school education in 1931. Accordingly, he would have spent a period of 8 years schooling until 1939 at the above-mentioned Harvard Girls School and Lawrence College and then entered St. Joseph's in 1939 at the age of 15. The Felicitation Volume adds that Premadasa completed his education in 1943 at the age of 19. Accordingly, he would have spent 5 years at St. Joseph's College from the age of 15-19 between the years 1939-1943.

One will agree that truth and belief is based on reasonable assumption. With its high rate of literacy and quest for education, there are few in Sri Lanka who have not been to a school. Nor does one attend school alone. There are so many other boys and girls in the same classroom. St. Joseph's being only a boys school, there would have been several other boys attending the school about the same time Premadasa attended. For the five years between 1939-1943 he would have gone through many grades and met many other students at St. Joseph's and acquired many friends. Many schoolboys of that age establish close friendships with some, while others remain mere class friends or school mates. At school one also sits for class tests and other examinations and also for public examinations conducted by the Education Department. St. Joseph's was no exception, and being a well established school of high reputation, would have insisted that its students did sit for public examinations. With Premadasa's outgoing

personality, surely he must have also taken a very active part in the extra-curricular activities of the school. Premadasa has gone on record to say that he played soccer for St. Joseph's and that he even captained the college soccer team. Also with his literary talents acquired at the temple school, surely Premadasa must have also contributed often to the School's magazines - at least the Sinhala editions. These are activities that normal children engage in at school and Premadasa surely must have engaged in such literary activity and sports. St. Joseph's was also quite close to his home at Keselwatte. Thus he had all the time to take part in the school's extra-curricular activities unlike some children who lived far away and had to travel long distances daily to attend St. Joseph's in Colombo.

It is also interesting to note that Premadasa celebrated two important events in his life while attending St. Joseph's College. In 1940 he celebrated the first anniversary of the *Sucharita Movement* that he had started. He had invited S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike - a popular political figure even at that time - to be the chief guest on this occasion. Again in 1941 for the second anniversary celebrations of the *Sucharita Movement* Premadasa invited both S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and Dr. E.W. Adikaram as the chief guests. Premadasa's *Felicitation Volume* proudly asserts that Bandaranaike attended the ceremony accompanied by his newly married wife, Sirimavo, and this was the first public function Sirimavo Bandaranaike had attended since marriage.

Now all this happened while Premadasa was still a student at St. Joseph's College because according to the Felicitation Volume he completed his formal education in 1943, i.e. at the age of 19. After joining St. Joseph's College in 1939 there is no mention of any other school Premadasa attended. So he

would have been at St. Joseph's in 1940 and 1941 when the anniversary celebrations of the *Sucharita Movement* were held.

As a result of these public events, Premadasa would have been even better known to staff and students of St. Joseph's College during that period. It is at this point that the cracks in this story of Premadasa's schooling at St. Joseph's appear. When this lie was invented, one would have never have thought or expected that if the story is carefully looked at and subjected to a microscopic examination. The lie will surface and the truth will unfold.

#### **No one can remember Premadasa at St Joseph's**

There are no students who attended St. Joseph's during the period 1939-1943 who remember Premadasa at St. Joseph's. If Premadasa played soccer for the school it is unlikely that school boys of that period will forget that fact. Being selected to play in the soccer team of a leading school like St. Joseph's was no mean achievement. There is also no record of Premadasa in any of the School's magazines of that period. Surely, if he represented the school at soccer, then it is normal that the School's magazines will have a record of his name and the year. Also, it is customary for school children to keep school documents such as class reports, photographs and other material of their days at school. Premadasa should therefore have with him some documentation of his five years at St. Joseph's College.

Because he is the Executive President and in view of sudden disappearances or attacks on persons who have openly opposed or criticized the Premadasa government, one cannot expect any staff member of St. Joseph's College to make any comments about Premadasa's schooling at St. Joseph's.

Another interesting aspect of Premadasa claiming to be an old Josephian is that until the UNP election victory in July 1977, Premadasa did not claim or associate St. Joseph's College as his old school. Premadasa had written several books prior to July 1977 such as *Ran Mini Muthu* (Gold, Gems and Pearls) in 1971, a novel *Pemwathiya* (Sweetheart) in 1976 and a collection of poems and lyrics, *Rasakavi, Sithuvili* (Pleasant thoughts) in 1976. In 1976 he also wrote an expose of his personal socio-political philosophy called *Peramaga Lakuna* (Early signs). In none of these publications did Premadasa indicate or refer to St. Joseph's as being his *alma mater*.

It is also interesting to note that in 1974 one Deva Yasapala Silva published a biography of Premadasa under the title *Suwada Hamana Malak* (a fragrant flower). But even in this first biography of Premadasa there is no reference to St. Joseph's College being his old school as Premadasa now claims.

To take this story further, in 1955 Premadasa was elected Deputy Mayor of the Colombo Municipality - a high office. In 1966, he was appointed Deputy Minister for Local Government in the Dudley Senanayake government when the Federal Party's Tiruchelvam resigned from Cabinet. On none of these important occasions did St. Joseph's College honour Premadasa or invite him for any of their important functions such as a Prize Giving or even a Sports meet. It is customary for an old school to so honour one of their old boys when they achieve a position in political, public or social distinction. But this did not happen. On none of those significant occasions did Premadasa acknowledge St. Joseph's as his old school. Neither did the school recognize him or honour him as an old boy.



### **Origin of Premadasa's claim to be an Old Josephian**

According to well informed sources Premadasa's claim to be an old Josephian arose in the following way. Immediately after J.R. Jayewardene's landslide victory in July 1977, several of the country's well known schools began holding felicitation ceremonies to honour their old boys and old girls who had been elevated to high political office and who had been appointed Cabinet Ministers in the J.R. Jayewardene Cabinet. Other than Mrs Wimala Kannangara, there were no old girls but there were several old boys.

For example, Royal College, Colombo had a big reception to honour President J.R. Jayewardene and Cabinet Ministers like Lalith Athulathmudali and Ranil Wickremasinghe who were old Royalists. Similarly, Trinity College, Kandy honoured E L B Hurulle and Gamini Dissanayake who were old Trinitians. St. Joseph's College did not want to be left out of this series of felicitation receptions for old boys. Accordingly, St. Joseph's also planned such a reception. The old boys they were thinking of including in their list of invitations Devanayagam (Minister of Home Affairs) and Shelton Jayasinghe a Deputy Minister of Industries. Premadasa's name was not in this proposed list of invitees. Subsequently, to the surprise of some it was 'discovered' that Premadasa had also been an old boy of St. Joseph's College. The final invitation list for the felicitation ceremony thus included Premadasa who was then Minister of Local Government, Housing and Construction and also the Leader of the House of Representatives.

Premadasa no doubt must have been very grateful to the Rector and staff of St. Joseph's College for having included his name in their list of famous old boys. His fear was that while the other prominent members of the Jayewardene government

would be recognized and honoured by their old schools, he would have been left out. The fact that he did not have any educational qualifications was not that important as not being able to refer to a good school as his old school. Even Sri Lanka's first Prime Minister D S Senanayake did not attain any educational qualifications but D.S. Senanayake did go to St. Thomas' College and was always recognized and honoured as an old boy of St. Thomas' College. So when St. Joseph's decided to accept Premadasa as an 'newly discovered' old boy of the school, Premadasa was greatly relieved.

To this magnanimous gesture on the part of St. Joseph's Premadasa responded quickly and equally magnanimously. He built for the school a huge new stadium at its Darley Road premises. It is now called 'The Premadasa Stadium'. By this stadium Premadasa's link with the school was established in brick, mortar and cement as well.

It is significant that from the time of assuming office as Prime Minister in February 1978 and even as President, Premadasa never got any project or building named after him. The only exception was the Premadasa Stadium at St Joseph's College. Why did he want this? This was the one link or association which, in his own mind, he knew was not true and which he feared the public may doubt. Therefore, in order to enshrine the lie, he had his name given to the school's stadium.

### **Premadasa's complex about being an "Old Joe"**

What Premadasa did next about his being an old boy of St. Joseph's was even more surprising. Without keeping quiet about this late recognition by his old school, Premadasa went even further and started relating several stories about his school days at St. Joseph's. These stories have caused much

amusement and wonder to the senior staff of the College and certainly to old boys of St Joseph's, none of whom can remember Premadasa at St Joseph's. They never realised he was an old boy or recognised him as one of their colleagues or old boys until the school suddenly "claimed to have "discovered" this after the general elections of July 1977 when he became the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Construction under J.R. Jayewardene. As stated earlier, even when he was first appointed to the Cabinet by Dudley Senanayake in 1968, as Minister for Local Government, St Joseph's College omitted to felicitate him as an old boy. No doubt they had not received instructions to this effect!

Since the latter part of 1977, when Premadasa was officially recognised and honoured by St Joseph's as an old boy, he has on several occasions graced major school events such as the annual prize giving, as chief guest. At these events, he has related amazing stories about his schooling at St Joseph's. To add authenticity to his links with St Joseph's he has spoken of how he was interviewed by Rev Father Le Goc and Rev Father D.J. Anthony when he was admitted to the school. He has told surprised audiences how he played for and even captained St Joseph's at soccer and how once he hurt his toe while playing soccer for the school. Premadasa has also attributed the leadership qualities he says he learnt to his schooling at St Joseph's.

#### **Premadasa's famous interview on alleged admission to St. Joseph's**

The interview with Rev Le Goc on his admission is a fantastic invention of Premadasa's. Other than Premadasa, there are no living persons today to vouch for this interview, or to corroborate that it ever took place.

Bradman Weerakoon, on whom Premadasa can now depend for matters other than advising on international affairs, has deliberately given greater authenticity and recorded for posterity this alleged interview by incorporating the whole of it in his *Premadasa of Sri Lanka*. Page 18 of that book relates this famous "interview" as follows:

The other story is of his entrance to St Joseph's College. The College at that time had started an oriental languages course. Richard Ranasinghe wished his son to follow this course. But St Joseph's was strict on admitting only Catholics to the school. Moreover, it was mid-term and children were not normally admitted at that time. The interview with the Rector Fr. Le Goc was short and crisp.

*"What's your nationality?" asked Fr Le Goc.*

*"I am a Sinhalese."*

*"What is your religion?"*

*"I am a Buddhist."*

*"Do you attend classes in religious instruction?"*

*"Yes, I do, on Sundays."*

*"Are you proud of being a Buddhist?"*

*"Yes, Father."*

*"Why do you like Buddhism so much?"*

*"Because the Buddha taught kindness. Because he taught us to be merciful, even to our enemies."*

*"Why do you want to join this school?"*

*"I want to study further."*

Fr. Le. Goc was satisfied. He entrusted Premadasa to Fr. D. J. Anthony, a senior teacher of the College, with the words, "Premadasa shows much promise. Who knows where he will end?"

Bradman Weerakoon has thus given credence to this interview by incorporating it in his biography of Premadasa. He has not named his sources. There are two other interesting facts in the above passage from Weerakoon's book.

Premadasa's father, Richard Silva, is referred to as *Richard Ranasinghe* (he was never known by that name and his death certificate bears this out). Premadasa found the caste connotations of the name "Silva", with its Portuguese flavour distasteful and found it necessary to adopt the less distinctive "Ranasinghe."

Secondly, Premadasa talks of how proud he is to be a Buddhist to a well known Catholic scholar and cleric. Older Sri Lankans well know that missionary schools (especially Catholic schools) were not given to promoting or even accepting Buddhism at that time and it is very unlikely that a new entrant to the school would proudly boast of dogmatic Buddhist beliefs in his eagerness to get admission to a well-known Catholic school in Colombo.

The other interesting item that emerges from this so-called interview is Premadasa's statement as to why he likes Buddhism so much. Premadasa alleges that he said: "Buddha taught people to be merciful – even to their enemies," and that is why he is a strong Buddhist. Premadasa's political critics and opponents will be amused at this utterance. They know with what brutality and vengeance Premadasa treats them. As I will show later in this text, some of his critics are now cremated or lying in unknown graves. Others are being persecuted. Their lands and properties have been illegally and forcibly acquired; their telephones tapped and their movements kept under constant surveillance. It is a lie for Premadasa to say that he

has followed or even understood Buddha's precept "To be merciful even to one's enemies." Premadasa's dictum was not that the quality of mercy is not strained but that the quality of vengeance knows no bounds.

Like many other incidents in Premadasa's life (which the *Aththa* newspaper has also recently highlighted despite engendering Premadasa's wrath) it is clear that this interview on his so called admission to St. Joseph's College is an ingenious invention of Premadasa's. It is Premadasa who invented it and it is he who relates it. No other living person can confirm that such an interview took place or if it did, what transpired during the course of it.

Apart from this "interview", a *Felicitation Volume* that was published when Premadasa was appointed Prime Minister by President Jayewardene in February 1978 also gives St Joseph's as the school where Premadasa received his secondary education. This Felicitation volume which is entitled *Ranasinghe Premadasa – Prime Minister with a Vision* was published by Ajantha Wijesena, one of Premadasa's closest associates until he became President in 1989. (Later on in this text, more will be said about Ajantha Wijesena who later proved an embarrassment to Premadasa. However, it was Ajantha Wijesena's company Artek Ltd of No. 60 Maligawatte Road, Colombo 10 that printed the Felicitation Volume on Premadasa).

#### Ajantha Wijesena and Premadasa

When Premadasa was Prime Minister, Ajantha Wijesena was his most trusted confidant. Ajantha Wijesena then played the part that Paskaralingam now plays. He was then the all powerful chairman of the Building Materials Corporation and



he also ran Premadasa's Sevana lottery. But during the Presidential Elections of December 1988, Premadasa was made to realise what an embarrassment Ajantha Wijesena had become. So he decided to have nothing to do with him and after Premadasa became President, Ajantha Wijesena was a forgotten figure and now lives luxuriously in London having purchased a mansion there for 750,000 sterling pounds in the inner suburb of Marble Arch, and spending his ill-gotten gains. At times, Ajantha Wijesena is found reminiscing about his life with Premadasa and relates spicy anecdotes about "Preme" and "Hema." He will, indeed, be a better and more circumspect biographer if he ever finds the courage to write a book about his former boss.

In Ajantha Wijesena's *Felicitation Volume*, it is said in several places that Premadasa received his post-primary education at Lawrence College, Skinners Road South, Maradana and his secondary education at St Joseph's College, Darley Road, Colombo. The dates of his education at St Joseph's are not given in the book but Dr Ananda Guruge who writes about Premadasa's life in this *Felicitation Volume* says that Premadasa entered St Joseph's at the age of fifteen. The *Felicitation Volume* also records that Premadasa was admitted to St Joseph's by Rev Le Goc and Rev D.J. Anthony and it was both of them who were Premadasa's "Main sources of inspiration and guidance."

#### **Ananda Guruge and Premadasa**

It is worth mentioning here that like Bradman Weerakoon who has now written Premadasa's biography, Ananda Guruge who wrote so glowingly of Premadasa in this *Felicitation Volume* has also been well rewarded by Premadasa. Premadasa (as Prime Minister) saw to it that after Guruge retired from his

UNESCO post in Paris that he was continued as Sri Lanka's Ambassador to UNESCO. This created an amusing situation for Sri Lanka in Paris because we then had two official Ambassadors in Paris. One, our Ambassador to France and the other, our Ambassador to UNESCO only. The normal practice was that our Ambassador to France held the other position as well. But Premadasa persuaded President Jayewardene to make an exception in the case of Ananda Guruge. After Premadasa became President, he once again combined both posts and made Guruge Ambassador to France as well as Ambassador to UNESCO. And when Guruge's term in France expired (after one extension as well), Guruge was sent as Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Washington. By giving these high and important appointments to Guruge, Premadasa did not care tuppence as to what the foreign service would think. The Foreign Minister and Foreign Secretary were not even consulted. Another of his biographer's had to be rewarded and kept warm and happy.

It is not suggested that Ananda Guruge is unqualified to hold these posts. What is important is that Guruge retired from Sri Lanka's public service several years ago and has not been involved with the development effort in the country since 1977. Also, there are several deserving persons in the traditional foreign service who can be appointed to these ambassadorial positions. Why overlook them to reward an unofficial biographer?

#### **Conclusions on Premadasa and St. Joseph's**

The above analysis of Premadasa's schooling at St Joseph's College may have been a long diversion in this story of his life. But it bears examination because the assertion that St Joseph's College was Premadasa's *alma mater* is simply not

true. In fact, like most biographical material on him published by his pet circle of flatterers, it is a contrived and diabolical lie.

Sometimes people invent a story thinking or hoping that others to whom they relate it will take the story for granted and never challenge its truth and authenticity. This happens often. But often little mistakes can expose individuals. This is what happened to the famous English writer Oscar Wilde. Oscar Wilde filed an action for defamation alleging that he had been falsely called a sodomite. He was winning the case but at a crucial point in his cross-examination by opposing counsel, Oscar Wilde made a small mistake – a small slip. He pretended he was younger and gave his age as two years less than his actual age. He did it on purpose but felt it would go unnoticed. Thereafter the entire case changed against him. He was ultimately disbelieved and later proved to be a sodomite and convicted and sent to jail. All this happened because he lied about his age. Just a two year difference.

Oscar Wilde's story is related here to show that there is "many a slip between cup and lip." When Premadasa asserted that St Joseph's College was his *alma mater* he did not expect anyone to challenge it. He may also have thought it unimportant so that people will not make any fuss about such an assertion. As stated earlier, if Premadasa can lie about his *alma mater*, he can lie about anything else as well. That is the issue which one should think about. It is a question of truth and belief. What Premadasa says cannot be taken for granted. Nor must he think that *all* people are so gullible that they will accept as true everything he says.

There are two other matters worthy of mention. If Premadasa had in actual fact been a famous old boy of St Joseph's, the school's management and staff would have involved him at a very early stage in the school's activities – at least from about the mid-1950s when he became Deputy Mayor of the Colombo Municipal Council. Premadasa was an urban politician and his electorate, Colombo Central, was in close proximity to St. Joseph's College. It would have been natural for the school to look to an old boy like Premadasa in many of its development activities. Old boys of schools do get involved in helping their schools and Premadasa would not have been an exception to this practice. Even when Premadasa got his first Cabinet appointment under Dudley Senanayake in 1968 as Minister of Local Government, St Joseph's College did not go to him for any school function or matter. The absence of the involvement of this famous old boy from the school's development since he allegedly left it in 1943 is most surprising.

Next, it is customary in the publication of a *Felicitation Volume* about a famous individual for a staff member or another old boy of the school to write a few words about the individual who is felicitated in that volume. This is the common practice. It happened when a *Felicitation Volume* was published about J.R. Jayewardene, almost 20 years Premadasa's senior. Several articles appeared in that book on J.R. Jayewardene which were written by past and present teachers of Royal College and past students of Royal College who knew "JR" as an old boy of Royal College. But in Premadasa's *Felicitation Volume* which was published when he became Prime Minister there is not one article by a member of the St Joseph's College staff or by an old boy of St Joseph's College about Premadasa and his schooling at St Joseph's. This alone

shows that his schooling at St Joseph's was in doubt and no one was willing to write about it. Surely a little mention of the person's schooling and school life is an ideal subject matter for a Felicitation volume? But this was missing in Premadasa's case.

Perhaps even Ajantha Wijesena, who was responsible for the publication of the *Felicitation Volume*, felt that an article about Premadasa at St Joseph's was too difficult a task to accomplish with credibility! When he was Prime Minister, the main person "marketing" Premadasa was Ajantha Wijesena who also ran Premadasa's Sevena Lottery. Even Ajantha Wijesena felt that to invent a story of St. Joseph's being Premadasa's Alma Mater would be counter productive because it was a too much of lie for any reasonable person to believe.

#### The Same Photograph with two different captions

It is also interesting to note that the openly valedictory *Felicitation Volume* on Premadasa published when he became Prime Minister contains a photograph of Premadasa as a young man in white long shorts and shirt and long socks and black shoes seated on a table. In the *Felicitation Volume*, the caption under the photograph only states "At the age of 18" – meaning that it was a photograph of Premadasa as a young man of 18 years. In Bradman Weerakoon's biography of Premadasa published in 1992 for the SAARC Conference in Colombo *the very same photograph* is reproduced. But strangely, the caption under this same photograph now says "Premadasa as a fifteen year old school boy, attending St Joseph's College."!

Several issues arise from this attempted deception. Surely a person like Bradman Weerakoon who has worked for Premadasa for so many years must have seen and read the

*Felicitation Volume* and seen this photograph in that book. Bradman Weerakoon would thus have been aware of the material difference in the captions. In the *Felicitation Volume* the caption of the photograph says "Premadasa at 18 years." In Bradman Weerakoon's book under the same photograph it says Premadasa at 15 years. There is a very big difference in three years and looking at the photograph it certainly looks a photo of a man of 18 years and not 15.

Secondly, in Bradman Weerakoon's book the caption says the photograph is that of Premadasa at 15 years "as a school boy attending St Joseph's College." It is curious that in *Felicitation Volume*, there is no statement under the photograph that it was taken when Premadasa was attending St Joseph's College.

It is quite clear that the caption under the photograph as given in Bradman Weerakoon's book is a lie. The book was published mainly for international consumption – to be distributed as complimentary copies to SAARC leaders and other delegates from neighbouring countries. Such readers would naturally have believed what is said in the caption to the photograph.

Thirdly, in Bradman Weerakoon's book this caption has been deliberately introduced to clearly show that St Joseph's College was Premadasa's *alma mater*. What both Premadasa and Bradman Weerakoon must remember is that when you tell lies you get caught because even minute details expose the lie! I have reproduced this photograph from both texts with the different captions so that the readers of this **book** will appreciate the significance of this deliberate lie.



When Premadasa as chief guest attended the 125 year celebrations of St. Benedict's College. he boasted about his days at St. Joseph's. He told an amazed audience how he was the captain of the St. Joseph's College soccer team when they beat St. Benedict's and that he had hurt his toe when playing the winning goal. He also said that he was in the St. Joseph's College debating team which had beaten the St. Benedict's debating team. Therefore, Premadasa said "Coming to St. Benedict's College for its Prize giving was like coming home." When he was so speaking, distinguished Old boys of St. Benedict's College who were in the audience were holding their heads in disbelief. Some had muttered, "we cannot believe that this man can lie like this."

#### **Premadasa's Lack of educational qualifications**

Whatever school Premadasa may have attended for purposes of education, there is no record whatsoever of his having passed any public examination. Nowhere has Premadasa offered any explanation as to why he did not sit for any public educational examination. He has however, now assigned to himself the portfolio of the important Ministry of Education and Higher Education. It will be recalled that prior to the impeachment motion, this portfolio was held by Lalith Athulathmudali who is undoubtedly the person who had the highest academic and educational qualifications as a UNP cabinet minister.

Here again, the reference to Premadasa's lack of educational qualifications is not emphasized merely in order to ridicule him for that reason alone. Sri Lanka's first Prime Minister, the revered D.S. Senanayake (always remembered as the Father of the Nation) also had no tertiary education. But D.S. Senanayake did not for that reason look down upon educated people. On the other hand, he used educated people not only

for administration but also for the political development of the country. But Premadasa is just the opposite. To Premadasa, the sight of an educated person is like showing a red cloth to a frenzied bull. One of Premadasa's greatest shortcomings and inferiority complexes is that he is very uncomfortable in the presence of educated people and therefore resents their company. This may be a problem with an individual's character but it has a sad and woeful effect when that individual is the leader of the country.

Sri Lanka may be a poor country but it is a country – however poor – where education is held in high esteem and at a premium. The very village folk whose cause Premadasa is so given to being the champion of, mortgage their properties and even delay the marriage of their children so as to give them the best education possible. Sri Lanka is proud of its high rate of literacy and excellence in education. In that context one cannot understand a leader who takes such an attitude towards educated people. Some of Sri Lanka's best known public servants and administrators have come from poor homes. They rose to eminence because of their educational attainments. Premadasa's resentment of educated people even made him propound his famous principle that a *Baas* (a skilled and experienced craftsman) can easily replace and outclass an educated and qualified engineer.

It is Premadasa's resentment of educated people that made him dislike UNP leaders like Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake – both qualified lawyers. President J.R. Jayewardene recognised their talents and capabilities. He gave them the necessary scope and encouragement to conceive and accomplish massive development programmes such as a free and liberalised economy, a free trade zone, the *Mahapola*

University scholarship schemes, the huge Mahaweli Development programme and the *Swarnabhoomi* or land grants scheme to the landless.

In fact, if one reads Premadasa's Presidential election campaign speeches during the period October to December 1988, Premadasa always said that he will be able to implement his Poverty Alleviation Programme (*Janasaviya*) only because the country had already been vastly developed by schemes like the Mahaweli programme, the Free Trade Zone, the Mahapola scheme and the free and liberalised economy. During his Presidential campaign, Premadasa always acknowledged the vast development programmes initiated and accomplished by Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake. He also made use of both these younger leaders to address public meetings and work tirelessly for his success at both the Presidential and Parliamentary elections in December 1988 and February 1989. Thereafter, it was a different story.

Both Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake were persistently ridiculed, persecuted and made to feel unwanted in the Premadasa administration. At Cabinet meetings their ideas were openly ridiculed or ignored by Premadasa. Premadasa encouraged other ministers who stooged him (Renuka Herath, Mallimarachchi and their ilk) to openly attack Athulathmudali and Dissanayake at cabinet meetings. These attacks were pre-planned and well orchestrated by Premadasa. Premadasa also interfered with the running of their Ministries. He directed the Secretaries of their Ministries to report directly to him and not to the ministers. He often embarrassed them by crude remarks and utterances in public which were intended for them. It was ingratitude of the highest order.

Everyone knows that apart from Sirisena Cooray's efforts, Premadasa's victory in December 1988 and February 1989 can only be attributed to the efforts of Lalith Athulathmudali, Gamini Dissanayake and Ranjan Wijeratne (the UNP's General Secretary). But Premadasa's subsequent conduct was such that both Athulathmudali and Dissanayake were completely left out from the decision making process of the party and the government. Premadasa well knows that no individual – especially in politics – will throw in his full effort unless he feels that his work or contribution is appreciated or at least recognized. If that single factor of appreciation is missing, there can be no political commitment. Well knowing this, Premadasa alienated Athulathmudali and Dissanayake to such an extent that they had no option but to move out. In Dissanayake's case, Premadasa went even further. He humiliated him by sacking him from his second Cabinet without any prior indication.

Premadasa had two main problems with Athulathmudali and Dissanayake. Firstly, his government had to be (what he himself called) a One Man Show. There could be no other persons that members of parliament, administrators and the public could look upon as leaders within the government. All the UNP members of parliament and Cabinet Ministers have to be his stooges and yes-men. The decision making must come from him. All eyes and ears must be directed to the President's Office. Independent decisions by individual Ministers were not only taboo, but were attacked in the crudest terms and were considered subversive. The servility Premadasa expects is readily received from Ministers like Renuka Herat, A.J. Ranasinghe and Azwar. Even Sirisena Cooray is well accustomed to Premadasa's style of leadership. But Premadasa could not and would not receive the unquestioning obedience

he expected of his subordinates from Gamini Dissanayake and Lalith Athulathmudali. They had minds of their own, perhaps largely due to the objectivity of intellect bestowed them by their superior education. Both were lawyers. Both were eloquent debaters in Sinhala as well as English. Both were skilled Parliamentarians and led the debates in Parliament. Both commanded high respect from among the MPs, public administrators and the general public. In fact, it would not be incorrect to say that Lalith Athulathmudali, who had a distinguished academic background, a sharp wit and a lively sense of humour, was educationally the most qualified individual ever to take to politics and function as a parliamentarian and Cabinet minister in Sri Lanka.

In this background, Premadasa felt extremely uncomfortable. He lacked the visionary ability to conceive of large-scale programmes and reforms and most acutely, a sense of humour. His envy of Dissanayake and Athulathmudali was open and public irritant. He made no secret of it. It had a considerable impact on Premadasa's mind. He felt uncomfortable. He could not function. He was never used to having around him any persons other than those who say "Yes," to anything he says. One was expected merely to listen to him and then agree wholeheartedly with him. Team work is a concept completely alien to him. Another UNP Cabinet Minister who openly did not stooze Premadasa was young G.M. Premachandra, who had secured the largest number of votes in the Kurunegala District at the Presidential and General Elections.

We now turn to Premadasa's political career – its origins and development.

### **Premadasa's early involvement in public Life**

Premadasa's father, Richard Silva was a very close and strong supporter of late A.E. Goonesinghe, the founder and leader of the Ceylon Labour Party. In the era of the Temperance Movement, A.E. Goonesinghe played a very important role in the campaign for closing down the taverns (liquor bars) in Colombo. This campaign was supported by many national organizations.

Young Premadasa had formed an organization called *Sucharitha* (good character) with the school boys of the locality under the guidance of Sunday school teacher-cum-magazine editor Piyadasa Palansooriya. *Sucharitha* was one of the organizations that worked very hard for the temperance campaign. There are some other stories as to how the *Sucharitha Movement* came to be founded by Premadasa and we refer to them briefly in a later part of this text.

### **Premadasa in municipal politics**

To use a biblical term, young Premadasa's baptism in politics was in 1943 at the age of 19, when he campaigned very hard for A.E. Goonasinghe at the Municipal election for the Borella ward against Pieter Keuneman of the Communist Party.

In the Colombo Municipal elections of December 1949, Premadasa (aged 25) contested the St. Sabastian ward as a candidate of the Labour Party with the support of its leader, A.E. Goonasinghe. Despite being defeated badly, Premadasa continued with his organization, and when the man who defeated him had to resign from the Municipal Council membership with three others on the findings of the Bribery Commission (the M.W H. de Silva Commission), Premadasa once again as a candidate of the Labour Party, romped home



at the by-election. This was on March 19th, 1950. The date is significant because it is regarded by Premadasa as the date on which he first entered the political arena. Every year on this day, a series of celebrations is held to commemorate this event. As at March, 1993, Premadasa has been forty three years in politics.

When A.E. Goonesinghe (who was then a Cabinet Minister) was trounced at the 1952 General Elections (he was the fourth in the three member Colombo Central constituency) the Labour Party breathed its last. Premadasa, the young MMC, joined the UNP then under the leadership of Dudley Senanayake.

In 1954 the UNP nominated Premadasa to contest the post of Deputy Mayor. The Colombo Municipal Council had 15 UNP members, 15 opposition councilors and one Independent (Ramanayake). This Independent member was a sympathizer of the UNP but he was an adversary of the UNP mayoral candidate V.A. Sugathadasa. He therefore decided to vote for Dr N.M. Perera, the Opposition candidate for Mayor, but voted for Premadasa for the post of Deputy Mayor. Results of both elections were 16-15. Dr N M Perera became the Mayor and Premadasa the Deputy Mayor.

Premadasa started losing his public popularity after he became Deputy Mayor. Many supporters of St. Sabastian Ward accused him of becoming "bossy" and "arrogant." These allegations were justified in the light of the results of the next Municipal Elections in December 1959.

Prior to that, however, the UNP which had suffered a humiliating defeat at the country's General Elections in April 1956, began its "resurrection" with the local government

elections at the end of the same year. It maintained this position at the Colombo Municipal Council elections of 1959 too.

In the 1959 Colombo Municipal Council Elections, Colombo's strong left-wing party was routed by the UNP. The Left leaders - Dr N.M. Perera and Pieter Keuneman together with their followers were roundly defeated. But there was one "surprise" for the victorious UNP. Ranasinghe Premadasa, the UNP Deputy Leader in the Colombo Municipality was defeated by the Communist Party's L.W. Panditha (the only seat that the Communist Party won). Panditha had earlier been defeated by Premadasa for this same seat in 1954. But in 1959, Panditha was able to defeat Premadasa despite all the other Communist Party candidates losing their seats in the Colombo Municipal Council.

The UNP leaders were perturbed by the defeat of Premadasa who was then the best young Sinhala orator of the party and a capable election organizer. The UNP managed to get him back to the Council at a by-election, when the UNP stronghold of Cinnamon Gardens fell vacant after some time. Ironically, Premadasa who loves to be called the common man's candidate was, on this occasion, voted in by the elitist and western-orientated residents of Colombo's most affluent constituency.

#### **Premadasa at the national level**

At the 1956 General elections, Premadasa had been nominated by the UNP to contest the well-known LSSP leader N.M. Perera at Ruwanwella, the latter's "pocket borough." Premadasa's main slogan against N.M. Perera was that while Premadasa stood for the "Sinhala only" policy, N.M. Perera was committed to parity of status for both Sinhala and Tamil.

Premadasa was defeated in his first attempt to enter Parliament. And in his current political view, there is no trace whatsoever that only as far back as 1956, he advocated a "Sinhala only" policy. Today as President, Premadasa has conveniently chosen to forget the strong anti-Tamil stand he took on "Sinhala only" in 1956. He has conveniently forgotten his communal policies and communal slogans on which he first contested national elections.

At the General Elections of March 1960, Premadasa was elected third member for the three-member Colombo Central constituency. However, when Parliament was dissolved in three months and fresh General Elections were held in July 1960 Premadasa failed to make it to even the third place. The reason given for his defeat was that public opinion went against him in the whole island after a speech he made at an election rally at Ratnapura. At this meeting Premadasa is alleged to have made indecent remarks about Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike in particular and women in general. Even though Premadasa later denied making this statement, the late Sarath Muttetuwegama said at a public rally "Premadasa's indecent speech helped to defeat the UNP in seven out of the eight seats in the Ratnapura district and even in the only one they won [Kolonne], the majority was just 45 votes."

Twenty five years later when Premadasa as Prime Minister made a speech casting aspersions on character of a rival politician and raising doubts regarding the paternity of an Opposition member, Muttetuwegama, then a member of Parliament quipped "it reminds me of his 1960 Ratnapura speech."

### Premadasa's marriage to Hema

Premadasa married on 23rd June, 1964. The bride was Hema Wickrematunga, who hailed from Bandarawela. The date of his marriage, 23rd June is significant because it was also the date of his 40th birthday. Now the annual *Gam Udawa* celebrations, an orgy of waste and extravagance, is held from 23rd June for one week. This is in fact little more than a big birthday celebration or *tamasha* for him. People have forgotten that his wedding was also on his birthday. Accordingly, the annual *Gam Udawa* celebrations is not only a birthday celebration, but is also the celebration of his wedding anniversary. Premadasa never mentions this wedding anniversary aspect at *Gam Udawa* celebrations. Only his birthday is emphasised but not his wedding anniversary. So in one sense it is clear that the *Gam Udawa* ceremony is the most colossal Government celebration at government expense of a man's birthday and wedding anniversary.

### Premadasa's first Cabinet appointment

At the 1965 General Elections, Premadasa contested the three-member Colombo Central constituency and was elected as second MP. In the UNP government that followed, led by Dudley Senanayake, Premadasa was appointed Deputy Minister (then called Parliamentary Secretary) for Local Government. It is said that one of the individuals who had supported Premadasa's appointment as a Deputy Minister in the Dudley Senanayake government was C.P. de Silva, who was a SLFP stalwart who crossed over to the UNP in late 1964.

In September 1968, Premadasa got his first appointment to Ministerial office. This happened when the Minister for Local Government, M. Tiruchelvam broke away from the UNP Government with his Federal Party. Premadasa, who was

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Deputy Minister, succeeded Tiruchelvam as Minister of Local Government.

From then on, despite the defeat of the UNP in the May 1970 general elections, Premadasa's political career was secure. The results of the 1970 General Elections had been an unimaginable surprise to the UNP. A United Left Front had routed them and reduced them to a mere 18 seats in Parliament. But Premadasa was not only one of the very few to retain his seat, but he had increased his majority and had even come first in the three-member Colombo Central constituency. And during the seven year rule of Mrs Bandaranaike from 1970 - 1977, Premadasa functioned as the Chief Opposition Whip with J.R. Jayewardene as the Opposition Leader (Dudley Senanayake had died in April 1973).

**An early illustration of Premadasa's mania for publicity**  
Beginning from his days as a Municipal Councillor, Premadasa tended to give priority to publicity and rhetoric at the expense of useful, altruistic work. Senior journalists talk of the time when Premadasa would rush to newspaper offices soon after making a speech in the Colombo Town Hall to plead for a 'splash' in the paper for his contribution.

This mania for publicity increased when Premadasa was made Minister of Local Government in 1968 during the dying days of the Dudley Senanayake Government which ran from 1965-1970. Using his official position as a Minister (he was concurrently a Deputy Minister of Information and Broadcasting), Premadasa began to tout himself as a 'doer' with the connivance of a few friendly newspapermen.

They picked on the making of *Poottu Palam* (instant concrete bridges) as the new Minister's distinctive contribution, when in fact the Highways and Construction Ministry's Ratmalana depot had been turning out these bridges for quite some time without any fuss. Premadasa's Goebbelian attempts to get personal publicity for himself at the expense of the Prime Minister and other more senior Ministers like M.D. Banda, U.B. Wanninayake and I.M.R.A. Irriyagolla, who had toured the length and breadth of the country and launched a successful grassroots campaign to revive agriculture, irked the UNP membership. Many of them had quietly sacrificed their wealth, time and energy as genuine patriots and were now being upstaged by a man they considered to be a political "Con-man."

Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake took the matter up at an inner party meeting in a characteristically open and firm, but friendly way. "I say Preme," he said, "we all like you. But we built up this party on honesty, self sacrifice and genuine patriotism. We don't have to rely on cheap stunts like *Poottu Palam*. We don't believe in deceiving the people." Dudley Senanayake was strongly supported in this criticism of Premadasa by party stalwarts like M.D. Banda, Irriyagolla, Wanninayake and Gamani Jayasuriya, who was then the Party Secretary.

This was a semi-public rebuke for which Premadasa never forgave Dudley Senanayake. It is said that Premadasa walked out of Sri Kotha and began to sulk in his modest flat at Rosmead Place. The Prime Minister sent Gamani Jayasuriya and Wanninayake to bring Premadasa back and get him to withdraw a letter of resignation that Premadasa had submitted after this public exposure and humiliation that he suffered at



the hands of his leader, who could forgive anything, but not attempts at hoodwinking the people in order to get cheap publicity.

Though the letter of resignation was withdrawn, Premadasa could never, after that, look Dudley Senanayake in the face. Former UNP Minister Gamani Jayasuriya has told his friends details of this incident on several occasions. He was the Secretary of the UNP at that time. Jayasuriya has made it known that he still has with him the letter of resignation that Premadasa submitted. While Jayasuriya is acclaimed for his honesty and integrity, he is reluctant to publicly confirm this incident because his son is married to the sister of Rohan Jayakody, who married Premadasa's daughter Dulanjali. In other words, Gamani Jayasuriya's daughter-in-law is Hubert Jayakody's daughter. She is the lady who is in charge of the massive Carnation and cut flower project for which the Nuwara Eliya race course has been given on a nominal lease to the Jayakody's. It is a massive extent of about 43 acres of prime urban land in the heart of Nuwara Eliya town.

#### **Premadasa the show-man**

For some reason best known to himself, Premadasa has a kink to tie up any development work with some celebration, commemoration or show. For instance, Premadasa proudly claims that it was he who as Minister for Local Government, was responsible for the mechanization of the Rural Roads and Bridges Department of the Ministry. He symbolized his ground design of *Poottu Palam* (pre-fabricated bridges) by installing twenty two such bridges simultaneously in twenty two districts on 22nd March 1969. For greater public and media attention, he chose the date well. It was the 17th death anniversary of Sri

Lanka's first Prime Minister, D.S. Senanayake. This "show-man" character of Premadasa has never left him. It is part and parcel of his daily life. To him there should be no development without an accompanying "show." There must also be no development without an accompanying local name-tag: "Sevena" for his lottery, "Udagama" for his housing and "Janasaviya" for his poverty alleviation - are good modern illustrations.

During 1968-70, from pre-fabricated bridges, Premadasa also attempted pre-fabricated houses, but soon gave up this idea because it was not feasible. People will remember that in the period between 1977 and 1979, Premadasa, as Prime Minister, started a craze for roundabouts and overhead bridges for pedestrians in the Colombo city, all painted in his "trade-mark" colour - orange. As can be observed, very few people use these overhead bridges which are mainly found in the Maradana area, but they were constructed at a huge cost.

However, there is one project which Premadasa commenced in his first Cabinet portfolio as Minister of Local Government in September 1968, which truly deserves recognition. That was the Maligawatte National Housing Scheme in Colombo which is perhaps one of the best public housing schemes in the country so far.

#### **Premadasa and his Purawesi Peramuna (Citizens' Front)**

In 1972, during the period that the UNP was out of office, Premadasa attempted to build up a separate power base by organizing a "Citizens' Front" (*Purawesi Peramuna*). It is said that he organized this movement as an attack on the UNP leader Dudley Senanayake who had restrained him earlier when

Premadasa was seeking unnecessary publicity with his pre-fabricated bridges. At one of the UNP conventions, Premadasa was met with such hostility for his separate Citizens' Front movement that he soon abandoned it. Premadasa's attempt to confront the leadership of Dudley Senanayake by his so called *Citizens' Front* was one of the reasons why Premadasa and his wife were jeered and hooted and almost assaulted by mourners when they went to pay homage at the funeral house of Dudley Senanayake, when the UNP leader died in April 1973.

#### **Premadasa insulted and assaulted at Dudley Senanayake's funeral house**

The UNP hardliners never forgot or forgave Premadasa when he tried to lead a breakaway from the UNP with his Citizens' Front (*Purawesi Peramuna*). They considered it as a personal insult and betrayal of Dudley Senanayake, the much loved UNP leader who had also been a personal benefactor to Premadasa. In fact, Premadasa will not deny that his first plot of land was also gifted to him by none other than Dudley Senanayake. The UNP leader gave Premadasa a block of land from his own property near "Woodlands" at a very small price and it was on that block of land that Premadasa built a house. This was all the more reason why UNP loyalists disliked Premadasa when he formed his Citizens' Front. Thus in April 1973 when Dudley Senanayake suffered a massive heart attack and died and when Premadasa visited the funeral house at "Woodlands" he was jeered and hooted. Their disgust towards Premadasa (who was also at that time accompanied by his wife Hema) was so great and prolonged that some mourners at the funeral house started to strike Premadasa with their hands and feet. Sensing that the situation was getting out of control, it was Dudley's own brother Robert Senanayake who, out of sympathy, came to Premadasa's rescue and pulled the couple

into a bedroom of the funeral house and then saved them from further disaster. Premadasa had to leave the funeral house secretly through a back door.

After this incident, Premadasa did not feel it safe to attend Dudley Senanayake's funeral when it was held at Independence Square and which was attended by over one million people – perhaps the largest crowd ever seen in Sri Lanka. It was at this funeral (from which Premadasa was forced to keep away), that J.R. Jayewardene made his famous funeral oration ending it with a paraphrased quotation from William Shakespeare's well known play Hamlet. "Good night sweet Prince, may the host of Devas sing thee to thy sleep." Today's leader of Sri Lanka because of his conduct in the political arena, was prevented by the people from attending the funeral of his leader and benefactor.

It is also said that the massive heart attack from which Dudley Senanayake eventually died was caused by anxiety generated as a result of a series of letters and articles written and published by Premadasa promoting his Citizens' Front which was brutally critical of Senanayake. This is in stark contrast to the manner in which Premadasa himself dealt with Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake when they criticized Premadasa during the impeachment of September 1991.

#### **Premadasa the photographer**

There is an amusing story about the charismatic leader Dudley Senanayake and his fondness for Mrs Hema Premadasa. They say that Senanayake liked buxom women and Hema Premadasa fitted the bill well. Also, Hema was only too willing to be wooed by and thus win the favour of the leader of the UNP at that time. It is said that Dudley Senanayake himself, a lover of

photography, when he used to visit the Yala and Wilpattu wild life sanctuaries sometimes invited Premadasa and his wife to the bungalow in the sanctuary. And in order to spend more time alone with Hema Premadasa, it is said that Dudley Senanayake used to encourage Premadasa to go out in the jeep with a camera or two to photograph wild life. This Premadasa did only too willingly because by now, he was spreading a story that photography was his hobby and that his leader Senanayake had also given him one of his best cameras. Dudley Senanayake must have been chuckling to himself as Premadasa was striving to become a successful photographer. More recently, Premadasa does not speak publicly of this hobby.

#### **Premadasa's long years in political opposition**

When assessing Premadasa's character and judging his actions, we must not forget that Premadasa had – until 1989 – spent a greater part of his political life – about 30 years, as an Opposition politician. Premadasa himself admitted this in his inaugural speech as President on 2nd January, 1989. About an year later in a speech at the B.M.I.C.H. Premadasa equated politics to climbing up a very greasy pole. He said it was difficult to get up and sometimes you come down in the attempt to get up. Premadasa said this before his impeachment motion in Parliament in August 1991. The impeachment process, which is now following him like a shadow, shows that Premadasa has still not got to the very summit of the greasy pole he spoke of. We will refer to the impeachment motion against Premadasa in another part of this text.

#### **Premadasa and his Gam Udawas**

Premadasa was elected as the deputy leader of the UNP in 1976 and this paved the way for him to be appointed the Leader of the House after the UNP victory in 1977 and eventually as Prime Minister after J.R. Jayewardene became President under the new Constitution in February 1978.

In 1978, soon after he was appointed Prime Minister, Premadasa launched a Scheme named *Gam Udawa* (village reawakening) "To uplift," as he said, "the most down trodden sections of the rural population." The first *Gam Udawa* was launched on 23 June 1978 at Yapahuwa close to a property which Premadasa now uses as his private holiday home and estate. This is called Kahambiliyawatte and is situated at Ambanpola.

According to leading economists, the Gam Udawa scheme had no economic planning whatsoever and made no economic sense. It did not create job opportunities, or lead to agricultural or rural industrial development. It was a scheme to house a small percentage of the people living in *cadjan* and mud huts in small tenements with electricity and other amenities. In no electorate could any *Udagama* accommodate even five percent of those living in huts, not to speak of those living even without a hut.

It is interesting to note that about the same time that Premadasa launched his Gam Udawa Housing Programme, the highly respected Marga Institute of Sri Lanka headed by economist and former public servant Dr Godfrey Gunatilleke had published a research paper on "Housing in Sri Lanka." In that publication, Dr Godfrey Gunatilleke clearly argued against a large-scale housing programme by the public sector because



of its high cost and lack of productive value. To Premadasa however, such research and economic evaluation are of no consequence. In fact, the more the economists that argue against any project of his, the more persistent Premadasa would be in implementing it.

The opening of any *Udagama*, in any place in the Island even with 25 houses was considered a "national festival." Coloured posters printed in tens of thousands were put up throughout the country. Elaborate invitation cards were sent out in thousands. The country's best singers and artists were mobilized to entertain at the public rally (*Jana Hamuwa*) after the inauguration. On some occasions the money spent on printing, travelling, entertainment and subsistence came near to or exceeded the cost of the construction itself.

At every *Udagama*, a *Sucharitha* oath was taken by all who attended the rally. Thousands of copies of this oath are printed and distributed to the audience who are made to solemnly repeat it, led by a teenager, who is made to read it like a religious preacher. Apart from pledging to abstain from all *Duscharitha* (bad deeds) like gambling, consumption of liquor etc., the audience would vow to abstain from eating meat and fish too.

When villages for fishermen were opened, the entire audience including fishermen and the minister for Fisheries are compelled to take this solemn oath of pure vegetarianism.

*Udagamas* were show-biz extravaganzas. They were unrealistic acts of sheer hypocrisy.

Apart from the houses, some of the structures built in connection with these *Udagamas* are now abandoned. Cattle graze on the sites, a few of which have fallen victims to the "jungle tide." The Dambulla *Udagama* site is a good example.

At every *Udagama*, whether it was at Hambantota or at Anuradhapura, bus loads of "representatives from Colombo Central" (Premadasa's electorate) were imported in large numbers.

Several rich *mudalalis* (local businessmen) in Colombo organized these "pilgrimages" and they were accompanied by some of the leading casino owners and mafia bosses of the capital. All of them joined the chorus readily to pledge from abstaining from "gambling, drinking and eating fish and meat."

As stated earlier, the first *Gam Udawa* ceremony was held at Yapahuwa in the Kurunegala district on the 23rd of June 1978, which coincided with Premadasa's 54th birthday and also his wedding anniversary.

Every year there will be a *Gam Udawa* ceremony in a chosen place from 23rd June to 3rd July. The ceremonial ground is a "Mini Disneyland." It is considered a national festival, a carnival, an exhibition, providing entertainment of all kinds and including the presence of leading singers and musicians. To poor rural folk, a visit to the *Gam Udawa* Exhibition is like going to heaven and coming back.

Daily cleaning of the *Gam Udawa* exhibition ground is done by the employees of the Colombo Municipal Council, using the vehicles driven all the way from Colombo. Work on the stages, pavilions etc. is done by the State Engineering Corporation,

coming from Colombo. Water supply is the responsibility of the National Water Supply and Drainage Board, also from Colombo. All these bodies are State Corporations, that come under Premadasa, who was the Minister for Local Government and Housing and also later Minister of Highways.

At the end of every annual *Gam Udawa* ceremony the place of the next annual ceremony (to be held 12 months later) is announced.

During the *Gam Udawa* annual ceremony all hotels, rest houses, lodging etc. within a twenty mile radius from the site are fully reserved for over 20 days for the visiting government officials from all parts of the island.

All vehicles belonging to the Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Construction are mobilised. Special buses from Colombo and many distant places are organised during the ten days of pomp and ceremony. Special trains are run from various parts of the island to the nearest railway station, from where special buses wait to transport the passengers to the site. The *Gam Udawa* Anniversary has more facilities than those provided for the annual Kandy *Perahera*.

Premadasa was so obsessed by his *Gam Udawas* and his *Janasaviya*, that he completely ignored agriculture, the mainstay of the country's economy. As the English poet Goldsmith wrote, "A bold peasantry, every country's pride; when once destroyed can never be supplied."

Premadasa loyalists argue that *Gam Udawa* is not a carnival and that the 15 *Gam Udawas* held so far have resulted in massive infrastructure development of those areas. The best

way to satisfy both loyalists and critics is to have an economic evaluation. All major development projects such as the Mahaweli, the Free Trade Zone etc., faced exhaustive critical evaluations which disclosed both their strengths and their shortcomings. So why not the *Gam Udawas* and even *Janasaviya*.

#### Premadasa's oil petition to the OPEC countries

During the decade he was Prime Minister Premadasa always attempted to implement unrealistic and bogus short cuts to solve massive political, economic and environmental problems.

When the price of petroleum was raised by OPEC countries in the late 1970's Premadasa decided to launch a campaign to submit a petition signed by all Sri Lankans to the heads of Arab nations to supply crude oil at a reduced price. "Our Muslims enjoy all privileges. Even our Foreign Minister (A.C.S. Hameed) is a Muslim. So the Islamic countries will sympathize with us," was his pet theory.

Officials down to the village level worked day and night to get the signatures from people most of whom did not know what all this was about. Over one and half million signatures were collected. However, no one knows as to what happened to this petition. It must have ended up gathering dust in a government store house. If one looks at the newspapers of that time, the reader will realise what a great hoax the Oil Petition came to be.

#### Premadasa and artificial rain

When Sri Lanka was having a very bad drought in 1980, Premadasa read about Thailand's efforts to artificially precipitate rain by cloud seeding. He lost no time in contacting

Bangkok for assistance. Even though the project was in an experimental stage, the Thai government were loath to displease a request from the Prime Minister of a friendly country. So they despatched a few meteorological experts.

Amidst publicity on a grand scale, some helicopters flew with seeding equipment over Sri Pada (Adam's Peak) and "chasing" of clouds was reported. Even though there was no change whatsoever of the monsoons and droughts, the Prime Minister addressing a public *Gam Udawa* rally said "King Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe sent Welivita Sangaraja to Thailand and brought the pure higher ordination to Lanka (*Upasampada*) two centuries ago. Today, I have been successful in getting rain from that country. Once that is successful there will never be a drought in this country." Innocent and gullible peasants cheered their "beloved" Prime Minister. Bradman Weerakoon, who is now his international advisor and biographer, was then the Secretary to the Prime Minister. Weerakoon, who knew better, also looked on happily while the people were cheering the Prime Minister who was bringing rain to them. Even able public servants like Bradman Weerakoon were not willing to tell Premadasa not to fool the people in this way. Even Weerakoon understood that the best approach to take with Premadasa was to stooze him and say "yes," to all his ideas and views.

#### **Wastage of funds by Premadasa's pet schemes**

The damage to the national economy alone by Premadasa's unplanned "pet schemes" is beyond any estimate. The Mattegoda Housing Scheme is but one example.

At Mattegoda (15 miles from Colombo) 1,122 houses in three categories were built. The cost was calculated at Rs 525,000, Rs 315,000 and Rs 165,000 respectively. The houses were

offered to the public on hire purchase basis. One fifth of the cost was to be paid on allocation and the balance to be paid in monthly installments over 30 years.

For example, a house costing Rs 525,000 was to be allotted on the payment of the initial deposit of Rs 105,000. After that the monthly instalment would be Rs 3,950 for 30 years.

Naturally, there were only a handful of takers at this exorbitant price. Only twenty percent of the houses could be disposed of during one year.

Finding no "market" Premadasa decided to offer the houses to Government and quasi-government employees without charging interest, on installments. The monthly instalment of Rs 3,950 was reduced to Rs 1,145 and for the other categories also on the same proportion. All the houses were so allotted. However, the original occupants objected (naturally) to this discrimination and stopped paying their installments. Subsequently their instalment were also reduced waiving off the interest.

The houses were completed in 1984. The occupants were expected to pay installments up to the year 2015. But to their dismay they have discovered that they will be lucky if the houses lasted till the turn of the century. Architects have called his homes "match box houses" because of their poor construction.

At a meeting of the Residents' Association, one of the occupants (now a retired senior police officer) said, "The allottees have lost. The government has lost. Only the contractors and their benefactors have gained."



This discovery is being shared by many of the "lucky ones" who were allotted houses throughout the country.

### **The Gam Udawas become a craze after his election as President**

After he was elected President in December 1988, Premadasa was free to implement all his pet schemes with no control whatsoever from the financial, administrative or parliamentary authorities. The period 1978-1988 showed the full mobilization of all the resources within the Ministries of Local Government, Housing and Highways for the *Gam Udawa* ceremonies.

From 1989 onwards Premadasa, as President, "commandeered" the resources of the entire government for this purpose. There was to be no restriction in the usage of helicopters, cars, buses, jeeps and trucks for this *tamasha*. There was no J.R. Jayewardene to check this extravagant and exorbitant waste.

It was also after becoming President, that Premadasa was able to execute his pet scheme of being the sole advisor to all administrators, specialists, lawyers, medical men, surgeons, engineers, media personnel and even nurses. He knew every subject and considered himself an authority for others to follow and emulate. Recently, in March, 1993, at an environmental seminar, Premadasa said, "Blindness in people is caused by the lack of oxygen." He added that it is because of the harm caused to the environment that there is less oxygen in the air. While the second statement may be true, we wonder on what medical advice Premadasa associated blindness with the lack of oxygen.

### **Premadasa's Presidential Mobile Service**

Premadasa also launched a Mobile Presidential Secretariat. This was really "mobile" in every sense of the word. During the week of the "mobile" the entire central administration becomes "mobile" to join the provincial administration. Almost all offices in the capital are deserted. Ministers, Secretaries, Directors, clerks and peons are all despatched to the far away district where the mobile is held with all pomp and glory. The television and radio are set up in advance for on-the-spot recordings. Millions were spent on fuel for the vehicles despite a previous campaign to save energy. The government officials obtain all their travelling and *per diem* expenses, and all the hotels in the vicinity are booked and paid for by the State.

The irony of fate is that it was Prime Minister Premadasa who moved the Provincial Councils Act and spoke in Parliament on the necessity of "devolving power." He said all the country's problems have arisen because of the concentration of administrative power in Colombo. He advocated that the Provincial Councils should make arrangements to devolve administrative powers to the 'grassroots' (presumably village) level.

With seven provincial councils (except the North and East) and over 230 Local Government establishments and Gramodaya Sabhas is it not absurd and wasteful to take the central administration in Colombo "lock, stock and barrel" to far away districts for a whole week regularly? This is perhaps a more telling indictment of the efficiency of the central administration than any other.

At the "mobile" secretariat held at Amparai in 1989, the President publicly reprimanded the Government Agent (the

highest administrative officer in the district), without giving the officer any opportunity of offering an explanation, and summarily ordered that the official be transferred. The public humiliation of the Government Agent was aggravated by the coarse, street language that Premadasa uses on such occasions.

But this was one occasion that Premadasa overshot his target of pleasing the "gallery." The Government Agent whom Premadasa humiliated was one of the most popular officers among the people of Amparai. A few days after the incident, the people of the district organized a massive farewell for their government agent. Thousands of *Bulath Hurulu* (betel leaves) and presents were offered to him by the humble peasants. Among the speakers were members of the *Maha Sangha* and other popular personnel. They were all angry and sorry that their G.A. had been dealt with in this manner.

**The Sucharitha stooges and control of television and radio**  
Premadasa converted the entire government-controlled news media establishment into "Premadasa & Co. Ltd." by appointing his stooges as chairmen, directors, editors and producers. One glaring example was the SLBC.

Hudson Samarasinghe, an announcer of the SLBC, was "comper" at all *Gam Udawa* ceremonies. He was appointed at Premadasa's insistence as the "Head of the Prime Minister's Unit" of the SLBC in 1979. While acceding to his Prime Minister's desire to have a "PM's Unit" in SLBC, the then President (J.R. Jayewardene), who had also been advised by Premadasa to have a "President's Unit" at the SLBC had replied, "There is no need to build up my image as the people have given me a clear mandate."

After Premadasa became President, the SLBC bade farewell to all accepted broadcasting ethics and practices, and was solely dedicated to the *Premadasa Chintanaya*. Hudson Samarasinghe became chairman of SLBC and monopolised all air time for Premadasa's coverage. A.J. Ranasinghe, the State Minister in charge of broadcasting and television, openly said "I shall even wash the President's toilets and carry his toilet bucket or make soup out of his footwear and drink it with relish."

On 24 March 1992, Minister A.J. Ranasinghe publicly proclaimed (at the opening ceremony of a re-developed Sarasavi Film Studio) that "*President Premadasa is my God and my heart beats today because of him.*" He added: "President Premadasa is a great leader who stands unparalleled in Sri Lanka." The public treat A.J. Ranasinghe as a joke. The media look to him for entertainment. In the olden days kings had court jesters and A.J. Ranasinghe is Premadasa's court jester. Some court jesters had a lot of wisdom, which they displayed by their wit. But A.J. Ranasinghe has neither wit nor wisdom. One's regret is that Premadasa permits Ranasinghe to behave in this manner and allows these public utterances. If it was J.R. Jayewardene, by now Ranasinghe would have been reprimanded and asked not to make a fool of himself. He probably would not have been appointed to public office in the first place. The poor reflection is on Premadasa, whom Ranasinghe praises in public in his capacity as a Minister. If the boss does not check the subordinate, the boss must take the blame. If the subordinate makes an ass of himself, the reflection is not only on him, but on the boss as well for not correcting him or reprimanding him. However, A.J. Ranasinghe carries on regardless.

Whenever the President makes a speech anywhere, the SLBC news broadcast of 10 or 15 minutes goes on for 20 or 25 minutes and devotes more than two thirds of it to the President. After the news broadcast, the full speech is re-broadcast on all channels. Songs in the praise of Premadasa were put on the air regularly. On the rare days on which the President does not make a speech, the news bulletin ends in less than 10 minutes.

*Rupavahini* goes further in attempting to please their "Leader." However, it kept to the accepted TV and radio practice of not exceeding the programs – particularly the news, even though at times 90% of the news is devoted to the speeches or activities of the President.

After the impeachment motion, *Rupavahini* had to change the whole system. Once a speech by the President (who was the accused) went on television for 78 minutes at a single stretch! For this to happen, several programmes, including a popular TV drama, had to be abandoned.

The Lake House papers have nothing to report or comment on except the *Premadasa Chintanaya*, and either black out or condemn the President's opponents and critics.

#### Premadasa's use of Mahindapala and the Lake House "Mafia"

H.L.D. Mahindapala is the son of an ambulance driver and was educated at Zahira College. After leaving school he taught at St Thomas's Prep. School, Colombo, until 1957. He then joined the Associated Newspapers (Lake House Group) as a trainee reporter in the *Observer*. He rose rapidly through the ranks of the newspaper, his *forte* of carrying tales to his superiors

serving him well throughout. Soon he was serving as personal errand boy for Esmond Wickremesinghe (Ranil Wickremesinghe's father), particularly catering to Esmond's "extra-curricular" amorous activities.

He then latched on to the Dudley Senanayake camp and built up a strong reputation for tale-carrying there too. He was primarily responsible for the Dudley-JR rift, thanks to his flair for being able to concoct a scurrilous story at the drop of a hat. He invented a story, which he related to Dudley in intricate detail, that JR was given to relating slanderous stories about Dudley. This Cassandra of journalism (I use the word loosely) made his contacts with Dudley through Robert Senanayake, whose friendship he was not slow in dispensing with when JR succeeded Dudley as leader of the UNP. When the SLFP won in 1970 Mahindapala fled the country. His poison pen had treated Mrs Bandaranaike less than kindly and he was not ready to stay behind and take his medicine. He was helped to migrate to Australia by Dudley Senanayake, who put in a word for him to the Australian high commissioner.

In 1968, while working at the *Observer*, Mahindapala started an affair with a Mrs Ranji Murugupillai, a buxom lady who was a clerk in the Milk Board. She was a Tamil Catholic from Vavuniya. She was at the time married to Ivor Murugupillai who was a press officer in the Health Ministry. In order to consolidate his romance, Mahindapala got the husband transferred to Kandy and thereafter, when he himself was forced to leave Sri Lanka, he got Ranji Murugupillai to elope with him. The husband filed action for divorce against her on the ground of desertion and one is not sure whether Mahindapala ever married Ranji, who now lives with him but has been unable to bear him any children.



Within Lake House, Mahindapala is better known as *Madapala* (mud-slinger). Mahindapala both hates and fears J.R. Jayewardene and Mrs Bandaranaike. He is now Principal Mud Slinger for Premadasa and writes under the name of *Lankaputra* (Son of Lanka). What few people know is that this great patriot revoked his Sri Lanka citizenship and is a citizen of Australia. He is not eligible for dual citizenship but carries an illegal Sri Lankan passport. His employment at Lake House is also illegal as he has no work permit to work in Sri Lanka. It is also ironic that *Lankaputra* is an employee of the Australian government, to which he has sworn allegiance! His terms of employment include a Rs 70,000 per month paycheck with the compliments of the Maharajah Organization Limited. He showed his loyalty in kind to the Maharajahs by his protracted and bitter attacks against their rival Ken Balendra, Chairman of John Keells. Balendra had evoked the wrath of the 'Rajah's when he promoted Boeing against the Maharajah's Air Buses with Air Lanka. Mahindapala and his wife have made more than ten first class round trips to Australia during the past two years, some paid for by the government, others by the Maharajahs. He still maintains a house in Victoria, Australia.

In his short stint at Lake House Mahindapala succeeded in attracting to the *Observer* the largest number of defamation cases ever filed against a newspaper in Sri Lanka. The paper is now virtually financially bankrupt.

His hatred for J.R. Jayewardene stems from an earlier attempt by him to get employment in the Lake House Group, when J.R. Jayewardene was President. JR blocked this by telling Bodinagoda, the then Chairman of Lake House not to touch Mahindapala. Mahindapala's hatred for JR was well known to

Premadasa and when he became President in 1989, Mahindapala was able to achieve his dream and become editor of a major Sri Lankan paper. He was initially recruited by Premadasa as a sub-editor in the *Observer* but he soon edged out Harold Peiris, the then Editor and succeeded to the influential post of Editor of the *Sunday Observer*. His conduct at the *Sunday Observer* as a Premadasa stooge reached such heights that even his former journalist friend, the much respected Manik de Silva (Chief Editor of the *Daily News*), is now not on speaking terms with Mahindapala.

While at the *Observer*, Mahindapala also assiduously cultivated Sirisena Cooray and K.N. Choksy, who wielded considerable influence with Premadasa. But his main strength was always the President, whose principal hack writer he soon became.

Few people know that prior to returning from Australia, Mahindapala was a close friend of Lalith Athulathmudali. When it became clear that Athulathmudali was being sidelined by Premadasa however, Mahindapala was not slow in ditching his old silver for new gold. Soon he was carrying on a slanderous campaign against his old friend and patron, dubbing him "Lies and Deception." In this respect, Mahindapala's betrayal and character assassination of one of his closest friends and a political leader whom he admired and respected speaks volumes of the true nature of the man.

#### **Premadasa and LTTE Leader Prabakaran**

During the eighteen month period of the Premadasa-Prabakaran "honeymoon" between March 1989 and September 1990, the Lake House papers were given specific instructions to give maximum publicity to Prabakaran, the LTTE's

propaganda chief Anton Balasingham, his wife (the Australian-born Adette) and one of Prabakaran's senior deputies, Yogi.

When an unconfirmed report of Prabakaran's death appeared in a newspaper, the Lake House Press on specific orders from Premadasa rushed a copy of the *Daily News* to Jaffna with a photographer and a photograph of Prabakaran reading that *Daily News* was published in the following day's Lake House papers.

When Mrs Balasingham was interviewed by a correspondent for the Women's pages of the *Sunday Observer*, the entire interview, including pandering statements made by her in praise of her hero "Thambi" (Prabakaran), was published in full. The President instructed that this interview with Mrs Balasingham be translated and published in the Lake House papers, both Sinhala (*Dinamina*) and the Tamil (*Thinakaran*).

In November 1989 C.V. Gooneratne the SLFP parliamentarian asked the following question in Parliament on Premadasa's honeymoon with Prabakaran. The question was unanswered.

C.V. Gooneratne (SLFP Colombo District) raising an adjournment question asked;

"Is the Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence aware

- (a) that very recently the wife of the LTTE leader V. Prabakaran arrived at Katunayake Airport in Sri Lanka together with her children , (b) that the wife of Prabakaran and her children were transported from Katunayake with full security by helicopter to the jungles of Nedunkerni in the North to meet V.

Prabakaran, who was already there? (c) that while Mrs Prabakaran and her children were waiting to be transported to Nedunkerni, they occupied a hotel in Negombo for half a day? (d) will the Hon. Prime Minister reveal to this House how such a matter which poses a grave threat to our National Security took place and as to who is responsible for such a grave crime against the State especially when our heroic soldiers are being killed, maimed and injured by the thousands by the LTTE and what action he would take against those responsible?

If not why not?

#### **The British High Commissioner expelled by Premadasa**

On Saturday 11th May, 1990, when the British High Commissioner David Gladstone, reported to the police at Dickwella, 120 miles south of Colombo, some local-government election malpractices, Lake House was instructed to search through past copies of *Hansard* and a special report was made with a statement from Minister Sirisena Cooray as the General Secretary of the UNP. The Sunday Lake House papers were published with this episode as the leading story over the UNP victory at the local elections. The first page of the Sunday papers were taken to *Sucharitha* (the private residence of Premadasa) for approval before printing. A short time later the Government of Sri Lanka declared the British High Commissioner *persona non grata* and he was expelled from the country.

Was Premadasa the only possible UNP candidate for the presidential elections of December 1988?

This is one of Premadasa's loudest boasts. He is now going about beating his breast and proclaiming loudly that the UNP was in a quandary in finding a Presidential candidate in December 1988. After the impeachment motion, in the so-called Throne Speech to Parliament on 24th September, 1991 (when he was jeered and hooted by the Opposition) Premadasa said:

"Members of our party were in a predicament about finding a candidate for the Presidential elections contest in 1988. The former President as the leader of the Party requested me to offer myself as a candidate. Not a single one of those persons who talk big like heroes today came forward to rescue the UNP on that occasion. Not a single one of them came forward fearlessly for the defence of the Party and democracy. They were actually shivering in their boots. It was I who volunteered to face the situation."

Bradman Weerakoon appears to have taken the cue from this statement in his recent work of political fiction. In pages 55 and 56 of his book *Premadasa of Sri Lanka*, Bradman Weerakoon writes:

The Constitution of 1978 limits the Presidency to a maximum of two terms. President Jayewardene began his second term as Executive President on February 4, 1983, and around the beginning of 1988, the matter of the successor to the Presidency began to occupy the minds of the members of the United National Party. Other political parties too, were gearing up for what looked likely to be a redoubtable contest. The situation in the country was anything but favourable for a peaceful election. Bitter conflict was raging in the North and East between the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) who had entered the country under the terms of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who had resisted being disarmed and finally in August 1987 turned against the IPKF. In the South especially, and increasingly in other parts of the country, the Jantha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and the Deshapremi Janatha Viyaparaya (DJV) were making their bid for power in a spate of robberies, attacks on police stations and the assassination of key political and administrative leaders.

The Opposition had made early and careful preparations for both the presidential and general elections. There had been much discussion about Mrs Bandaranaike, the SLFP leader as the common candidate of the Democratic Political Alliance (DPA). The SLFP had been in the Opposition since 1977. Since there had not been a testing of the electorate in a general election—the Referendum of 1982 notwithstanding—many thought that the pendulum swing against the government in power would favour the Opposition in any election. In the face of these formidable challenges, only the

bravest and the hardest could hope to come through the ordeal of a presidential election and emerge victorious securing more than 50% of the votes at the first count. Moreover, President Jayewardene had decided that Parliament would stand dissolved after the Presidential election. The new President would therefore have to take his chance with a Parliamentary majority that was yet to be determined. For the first time in Sri Lanka, the parliamentary elections were going to be on the basis of proportional representation. Even the most optimistic of candidates could expect the kind of majority which President Jayewardene had enjoyed.

Premadasa's persistence had paid off. The objective had been achieved. But to him, there was one more nail to be secured to make the picture perfect. The card had not been signed. He had a way around that as well. Anyone else would have been happy to go home with a £100 million, but Premadasa wanted it signed, sealed and delivered. Before the afternoon sessions commenced, he had his Secretary, with some trepidation, go around to Mrs. Thatcher at the table to get her signature on what would become a historic piece of paper. The Secretary murmured that Prime Minister Premadasa would be very appreciative if the card could be signed. She obliged immediately with a typical, "Of course. How forgetful of me!"

Many years later, after this generous gift had been put to good use and the waters of the Mahaweli Ganga tamed at Victoria below Kandy, Margaret Thatcher visited Sri Lanka to take part in the inauguration of the headworks. She was honoured exceptionally, as a Head of Government, by being accorded a reception in the new Parliament at Sri



In the above paragraph Bradman Weerakoon states that J.R. Jayewardene had decided to dissolve Parliament prior to the conclusion of the presidential elections. This is an blatant lie, and Bradman knows it. Jayewardene's decision to dissolve parliament was made long after Premadasa was chosen as the Presidential candidate. The dissolution of Parliament, which Premadasa strongly opposed (because he wanted to make use of the UNP's two-thirds parliamentary majority after his election as president), was announced by Jayewardene in mid-December 1988, just a few days prior to the Presidential election on the 18th.

#### **Was Premadasa the only available presidential candidate?**

Those in the UNP and even the public know how utterly false Premadasa's assertion is. It is a lie that can emanate only from Premadasa's power-crazy, egotistic and sick mind. The true story, in a nutshell, is as follows.

A new President had to take office by February 4th, 1989. Presidential elections therefore had to be held before that. It is true that the incumbent President (J.R. Jayewardene) was toying with the idea of going in for another (third) term. For him to do this Parliament would have had to pass a constitutional amendment because the Constitution restricts the term of office of a President to two terms. Although Jayewardene had the two-thirds majority in Parliament necessary to effect the amendment, there were other considerations.

At that time (August–September 1988) when these issues were being finalised J.R. Jayewardene's popularity in the country was at an all-time low. He was old (82 years). Public opinion on the Indo–Lanka Accord was said to have gone against him.

He had agreed (pending a referendum) to a merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces to form a single council. The Indian Army was on Sri Lankan soil and the JVP had used this fact to instill a reign of fear and terror in many parts of the country. Accordingly, the consensus among the UNP Ministers, parliamentarians and even the rank file was that Jayewardene would not win a third term. "JR" himself, quite independently came to the same conclusion.

Then arose the question, "Who should be the UNP's presidential candidate?" It was at this point that Premadasa invented this great lie that there were no candidates who were willing to come forward and that all the other UNP leaders "were shivering in their boots."

The term "shivering in their boots" was the English translation of Premadasa's throne speech to Parliament on September 24th, 1991. The original sinhala words he used read "Oyagolla wewula wewula bayawela sitiya." A literal translation should read "they were shivering and frightened."

To whom was Premadasa referring when he uttered these words on 24th September 1991? Undoubtedly it was Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake. These two were regarded as leading Ministers in the Jayewardene Government and they were truly the only other contenders for the Presidential nomination in 1988.

Everyone in the UNP hierarchy knew that once Jayewardene finally decided not to stand for a third term, both Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake would be very keen to enter the race for the candidacy. Thus, the contest for the UNP Presidential nomination in late 1988 was divided between

three contenders –Premadasa, Athulathmudali and Dissanayake. But all three of them knew that to win, the ultimate choice had to be unanimous and had to have the support of the other two who failed to get the nomination.

By way of seniority in the Party Prime Minister Premadasa had the best claim. Next in seniority came Gamini Dissanayake while Lalith Athulathmudali had built an image for himself as Minister of National Security and had also been injured in the Parliamentary bomb attack by the JVP in 1987.

Premadasa soon let it be known that he would not agree to seek the nomination unless he was the unanimous and the single choice of the UNP and unless all possible contenders supported him. Ultimately, Jayewardene was able to persuade Dissanayake and Athulathmudali to stand aside as he argued: "If Premadasa does not get the nomination now, he will make it look as if he has been discriminated against because of his caste." Premadasa was delighted by this compromise, which was exactly what he wanted, and eventually his candidacy was proposed by J.R. Jayewardene and seconded by both Gamini Dissanayake and Lalith Athulathmudali.

It is a diabolical lie for Premadasa to now say that in December 1988 the UNP could not come up with anyone other than himself to contest the presidential elections; that the entire UNP looked to him as the saviour of the Party and democracy. This is a load of rubbish, as Premadasa himself well knows. But Premadasa thinks that if he keeps on repeating the lie, history will eventually write it his way.

The first time that Premadasa made this assertion publicly was after his "Impeachment." Prior to that he had not said it. Both

Gamini Dissanayake and Lalith Athulathmudali have at several public meetings refuted this lie. They have reiterated the fact that both of them were quite willing to, and in fact did offer themselves as candidates to contest the Presidential elections for the UNP. These refutations and the correct position as stated by Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake, have not been published in the Lake House group of newspapers because Premadasa will never permit such a view to be published. However, they have been reported in the independent newspapers like the *Island* and the *Sunday Times*.

Prior to the "Impeachment" only one other official government publication stated that Premadasa was UNP's only Presidential nominee. This was a publication entitled *The 9th Parliament of Sri Lanka* published by the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd, which is completely controlled by Premadasa himself. Ironically, page 9 of that publication, which was issued about the time of the Impeachment, states as follows:

The UNP realised that the only man who could lead it to victory was Premadasa who had the national image, grit and determination as well as the physical courage to face an election where the candidates ran the real risk of assassination. Ironically, two other contenders for the UNP ticket for the Presidency jostled eventually to sponsor Mr Premadasa who was his party's unanimous choice.

The last sentence of the above statement is once again a continuation of the lie. The "two contenders" are not named but refer, no doubt, to Gamini Dissanayake and Lalith Athulathmudali. To state that they "jostled eventually to sponsor Mr Premadasa" is a deliberate untruth no doubt

inserted into this book on the specific direction of Premadasa himself. The word "jostle" has obvious connotations – but no such thing happened. Once Premadasa was decided upon as the candidate, it was agreed beforehand that the two other contenders (Gamini and Lalith) would second Premadasa's name that was to be proposed by J.R. Jayewardene. There was no question of "jostling" to do so. This is typical Premadasa style of ridiculing his past colleagues who refused to bow down to him and serve him menially like some other Cabinet Ministers continue to do.

#### **An event to show how small-minded Premadasa is.**

In the same way that Premadasa now says that he was the only candidate the UNP had for the Presidential election of December 1988, he also boasts that it is he and his persuasion and efforts that resulted in the grant of British aid of over £100 million for the construction of the Victoria Dam in the Mahaweli development programme. Both stories, ably spread by Premadasa, are diabolical lies. We now deal with Premadasa's boast that he got British funds for the Victoria Project.

After the J.R. Jayewardene government assumed office in July 1977, the World Bank and other investment aid agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recommended to donor countries that Sri Lanka be given foreign financial assistance to implement many of its development programmes. Western countries had confidence in the Jayewardene government and its efforts to develop the country. This was the main reason for their agreeing to give aid to Sri Lanka.

The largest post-1978 development project was the Mahaweli scheme, of which the Victoria Dam (near Kandy) was one of

the major components. The dam, which was completed in 1984, rises 400 ft. from the river bed. It is nearly as high as the Sigiriya rock as seen from the Matale plains. The total cost of construction of the Victoria Dam was about £137 million of which £110 million sterling pounds was total grant aid from England.

As to how this huge amount of aid from Britain was obtained for the Victoria Dam is now well documented. A booklet that gives a brief but authoritative account is *Glimpses of Mahaweli*, published in 1985 to commemorate the completion of the Victoria multi-purpose reservoir project. Printed by Lake House Printers & Publishers, the booklet was issued by the Ministry of Mahaweli Development.

The one foreign individual to whom Sri Lanka should be most grateful for mobilising British aid for the Victoria project is the late Judith Hart, who was Minister for Overseas Development in the Labour Party government. On page 14 of *Glimpses of the Mahaweli*, Judith Hart recalls how the Victoria project came to be funded by England:

"I remember so well the first beginnings. My policy as Minister for Overseas Development was to find ways of helping the poorest. Most of the poor in the Third World struggle to make a living on the land. They need many things – roads, expertise, schools and clinics. But fundamental is the need for water and power for irrigation to make the dry lands fertile.

Your Ministers came to see me. I vividly recall how they sat and told me in my office in London of their plans for the dam. "Can Britain help?" they asked. I



saw it at once as right for our Aid Programme, for it would bring water and power to help the poor people in a poor country. That is its purpose.

*It was and is the largest single project ever undertaken by Britain.* I have always called it my first Jumbo Project – and how appropriate that is for the country of the elephant. Minister Gamini Dissanayake will remember that my Cabinet colleagues agreed that it should go ahead and that I told him that Britain would go ahead with the Victoria Dam whether or not the World Bank and other countries joined in other stages of the scheme. Our British engineers were very quickly in Sri Lanka and the real work began. You have worked so fast and so well and now here it is, a reality."

But then something happened, the Labour government in which Judith Hart was Minister for Overseas Development, was defeated and Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister as leader of the Conservative Party. The question arose as to whether the new Conservative government would honour the Labour government's earlier pledge to aid the Victoria project.

Former Sri Lankan Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel picks up the story. He says (*Glimpses of the Mahaweli*, p. 22) "It was the Labour Government in Britain that decided to fund the Victoria Dam. But when the Labour Party government in England was replaced by the Conservative Party government of Prime Minister Mrs Margaret Thatcher, the question arose whether the new government would continue with the promised grant for the Victoria Dam. I met the British Ministers several times and in the end convinced them that Britain should

support the Victoria Project. *After twenty months of negotiations*, Britain finally agreed to give an outright grant of 100 million Sterling pounds."

It is without doubt therefore that it was the personal efforts of Mahaweli Minister Gamini Dissanayake and Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel that were responsible for negotiating this huge grant of over £100 million to construct the Victoria Dam. A number of senior officials of the Mahaweli and Finance Ministries were also involved in the aid negotiations which, as Ronnie de Mel confirms, took nearly twenty months.

The announcement of the final decision by Britain was however, made by Prime Minister Thatcher to Premadasa when he represented Sri Lanka at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Lusaka, Zambia in July 1979.

At this meeting, Mrs Thatcher, in a gracious mood, sent Premadasa a note saying that British aid for the Victoria Dam of the Mahaweli Programme had been finalised and would definitely be given. It was a mere formality, but Premadasa now uses this event to boast that it was he (Premadasa) who negotiated this entire aid package from Britain. His *Felicitations Volume* expressly states:

"July 1979 – attends Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Lusaka, Zambia and negotiates major aid programme for the Accelerated Mahaweli Project with the British Prime Minister culminating in British co-operation in the construction of the Victoria Dam.

To carry this false boast further, Bradman Weerakoon in his biography of Premadasa gives the following account at pp 50-51:

In 1978, soon after the government was formed, President Jayewardene had approached the Labour Government in Britain for funding of the Victoria Dam, one of the five projects of the Mahaweli Scheme. The preliminary approvals had been given. But soon thereafter Harold Wilson's Labour Government fell. The Conservative Government of Mrs. Thatcher facing an economic crunch were not looking at Overseas Development Aid that favourably. It was then that Premadasa decided to put on the pressure. On the way to CHOGM, he first stopped in London. Seeking the customary courtesy call on the Prime Minister (which was in his case invariably granted) he met Mrs. Thatcher and Lord Carrington at her No 10 Office and pleaded the case for Victoria. Thatcher was impressed with the way he put it. But try as he might, he could make no real progress in London.

Premadasa knew he was going to have a further chance of meeting Margaret Thatcher in Lusaka. Thatcher was under extreme pressure at CHOGM and the frontline states, Zambia, Tanzania and Kenya, in particular, were cornering her for quickening the pace of Zimbabwe's independence. Premadasa worked behind the scenes and at the Conference table to work for a compromise acceptable to Britain. He moved closely with Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. The seating order around the table helped, since the alphabetical order put Sri Lanka and Tanzania together. Mrs. Thatcher was mindful of the support Sri Lanka gave during the meeting.

Each delegation had been provided with a comfortable villa in the Mulungushi enclave, specially prepared for the CHOGM delegates. There was a good deal of inter-villa

entertainment and Premadasa invited Mrs. Thatcher to lunch with him, along with a few others on the third day of the Conference. Although she was indisposed that day, Mrs. Thatcher came for the lunch. On leaving, she handed Premadasa a little card—the size of a post card—on which were typed these words:

*Prime Minister to Premadasa*

SRI LANKA

I am glad to be able to tell you that we are now in a position to offer a UK contribution to the Victoria Dam Scheme. This would be in the form of a grant of up to £100 million over six years towards the costs of the design and construction of the Dam and power station. It would, of course, be subject to normal UK grant conditions.

*Margaret Thatcher*

*Lusaka 6<sup>th</sup> May 1979*

Once again his faithful servant (and now biographer) Bradman Weerakoon has helped Premadasa to *try* to make a truth out of a lie.

It is on record that Premadasa did *not* meet Margaret Thatcher in London on his way to Lusaka to discuss British funding for the Mahaweli project. The aid negotiations were taking place between officials of the British government and the Mahaweli and Finance Ministries of Sri Lanka. All that Premadasa in fact did was to play the role that he himself says he played in the J.R. Jayewardene government, that of a *peon*. He merely took delivery of a note from the British Prime Minister that British aid for the Victoria project was confirmed.

On the other hand, Bradman Weerakoon's account shows how Premadasa's mind works. The British Prime Minister had handed him a note, but Premadasa noticed that it was a typewritten note – with nothing to indicate or confirm that it was personally from her. Upon receiving the original note (in memo style as is usual in British government and parliamentary practice), Premadasa read it, left his seat at the meeting and walked up to Mrs Thatcher. One might have expected him to have poured out expressions of a nation's profuse gratitude. But he did not. He merely handed her a pen and asked if she would be kind enough to address the note to him and sign it. Members of the Sri Lanka delegation who witnessed this say that Thatcher was visibly taken aback. She retained the note, conferred with her officials and sent it on to Premadasa some moments later. According to these witnesses, it was very clear from Thatcher's attitude that she was surprised by Premadasa's departure from protocol. It was equally clear that she could not recall the name of her Sri Lankan counterpart, and one of her aides was seen spelling it

out to her so she could write it correctly.

Premadasa is now using this document to show that it was he who negotiated this British aid package for Sri Lanka. A web of lies such as this can be woven only by an artful craftsman of falsehood such as Ranasinghe Premadasa. The ever-faithful Bradman Weerakoon has, as usual, unhesitatingly lent his name and reputation (such as it is) to add credibility to this fabrication.

### **J.R. Jayewardene's organization of the UNP after Dudley Senanayake's death**

On Dudley Senanayake's death in April 1973, J.R. Jayewardene became the leader of the UNP. With his great organizational skill J.R. soon got down to the task of making the UNP the most popular party in the country. He had a difficult political environment in which to do so. Premadasa played an important part in assisting Jayewardene to make the UNP the strongest political party in the island by 1977. The political events of that period are yet well within the memory of most readers of this text and need not be recounted here.

### **Premadasa becomes the Deputy Leader of the UNP**

Towards the middle of 1976 it became increasingly clear that general elections would have to be held very soon. Mrs Bandaranaike's government had become increasingly unpopular primarily because of her restrictive, leftist economic policies which resulted in shortages of essentials such as food, clothing, fuel and educational materials. Her abysmal human rights record also contributed to her growing unpopularity, considerably assisted by her folly in nationalising Lake House and sealing the *Dawasa* newspaper group.



A few months prior to the general election of July 1977, at a meeting of all the UNP candidates who were to contest the forthcoming General Elections and who had been summoned to Sri Kotha, J.R. Jayewardene in his usual style pulled a rabbit out of his hat. He suddenly asked that the General Secretary of the Party (at that time Daham Wimalasena) to distribute ballot papers to all those present. J.R. then asked all present to cast their ballot and vote for the individuals whom the entire group of UNP candidates considered to be the most popular and acceptable leaders of the UNP next to J.R. himself who was the leader. By asking the candidates to cast their ballot without prior warning or canvassing, J.R. Jayewardene wanted to test the inner feelings as to the individuals who commanded respect and leadership within the Party and thus in the country as a whole. The result of this sudden and secret ballot was not surprising. Its outcome was the selection of the most popular leaders of the UNP next to its leader J.R. Jayewardene. Premadasa topped the ballot by receiving 118 votes and Gamini Dissanayake came next with 110 votes. This secret ballot effectively anointed Premadasa as Deputy Leader of the UNP at the General Election which were held in July 1977. The outcome of the elections was not in doubt. Everyone knew that the UNP would win. What was surprising was the huge landslide - 141 out of 168 seats. The SLFP of Mrs Bandaranaike was decimated and reduced to 18 seats. The Leftist parties were routed and their leaders, like Dr N.M. Perera and Dr Colvin R. de Silva lost badly and had to bid good bye to national politics.

#### **Premadasa's conduct on accepting the Presidential Nomination on 10 October 1988**

Elsewhere in this book we dealt with the lie that Premadasa is spreading that he was the only candidate the UNP had to put

forward for the Presidential election of December 1988. According to Premadasa all the other so called leaders of the UNP were "shivering in their boots" and were frightened to come forward and contest.

We have shown that the truth of the matter was just the opposite. Both the Mahaweli and Lands Minister, Gamini Dissanayake and the Minister of National Security, Lalith Athulathmudali were ready and willing to be the UNP's Presidential candidate. But everyone knew that any fighting and division within the UNP would be disastrous at this time. They all knew that the UNP candidate for the Presidential election had to be a unanimous choice. In this background, both Gamini Dissanayake and Lalith Athulathmudali conceded the nomination to Premadasa for two main reasons. Firstly, Premadasa was more senior than either of them. Secondly, they wanted to ensure a unanimous choice so that the UNP could win the elections. Accordingly, as stated earlier, Premadasa's name as Presidential candidate was proposed at a Working Committee meeting of the Party by J.R. Jayewardene and seconded by both Gamini Dissanayake and Lalith Athulathmudali.

Thereafter Premadasa should have immediately begun his official campaign. But, possibly because of astrology and the interpretation of his horoscope, Premadasa decided to go on an official visit to China as Prime Minister. The Chinese visit was in September 1988 and Premadasa, the UNP Presidential candidate returned to Sri Lanka about the end of Sep' 1988.

On 10th October, 1988, at a massive rally at Sugathadasa Stadium in Colombo, of all island leaders and supporters of the UNP, Premadasa started his official campaign for Presidency.

It was at this meeting that incumbent President J.R. Jayewardene paid a glowing tribute to Premadasa and gave several reasons why he was the unanimous choice of the UNP for President. In the best traditions of Parliamentary politics, both Gamini Dissanayake and Lalith Athulathmudali also endorsed J.R. Jayewardene's statements and told the UNP supporters gathered at Sugathadasa Stadium that "Together we will ensure a victory for Premadasa on 18th December, 1988." Ranjan Wijeratne, who was then in charge of the Party as its General Secretary also paid a tribute to Premadasa and said that the Party would ensure his victory.

Thereafter, Premadasa rose and outlined his carefully prepared presidential manifesto. This had some general reference to his poverty alleviation programmes now popularly known as "Janasaviya." Premadasa then dropped a bombshell. While explaining the future policies and programmes he would implement if elected President, Premadasa made three astonishing statements as part of his election pledge:

First, he would immediately after his election take steps to send back the Indian troops (the Indian Peace Keeping Force inducted following the 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord) from Sri Lanka.

Second, that he would take steps to replace the Indo-Lanka accord signed between J.R. Jayewardene and Rajiv Gandhi, with a new Indo-Lanka friendship treaty (the Indians have politely ignored or sidestepped several overtures from Premadasa on this issue).

Third, that he would ensure that there would be no possible merger between the Northern and Eastern Provinces as

indicated in the Indo-Lanka Accord, and to which President Jayewardene had agreed temporarily, pending formal determination by a referendum (as this has yet to happen the temporary merger still stands.)

All the UNP leaders present were taken by complete surprise. It is said that when J.R. Jayewardene heard these pledges of Premadasa's his face went pale and ashen. He was astounded. Indeed, he had been tricked by the very Prime Minister whom he himself had nominated as his party's candidate for the Presidency.

Premadasa had given no earlier indication to Jayewardene that he was going to negate the bold steps his Leader had taken just one year previously.

Jayewardene was both shocked and surprised. He had two more months to serve as President but there was nothing he could do at that moment or later, to contradict what Premadasa had publicly stated. Moreover, many of the delegates at the Sugathadasa stadium (orchestrated by Premadasa loyalists) applauded the Three Pledges. "Sponsored applause" is a Premadasa specialty. Applause and cheering at his public speeches as are predictable as the electronic applause of the less amusing BBC sitcoms. This was vintage Premadasa. Even in his formal acceptance of the UNP's nomination, he was able to be disloyal to his leader and had ridiculed Jayewardene by pledging that he would undo the very things that JR had done just one year ago.

What Premadasa did on 10th October, 1988, at Sugathadasa Stadium was characteristic of the man. Premadasa is only for Premadasa. Nothing else matters. He knew that Mrs

Bandaranaike, who had already started her campaign as the SLFP Presidential candidate had pledged to take all the three steps that he himself now pledged to take on 10th October at the UNP sessions at Sugathadasa Stadium. Although he was disloyal to his Leader by these three pledges, Premadasa had taken "the wind out of the sails" of Mrs Bandaranaike's campaign. The SLFP's main themes were

- (1) Abolish the Indo Lanka Accord of July 1987;
- (2) Expel the Indian Army in Sri Lanka from Sri Lankan soil;
- (3) Prevent any permanent amalgamation of the Northern and eastern Provinces as required by the Accord.

Now, on 10th October, at Sugathadasa Stadium, Premadasa had also pledged himself to implement the same three pledges. Mrs Bandaranaike was now left to abandon these three major issues and to find other issues to defeat Premadasa. It was a bold stroke, typical of Premadasa. Gratitude and loyalty to Jayewardene was unimportant. What was important was Premadasa's victory at the polls on 18 December 1988.

#### **No individualism under Premadasa**

One of the established principles of human nature is the desire to be appreciated. Appreciation can only come from others. Many national leaders have been successful because they were able to motivate others to work for them. But to motivate others you have first to be willing to see the other man's point of view and see things from his angle as well as your own. A successful political leader has said, "I consider my ability to arouse enthusiasm among men as the greatest asset I possess.

The way to develop the best in man is by appreciation and encouragement. There is nothing else that quickly kills motivation in a person as criticisms and lack of appreciation by his superiors."

Each individual, especially in an educated country like Sri Lanka, has a desire to feel important. Everyone wishes to feel that he or she has contributed ideas and views and wants to feel his importance in whatever work he is engaged in. However humble one's circumstances may be, this is a human desire. As Britain's well-known Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli once said, "Talk to a man about himself and he will listen for hours."

President Premadasa, despite all his experience and his so-called wisdom and ability, lacks these qualities. He has become a solo performer. As everyone, including himself says, he has become a *One-man Show*. The Cabinet of Ministers are ignored. They have been relegated to the position of rubber stamps. The only views that prevail today in government are Premadasa's. He is the oracle – the last word – on all matters. He decides when and where who should speak, and what should be said. He next decides who should speak before and after him and also what the other speakers should say. He personally draws up the agenda for every public meeting he attends.

All sense of individualism has been destroyed by Premadasa. Other Cabinet Ministers, however senior and knowledgeable, are not encouraged to express their opinions and views. The public administration service has also been frightened into utter submissiveness. Educated, talented, trained and experienced public servants now remain silent rather than present a view



that may not find favour with "H.E." They all await directives and orders from the Presidential Secretariat. They will not act on their own initiative.

A good example is the Finance Minister's annual budget speech. Years of Parliamentary tradition are now ignored. The budget speech is drafted by Paskaralingam, Premadasa's confidant and Finance Secretary, and also Premadasa's Secretary as the Minister for Policy Planning. The speech is given to the Finance Minister only on the day on which he is to present it to Parliament. The Finance Minister is given absolutely no knowledge of the contents of the Budget speech in advance. By doing this, Premadasa has destroyed a well established Parliamentary procedure and practice. He has made the Finance Minister's Budget speech – perhaps the most important in Parliamentary government – a big joke.

Another example is the public disgrace that senior cabinet minister Festus Perera faced when Premadasa blasted him in front of more than 200 public officials. When Festus Perera, as Minister of Public Administration, stated that there was a delay in establishing Provincial Secretariats, Premadasa, who was chairing the meeting, pounced on him, saying, "If you can't do this, I will," implying that Perera was qualifying for dismissal from the cabinet. The humiliation was painful because it was done publicly, in front of the Minister's entire staff at a national conference.

Premadasa is so engrossed with his own importance. There is no subject he does not know. There is no topic on which he cannot speak. His speeches are long. They are all sermons and lectures – always talking down to his audience as if they were children listening to Santa Claus. Does not Premadasa realise

that his audiences are invariably 'forced'? They have not come of their own free will. All occasions at which Premadasa delivers his 'sermons' are government-organized functions. Often the function is followed by a musical entertainment, where popular and well-known artists and singers (paid for by the government) are brought from Colombo. In order to listen to the musical entertainment, the audience has to first suffer in silence and listen to Premadasa. He goes on and on, lecturing to them on every possible subject that comes to his mind. He talks politics most of the time but mixes religion and culture with politics. He has memorized a few key stanzas of the *Dhammapada* (Buddhist scripture) and now repeats them *ad infinitum* in every speech he makes.

Every government function at which Premadasa speaks (such as the recent opening of garment factories) has been converted into an election meeting – an election campaign. After Premadasa – one of his biggest stooges – Ossie Abeygunesekera a former Opposition Party leader, takes over and continues the political harangue. The task entrusted to Ossie Abeygunesekera by Premadasa is to sling mud at Premadasa's political opponents. Other senior UNP Ministers are ignored. They are not given an opportunity to be heard. The agenda and the list of speakers are carefully checked by Premadasa and the order of speakers is also controlled by him. Premadasa will even go to the extent of deciding the seating arrangements and the exact position where the lectern should be and how the microphones and the loud speakers should be situated. Some foolish people who stooze Premadasa think that this minute attention to such little details on Premadasa's part is a sign of his greatness and ability. But in actual fact it shows how small minded Premadasa is. He cannot trust or rely on others to attend to such things. This is because he never

permits them to decide. He destroys all sense of individualism in those around him and expects them to give leadership in governing a nation. It is equally a symptom of his inability to envision larger issues.

To continue the story about Premadasa's lectures at state-controlled and stage-managed functions, the same evening the lecture is delivered, the whole event is shown on Rupavahini in all three languages (Sinhala, Tamil and English). Every day the people of Sri Lanka are forced to see him and hear him on Rupavahini. Television viewers would love to see some worthwhile programmes instead, but this is denied them. The continuous sight and sound of the President is nauseating, but viewers have no choice except to turn off the television.

The *Rupavahini* performance is then continued on state-controlled radio through the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and Premadasa's entire speech is then broadcast over and over again. As in the case of television, the only option for listeners is to turn their radio sets off. Radio listeners and television viewers are so disgusted that many, including small children say, "Here comes the *Kanu Kata* (Dirty Mouth)," when Premadasa appears on television or Radio.

#### **A contribution about Premadasa by a well-wisher.**

At this point, we ourselves do not wish to sound like Premadasa. So we will take a break and give our readers another viewpoint written in another's language. Here we quote a contribution by a well-known journalist about Premadasa's life experience.

R. Premadasa first came into the UNP's national politics in 1956 when the UNP, after it's electoral rout, wanted speakers who could attack and vilify S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. Premadasa himself had been fielded as a UNP candidate in the impossibly difficult seat of Ruanwella against Dr N.M. Perera and, predictably, had been defeated. By about 1958 S.W.R.D. had become very unpopular mostly due to his indecisiveness, divisiveness within the party, the mounting racial tensions and the deteriorating economy. On the debris of this failure, the UNP mounted a campaign against the MEP Government and after the removal of Phillip Gunawardene and William Silva from the cabinet, it was very clear that it was only a matter of time before the government fell. It was a government that was drifting without any purpose.

Until the UNP mounted this campaign Premadasa was another minor politician hanging around at Sirikotha. He contested a municipal ward in the Hulftsdorp area, and lost to L.W. Panditha of the Communist Party. Thereafter, this man who claims to be a symbol of the Common Man, was given nomination by J.R. Jayewardene and Dudley Senanayake to the Cinnamon Gardens Ward, which he won at a by-election. Thus, one of Premadasa's early representative offices was obtained through the patronage of the voters of Cinnamon Gardens, home of Colombo's social elite.

Premadasa got into the national campaign mounted by the UNP against S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. The Party hierarchy thought him suitable only as an entertainer. Soon he became arguably the best and ablest political entertainers on the UNP platform.

His speeches had a set pattern. He would refer to S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike as *Sevalaya*, *Sevala Banda*, and *Pana Nethi Eka*

(a man without a backbone). However, it was this same S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike that Premadasa had invited to be the chief guest at the celebration of the first and second anniversary of his *Sucharita Movement* in 1940 and 1941. He would also refer to Duncan de Alwis and allude to a close relationship between him and Mrs Bandaranaike. The vulgarity of these statements were a rich source of political amusement at the time. On average, Premadasa would speak for about one hour – all jokes, and light-hearted or vulgar banter. His obsession with providing music, dance and song to political audiences started with this experience of his.

One of his favourite stories was about a king who appointed a donkey as his Prime Minister. The king had wanted to know from his cabinet of ministers when the rains would fall. Nobody could provide an answer. Finally one amongst the ministers started to predict accurately the onset of the rains. The king asked the minister one day what his secret was. The minister explained that he had a donkey in his house who throws its hind legs up, looks at the sky and brays whenever rains are due. In this way the minister could accurately forecast the weather. The King had thereupon stated that he will appoint the donkey to be his Prime Minister as the donkey performed the most useful task for him. Seated in the Prime Ministers chair in Parliament, Premadasa would ask, "Is this why Bandaranaike, like the Donkey, was also appointed by the King!"

Premadasa went round the country with the UNP team ridiculing and lampooning S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike until his assassination in September 1959.

In March 1960 he was nominated by the UNP to contest Colombo Central and was elected third MP. In July 1960, he lost the seat. He was beaten to fourth place in the three-member constituency. Sir Razik Fareed, Pieter Keunaman and Falil Cafoor were elected. In 1965 he won Colombo Central once more and was elected second MP, next to Falil Cafoor. His Parliamentary career started after this, in 1965. In 1970 he succeeded as the First MP and retained this position with a huge majority in the July 1977 general elections.

The speech that Premadasa made in Parliament when he was first elected in March 1960 is worthy of mention. Here he stated that if Mrs Sirima Bandaranaike, who had just started to campaign for the SLFP (after the assassination of her husband), won the elections, Parliament would have to employ a special employee to clean the chair she sat on (the PM's chair) every month. This low reference to the menstrual periods of the world's first "lady prime minister-to-be" resulted in his being shouted down violently by the Opposition. Even Dudley Senanayake made it known that he was very angry about this speech. But Premadasa's speech showed the true breeding of the man. "Cleaning the chair every month" was in fact a reference to a caste – perhaps unintended and psychological – the role of a Dhoby. Why did Premadasa choose this particular reference? He should best know the answer to it.

Within the UNP itself, Premadasa was always in the centre of intrigue. He was largely responsible for the Dudley-JR clash, sneaking on, and carrying tales, to both of them. It is said that J.R. Jayewardene got Premadasa assaulted twice. Once he was hit with a slipper at Sirikotha by Rane Adikari, the present Minister's wife who was then a clerk at Sirikotha. On another occasion he was severely mauled by one Punchihewa and a



group of UNP Youth Leaguers at the Ratmalana airport when Dudley Senanayake arrived from England and Premadasa was also there to receive him. It is also said that when Dudley Senanayake died, Premadasa was performing *hooniyam* (ritual curse) against him in India (Premadasa was carrying on a campaign called *Purawesi Peramuna* against the UNP at the time). When he visited Dudley's house, "Woodlands" to pay his respects to the body of the dead leader he was physically threatened and hooted by the UNP supporters there.

#### **The Job Bank of the UNP: a Premadasa proposal**

Premadasa now maintains that jobs and employment must be given on merit and not on political grounds. Firstly, there has been very little generation of employment after Premadasa became Executive President in January 1989. Premadasa's presidency failed to generate the huge development and employment-friendly projects that were initiated under President Jayewardene from 1978-1988, such as the Mahaweli development scheme and the Free Trade Zone. Premadasa's main programme has been *Janasaviya*, which did not create employment but gave a dole or a free wage to those already unemployed. The only jobs created by Premadasa have been the garment factory employment – mainly for young girls. With not more than 500 per factory and with 100 factories established so far, not more than 50,000 jobs have been created by these garment factories (not counting the jobs lost at factories that closed down *because* of the 200-factory project). Apart from this project, the only other major jobs created by Premadasa have been among school teachers: about 30,000.

Thus it is clear that the Premadasa Presidency from January 1989 will be remembered as a period of unemployment and spiralling cost of living. The Jayewardene era softened and

reduced the impact on the masses of increases in cost of living by generating more employment in each family. More people got employment in each family or household. This additional employment generated more income and thus more money for each family to meet cost of living increases. But this has not been so under Premadasa.

Apart from highlighting the absence of Employment generation under Premadasa, it is noteworthy that it was this same man, who now talks of "employment on merit only," who introduced the (in)famous Job Bank scheme of the J.R. Jayewardene government. Many people still think that the Job Bank was Jayewardene's idea. It was not. The original cabinet paper formulating the Job Bank scheme was put up by Premadasa in 1978, when he was Prime Minister and Minister of Local Government, Housing and Construction. Premadasa will not deny this because this fact can be verified by the relevant documents and minutes in the Cabinet office. So, like the oil petition which was a joke, the Job Bank scheme which ignored merit and first gave jobs to UNP supporters was also one of Premadasa's proposals and ideas. Today, he has conveniently forgotten this fact when he talks of employment only on merit. This is another example of the double game he plays so often. However, Premadasa must not forget that there are good students of history who are capable of exposing the skeletons in his cupboard.

#### **Premadasa's crude speeches**

As stated earlier, Premadasa's early recognition and rise in UNP politics was really due to the fact that he was a very able Sinhala orator. His temple education had bequeathed him a rich vocabulary. He had mastered a simplicity of style, delivery and cadence easily understood and attractive to ordinary folk. In

Dudley Sananayake's UNP since 1952, Premadasa was regarded as the Party's best "mob orator." But the Party hierarchy and the audience looked to Premadasa not only for humorous utterances, but also for vulgar ones.

Premadasa was carried away, and got used to the habit of making crude remarks which usually evoke the mirth of the baser elements of society. But this style came ultimately to be resented by most people, especially as he became more senior in the Party and older. In addition to his remarks on Mrs Bandaranaike's menstrual periods referred to earlier, Premadasa's tongue achieved particular notoriety as a result of two individuals he had particular cause to dislike, Anura Bandaranaike and Upali Wijewardena.

As Prime Minister, Premadasa went out of his way, shielding himself with parliamentary privilege, to make disparaging statements about Anura Bandaranaike's paternity, thereby not only insulting Bandaranaike but also his mother, Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike. To cast aspersions on Anura Bandaranaike's paternity necessarily implies infidelity on the part of Mrs Bandaranaike, who was married to S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike.

Again in Parliament itself, Premadasa openly cursed Upali Wijewardena only a few weeks before Wijewardena disappeared on 13th of February 1983 in his Lear Jet on his return to Sri Lanka from Malaysia. Without mincing words, Premadasa castigated Upali Wijewardena adding that those who oppose him (Premadasa) are cursed. Premadasa's speech in Parliament as Prime Minister is reported in *Hansard* of 24th December 1982 on pp. 2253-2255. Having attacked Upali Wijewardena for allegedly carrying on a campaign against him in his newspapers (*Island* and *Divaina*), Premadasa said:

"I categorically state that Upali Wijewardena will soon get the treatment he deserves and learn a bitter lesson. He has exhausted my patience. I cannot wait any longer. He does not know me. Until now I was silent. In future he should be careful. What I have said I have not failed to implement. Any person whom I have cursed has never survived. I am also not a person who says one thing and does just the opposite. My warning to Upali Wijewardena is not only directed to him but to the entire society and class to which he belongs."

This attack by Premadasa on Upali Wijewardena has been eloquently commented upon by Denzil Peiris (the former Editor of the *Observer*) in the *Saudi Gazette* of July 2, 1983 in an article under the heading "The curse that killed a tycoon."

#### **Premadasa's influence over the media**

Of all Sri Lanka's political leaders since Independence in 1948, Premadasa knows and appreciates the colossal power of the media. Sri Lanka has one of the highest rates of literacy in Asia. Free education since 1944 has been the main reason for this. While newspapers and radio are the most important, since 1981 when television was introduced, *Rupavahini* and ITN have had a great impact on the minds and opinions of the people – especially the rural people who look to television for relaxation, entertainment and amusement.

Even when he was Prime Minister, Premadasa tried to control the media by having his "special people" installed in the Lake House newspapers, SLBC and even *Rupavahini*. President Jayewardene was aware of this and did his best to prevent or at least reduce Premadasa's growing influence over the state-controlled media. It is well known that as Prime Minister,

Premadasa gave houses to journalists who looked after his interests and also had special media units attached to him paid for by the Ministries and Corporations under him.

Although during the Presidential election campaign of December 1988, Premadasa hoodwinked the masses by claiming that he was only a *peon* in the Jayewardene government, as Prime Minister he wielded immense power. J.R. Jayewardene seldom interfered except in the rare instances in which he felt that Premadasa was going way too far. When Jayewardene contested the Presidency in October 1982 and again campaigned for the referendum of December 1982, Premadasa organised a separate campaign to show that next to J.R., he was the supreme leader in Sri Lanka. There were as many books and magazines, badges, caps and other propaganda and promotional literature about Premadasa as there were about Jayewardene, who was then President. Even his opponents readily concede that Premadasa's propaganda machine was exceedingly well managed.

After he became Executive President on 2nd January 1989, Premadasa went to extremes in promoting his ego, establishing an image as the best political leader Sri Lanka ever had. He put his stooges in to Lake House, *Rupavahini* and the SLBC. Bodinagoda was replaced as chairman Lake House by a lawyer, Sunil Rodrigo – a staunch Premadasa supporter and a close friend of Sirisena Cooray. Edward Goonewardena, a retired Deputy Inspector General of Police was put in charge of security and personnel at Lake House. Goonewardene was a disgrace to the Police. He had had to resign from the force because of an incident in which he himself had written an anonymous petition and pretended that it had been written by JVP sympathisers in the Colombo University. He had then

raided the University to win the recognition of President Jayewardene. His boss, IGP Cyril Herath however, knew Edward Goonewardena better. Cyril Herath noticed the similarity in the handwriting in the anonymous petition and that in Edward Goonewardena's personal file. The handwriting experts of the police also confirmed that they matched. Herath's suspicions were proved right when Edward Goonewardena later admitted that he himself had written the petition and falsely accused the university students. In the wake of the resulting public outcry, Goonewardena had to retire in disgrace. It was such a person that Premadasa appointed to one of the top jobs at Lake House. Premadasa is safe in such company. Another was H.L.D. Mahindapala, about whom we have written elsewhere in this text.

At SLBC, Premadasa put Hudson Samarasinghe in charge as Chairman. Hudson Samarasinghe no doubt has talent. He contested the general elections of February 1989 calling himself *Punchi Premadasa* (little Premadasa). Samarasinghe has been a Premadasa loyalist for the past 15 years and his main job (apart from being employed as a Sinhala announcer in SLBC) was to act as 'compere" of Premadasa's election meetings and propaganda rallies. Currently, the story is rampant that there is now open warfare between Hudson Samarasinghe and Premadasa's right-hand man Sirisena Cooray. It is interesting to note that while Hudson Samarasinghe remains a favourite of Mrs Hema Premadasa, it is well known that Sirisena Cooray and his wife hate the very name of Hema Premadasa. Immediately her husband became President, Hema Premadasa took steps to have Sirisena Cooray leave the Mayor's residence in Colombo purely because of her personal dislike of the Coorays.



Appointments in the state media have been carefully controlled by Premadasa and the posts of editors of major newspapers and journals such as *Silumina* and *The Observer* were made overlooking all senior and experienced journalists in the newspapers' staff.

By his speeches, Premadasa made it difficult for any political reconciliation in the country, or for a national government. The Lake House newspapers, SLBC and *Rupavahini*, which implicitly follow Premadasa's orders, made the very concept of a national government (to solve the ethnic war) an impossibility.

The state news media pleased their "boss" by publishing manufactured news and commentaries by "ghost writers" like "Lankaputra" and "Anurudha Tilakasiri." Whenever the Premadasa troupe lashed out at his political opponents in Parliament, on stage or through media, they appear to have forgotten the statesman's dictum: "There are no permanent friends or enemies in politics." It is an open secret that the government-controlled media (the Lake House papers, television and radio) have been ordered not to report any news or give any coverage to opposition parties other than ridiculing them and making the public believe that the opposition is in disarray and is full of in-fighting.

After the impeachment motion was announced in late August 1991, Premadasa used the government media to assassinate the characters of his political adversaries in the crudest manner. He even accused, through the media, his rivals of being financed by "Casino Kings," conveniently forgetting the huge donations made by "Casino Kings" to his own "*Sevana*" (=shady!) Fund. Also, as Prime Minister, it was his Ministry of Local

Government that had granted permission for the operation of casinos and jackpot parlours in the City of Colombo and other main cities of the country.

At the State Opening of Parliament on 24th of September 1991 on the eve of the 32nd anniversary of Bandaranaike assassination (25th September), Premadasa compared the threats to his government by the impeachment motion with those of the conspiracies against the government of late S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike. Premadasa will never miss any opportunity to compare himself with great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Anagarika Dharmapala, D.S. Senanayake and D.B. Jayatilaka.

In the address referred to above, he claimed that *Janasaviya* was successful beyond all expectations. Ignoring his elections pledge of giving *Janasaviya* to 1.4 million families from 1989 (by the device of "expanding" it to 11 tranches extending over a decade) the President claimed that 53% of the *Janasaviya* recipients of the first round are now employed (self or otherwise) earning a monthly income of over Rs 1,500. Another 32% were said to earn over Rs 1,000. Only an insignificant minority of 13% was still unable to earn a substantial income. If these statistics are correct, it is a great achievement no doubt. But Premadasa's statistics were never endorsed by even the Central Bank or any independent authority. In fact, he never made known the source of his data!

One glaring example of false publicity was that of the housing targets. A one million house target was announced in 1980. By the time of the Presidential election (1988) this target was claimed to have been exceeded ("beyond all expectations") and a new "target" of 1.5 million houses was announced.

There are 160 electoral divisions in the island. To reach the one million new houses target the average number of houses built in each electorate should be 6,250. Let the people of each electorate, including those of Katana (Raddoluwa), Homagama (Mattegoda) and Maharagama (Rukmalgama) where large housing complexes were completed do a little "research" and find out whether the target of 6,250 houses has been achieved in any electorate, including that of Colombo Central with its enormous housing complex at Maligawatte.

In the same way the people of the "first-round Janasaviya" divisions, including such places as Divulapitiya, Hanwella, Walallavita and Embilipitiya should "research" the accuracy of the "53%, 32% and 13%" claims.

The people's anger against the LTTE, together with Premadasa's treachery of 1989-90 by secretly parleying with and re-arming the Tigers, also paved the way for an unprecedented political unity against Premadasa. This unity is not strange by any means. Who is the politician with an iota of patriotism who will forgive or forget the actions of a head of state who admits that he donated arms, ammunition, explosives, hardware and cash with the most brutal, inhuman, blood-thirsty, and fascist terrorist organisation the world has yet seen?

#### **How the Sri Lankan President should conduct himself**

J.R. Jayewardene was the first elected Executive President of Sri Lanka. He recognised that it was an office of considerable power. Being the first Executive President there were few conventions or precedents to guide him as to how he should act. In a speech he gave on 31st May 1978 (a few months after he became President) at the convocation ceremony of the

University of Sri Lanka at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), Colombo, President Jayewardene said:

I am the first elected Executive President, Head of the State, Head of the Government. It is an office of power and thus responsibility. Since many others will succeed me I wish during my term of office to create precedents that are worthy of following.

Firstly, I will act always through the Cabinet and Parliament, preserving the parliamentary system as it existed without diminution of any of their powers;

Secondly, I will not create a group known as the President's men and women who will influence him;

Thirdly, I will implement laws and decisions passed by Parliament impartially, without political party or family bias;

Fourthly, I will neither encourage nor countenance political victimisation.

It is the nation's regret that President Premadasa has not followed any one of these undertakings.

Firstly, Premadasa does not consult his Cabinet of Ministers in taking important decisions affecting the country: he decides on his own. Sometimes (but not always), he consults his confidante and Finance Secretary Paskaralingam. Cabinet meetings are held, but it is well known that no Cabinet Minister dares to qualify, oppose or criticise any views

expressed by Premadasa. Former Mahaweli Minister Gamini Dissanayake learnt a bitter lesson. He attempted to speak his own mind at Cabinet meetings and was sacked. (It is well known that Gamini Dissanayake was sacked from Cabinet by Premadasa in his reshuffle of 26th March 1990. Just six days earlier, to add insult to injury, Premadasa had sent Dissanayake a magnificent bouquet of flowers for his birthday which fell on 20th March, wishing him "A happy, prosperous and long-lived political career").

Premadasa also ignores the views expressed by Parliament. He will never forgive the Opposition for the manner in which he was treated when he addressed Parliament on 24 September 1991, a few weeks after the impeachment motion. Normally the President's address to Parliament is both televised over *Rupavahini* and broadcast by the SLBC but on this occasion it was not done because of the hostile reception he received in Parliament.

Secondly, Premadasa has created his own group of political and social stooges who always pay homage to him and say "Yes," to all his views and proposals. His inner circle of stooges among politicians are Ministers Sirisena Cooray, A.J. Ranasinghe, Azwar, Renuka Herat and Mallimaratchi. Among the business cronies who come within the term "Presidents Men" are H.K. Dharmadasa (Nawaloka Mudalai), Killi Maharajah and his brother R. Rajahmahendran (The Maharajah Organisation Limited), Hubert Jayakody and his son Rohan (HuJay International) and K. Aloysius (Free Lanka Trading Company).

Premadasa is also well known to favour those who only openly support him. Apart from helping family members such as

Hubert Jayakody and Premadasa's son-in-law Rohan Jayakody (Hubert's son) he has also helped Hema Premadasa's family. More will be said about these matters later on in this text.

J.R. Jayewardene's Fourth Precept – no political victimisation – has been exactly the opposite with Premadasa. He instilled fear and respect not love and affection, by threats and victimisation. He was revengeful and vindictive, not only to his political opponents but to any businessmen whom he suspected of associating with his critics or opponents. Even social service organisations and NGOs were not spared. His persecution of the *Sarvodaya* leader Dr A.T. Ariyaratne is a good example. For an able public servant who served Premadasa like an alsatian dog but was disgraced, we have the example of Yasasiri Gunawardena. He was a former government agent who later managed Premadasa's Foster Parent Scheme. Premadasa was fond of him and gave him several official positions, one of which was a directorate of the Bank of Ceylon. On one occasion, because Gunawardena questioned a request of the President about assisting a customer of the bank, he was dismissed from all his positions and had finally to retire from the Public Service. "Ingratitude" is a term that Gunawardena now well understands.

#### **Knuckle-Duster Premadasa**

We now reveal a true story of a litigation in the District Court of Colombo (case number 36707/Money) which clearly shows how Premadasa (i) gave false evidence and was disbelieved in court; (ii) made a false complaint to the police implicating another person in criminal activity; (iii) tried to conceal the fact that his driver had a criminal record and was a jail-bird; (iv) tried to conceal that his car was carrying deadly and illegal weapons (knuckle dusters and clubs); (v) invented a false story



to injure others.

People still remember how a man who was once considered the most powerful person in the whole world, President Richard Nixon of the United States of America, had to resign his presidency in disgrace because he had lied about knowledge of a criminal conspiracy. For this simple lie, Nixon had to give up his Presidency. The American people booted him out.

In Sri Lanka, we have as our Executive President a man who was called a liar in open court by an eminent judge.

### **Introduction**

One of the most remarkable cases relating to Premadasa's political career concerned a rivalry between himself and L.W. Pandita, a stalwart of the Communist Party. Pandita – who had retired from politics and who was then an elderly man, was murdered in 1989 soon after Premadasa became President. His murder was never solved and remains a mystery to this day.

In 1952 Premadasa left A.E. Goonesinghe's Labour Party and had joined the UNP under the leadership of Dudley Senanayake. In 1954, he contested the Colombo Municipal Council Elections as a UNP candidate for the St. Sabastian Ward and he was successful. The opponent he defeated at this election was L.W. Pandita who contested the seat for the Communist Party.

There is a very interesting court case in the District Court of Colombo arising out of that election. The official court record of this case, an obvious embarrassment to Premadasa, has "disappeared." The case details are however, found in the court register and copies of the judgement are available from

attorneys who appeared in the case. Judgement was delivered by the District Court of Colombo on 18th June 1957. For a case of 1957, the court record cannot be considered to be an old one and should still be available in the District Court registry.

Fortunately although the court record is missing from the District Court registry, a true copy of the judgement is available. It is from this true copy that the following facts are related.

The District Judge who delivered the judgement against Premadasa in that case was Mr Justice V. Sivasupramaniam. He was a highly respected judge who was later promoted to be a Judge of the Supreme Court. In those days judges were less fearful of politicians and they gave judgement according to what they considered on the evidence to be true and false.

Premadasa (then 30 years old) was in the initial stages of his political career. Therefore, his true character, his ways and his conduct are well displayed by the facts of this case. It is truly said that whatever he does, a leopard cannot change his spots. Similarly, this 1954 case reveals Premadasa's true and innermost character. For some unknown reasons, this case record has not been used against Premadasa in his political career. The reason may be that the case record was missing from the District Court registry and the few people who did have a copy of the judgement did not make it available for public consumption. Now the true facts can be revealed.

### **Facts of the Case**

The case concerned the elections to the Colombo Municipal Council in 1954. Premadasa was contesting the San Sabastian

Ward as the UNP candidate. His main opponent was L.W. Pandita who was contesting from the Communist Party. One Ramanayake, who was a influential person in the San Sabastian area, was not supporting Premadasa. Ramanayake was a UNP sympathiser and on earlier occasions had supported UNP candidates but for personal reasons he had decided not to support Premadasa on this occasion.

1st July 1954 was nomination day. Premadasa and Panditha had gone with their respective supporters to hand in their nominations. Premadasa raised some objections to Pandita's candidature but they were overruled by the presiding officer.

When Premadasa and Pandita came out of the Colombo Town Hall after handing in their nominations, both were garlanded by their respective supporters. A short while later, when the candidates were leaving in their vehicles, there was an incident on the main road near the Town Hall. Bottles were thrown and some members of the assembled crowd of supporters were assaulted by others.

As a result of this incident, Premadasa went to the Cinnamon Gardens Police Station and lodged a complaint that Ramanayake had led a gang of thugs who were supporters of Pandita and that in the incident that took place, Premadasa's car had been attacked and damaged by these thugs. He also maintained that his driver Reuben had been assaulted. Premadasa's statement to the Police was supported by statements made by Reuben who was the driver of his car (EY 8820) and Martin Singho, one of Premadasa's supporters who had accompanied him to the Town Hall on that day.

On 1st July 1954, when Premadasa made this police complaint, he had already been a member of the Colombo Municipal Council and Deputy Mayor and had acted in the post of Mayor. He was also a Justice of the Peace. It is significant that while Premadasa had told the Police that Ramanayake was the leader of the mob that attacked him, when Ramanayake was brought to the Police station, Premadasa went further and pointed his finger at Ramanayake and identified him as the person who led the assault. In view of these facts the Cinnamon Gardens Police took Premadasa's complaint seriously and arrested Ramanayake and locked him up in the police cell overnight. He was released on bail the next day and asked to appear in the Magistrate's Court on the basis that the police were to prosecute him for assaulting Premadasa.

Subsequently, though Ramanayake appeared in the Magistrate's Court on several occasions, the police informed him that they were not filing a case against him. When the Police decided not to prosecute, Premadasa as the original complainant had the opportunity to file a private prosecution against Ramanayake in the Magistrate's Court. This is the normal procedure. If the Police feel that there is no criminal case, then the actual complainant has the right to proceed against the person he made the complaint. But Premadasa, for reasons known only to himself, did not do so and no criminal charges were eventually laid against Ramanayake about this alleged assault.

Premadasa must have felt that the matter would end there. He had also won the election by defeating Pandita and become the member for the San Sabastian Ward. He was confident that the incident was past and best forgotten.

But a short time later, much to Premadasa's surprise, Ramanayake filed action No. 36707/Money Case in the District Court of Colombo claiming damages from Premadasa on the ground of *malicious prosecution*. Ramanayake alleged that Premadasa had made a false complaint against him to the Cinnamon Gardens Police on 1st July 1954 in connection with the incident at the Town Hall on nomination day. Ramanayake further alleged the police did not later file a case against him because they themselves realised that Premadasa's complaint was a false one. Ramanayake then went on to say that when the police refused to file a criminal case against him, Premadasa himself had all the right to file a case if his complaint was true. And because the complaint was false, Premadasa had not taken any further steps in the matter. Accordingly, Ramanayake alleged that Premadasa's complaint against him was falsely and maliciously made simply because Ramanayake who was known to be a UNP sympathiser refused to support Premadasa's candidature for the San Sabastian Ward. On the above grounds, Ramanayake claimed damages against Premadasa for having maliciously sought to get him prosecuted by the police on a criminal charge of assault.

Accordingly, in the District Court case, the roles were reversed. Premadasa who was the original complainant now became the defendant, Ramanayake who was originally the accused, was now the plaintiff claiming damages from Premadasa for a false complaint. Premadasa would have been quite surprised, because when he complained to the police on 1st July 1954 he would never have expected events to take this turn and a few years later for him to end up as the defendant.

The outcome of the case surprised Premadasa even more. On 18th June 1957 (which is a few days before Premadasa's

birthday which falls on 23rd June) judgement was delivered. Premadasa lost the case and was ordered to pay Ramanayake Rs 1,000 in damages. In those days it was a substantial sum, especially for a person who maintained that he had no financial means.

What was worse was that the District Judge made adverse comments about him. The judge disbelieved Premadasa and his two witnesses Reuben (the driver) and Martin Singho. The judge added that Premadasa and his witnesses were lying and that they had made a false complaint to the Cinnamon Gardens Police implicating Ramanayake. That was not all. The judge went to say that in actual fact what had happened on that day was that Premadasa's driver (Reuben) had got down from his car and assaulted some supporters of Panditha's who were hooting and jeering at Premadasa outside the Town Hall; that Premadasa feared that if his driver and his car was taken into custody by the police he would get into trouble because of his driver's conduct. Premadasa's driver had a criminal record and had also served a jail sentence. Also to Premadasa's knowledge there were knuckle-dusters and clubs inside his car. If the car was taken to the police station, the police would soon discover these deadly weapons inside his car and it would be very embarrassing to him.

To avoid this detection and to avoid his driver (Reuben) getting into trouble with the police, Premadasa had decided to tell a lie to the police that he was attacked by a mob led by Ramanayake. The following are the very words of Justice Siva Supramaniam taken from page 10 of his judgement delivered on 18th June 1957:



"In my opinion the evidence of Premadasa that Ramanayake led a crowd and instigated that crowd to assault him and because of that assault Premadasa had to flee for safety, is false"

"In my opinion, when Premadasa found that his driver (Reuben) had been caught red-handed by the police while assaulting some other people and when the police found deadly weapons in the car in which Premadasa was travelling, Premadasa was then obliged to take the car to the police station. At this point Premadasa invented the story of the attempted assault on him by a crowd supposed to be led by Ramanayake.

I reject the evidence of Premadasa and his witnesses on this matter."

The Judge also noted that the evidence of the police officers about the incident was different from the evidence given by Premadasa and his witnesses and the judge preferred to accept the police evidence as correct and reject Premadasa's evidence.

Now let us summarise some important facts about Premadasa's character that arose from this judicial decision.

1. One of the most important findings of Justice Sivasupramaniam was that Premadasa had invented a false complaint against Ramanayake to prevent his driver being arrested for assault and also to prevent the police from discovering the deadly weapons (knuckle-dusters and clubs) that were in his own car.

2. In other words, this was not a case where Premadasa by mistake accused Ramanayake of leading a mob. Nor was it a case where someone else had told Premadasa that Ramanayake was leading a mob to assault him. The entire complaint made by Premadasa to the Police was based on his own evidence, and the entire false complaint was invented by Premadasa himself. No mob attacked Premadasa. Nor was Ramanayake leading a mob. It was Premadasa's driver Reuben who had got down from his car and attacked others. So the entire false complaint was, as the judge held, invented in the fertile mind of Premadasa (then aged 30) now the Executive President of Sri Lanka. This is what his mind is capable of. Inventing false stories on the spur of the moment to save his own skin and to put others into trouble.

3. According to the judgement, the police officers of the Cinnamon Gardens police station who had inquired into this incident were the following (although they would now have retired from the police, they will recall this case):

- (i) Inspector Amarasekera
- (ii) Sub-Inspector Misso
- (iii) Sergeant Dissanayake
- (iv) Sergeant Ekanayake

#### Premadasa's JVP connections

All Sri Lankans know about the atrocities committed by the revolutionary Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). But Premadasa, even when he was Prime Minister, never attacked the JVP by name. His famous excuse was "Where is the proof

that JVP is behind these criminal activities? Show me the proof." But now that the JVP menace has been eliminated, he publicly takes the credit for restoring order and condemns the criminal actions of the JVP! Premadasa rarely mentions that it was the late Ranjan Wijeratne who gave leadership to the struggle to overcome the JVP.

Now it has come to light that the only remaining leader or politbureau member of the JVP, Somawansa Amarasinghe, is a very close family relation of Premadasa's long tie friend and now Minister of Housing and Construction, Sirisena Cooray. Somawansa Amarasinghe is closely connected to Sirisena Cooray's wife. While all the other top JVP leaders were killed by the Premadasa government in 1990-1991, Somawansa Amarasinghe not only survived but escaped from the island and is now said to be living in India. As to how he managed to escape is another mystery.

People were also surprised how Premadasa, as President, was able to hold the *Gamudawa* celebrations at Kataragama in 1989 and in Mahiyangana in 1990. These events were held at the height of JVP activity but there was no interruption or any JVP incidents at the *Gamudawa* celebrations. Why did the JVP leave Premadasa alone? It is true that Premadasa has massive security but the JVP were known to have attacked or killed or injured other politicians who had security and protection. It is also noteworthy that Premadasa addressed 118 election meetings all over the island during the Presidential campaign of December 1988. But none of his meetings were attacked by the JVP. Why? Now that we know the connection between Sirisena Cooray and Somawansa Amarasinghe, the reason why the JVP did not attack Premadasa becomes clearer and more understandable.

### **Premadasa never employed**

Premadasa has never engaged in any gainful employment apart from politics. In 1949 at the age of 25 he joined the Labour Party and entered Municipal politics. There is a story that prior to that he had worked in a printing press at Dam Street Colombo which belonged to the father of Norbert Perera, who was recently sacked from the UNP for having (as a Justice of Peace) attested the affidavits of the Members of Parliament who signed the Impeachment Motion.

Perhaps it is this first hand experience that Premadasa gained by working at a printing press that has given him such a good knowledge of print media. As President he is said to decide on even the typesetting and arrangement of his speeches that are now published daily in the Lake House Newspapers.

### **Some fantastic stories related by Premadasa**

It is strange that despite his political acumen and experience, Premadasa has related some unbelievable stories. The wonder is how he gets away with it. Perhaps, people are so busy with their own lives that they do not care any more about what Premadasa says. Some are bewildered by these stories but laugh them off in amusement. Others are angry that the President utters such lies but are helpless to correct them. And Premadasa carries on regardless. Let us examine some of these weird stories.

### **The peon story**

During the Presidential campaign in October-December 1988, Premadasa took pains to distance himself from President J.R. Jayewardene. The Opposition then publicly said "How can you say you are not responsible for anything that happened during the J.R. Jayewardene government, because you were his

deputy and you were the Prime Minister?" To this Premadasa's ingenious reply was "Under J.R.'s Presidential system, the Prime Minister's post was a mere figure-head appointment. Although I was Prime Minister, in real fact, my powers were no greater than that of a *peon* in a government office."

The Sri Lankan people well-know the connotations of this term. A peon is the office orderly who takes files from one staff officer to another for their attention and is available to assist office staff to attend to daily routine work. A peon also often serves staff officers their tea and attend to their other needs. Premadasa's statement that he played the role of a peon in the J.R. Jayewardene administration was accepted more in amusement by his audience. But as Mrs Bandaranaike told Premadasa during the campaign, "You were the only peon in the entire world who solicited and obtained an invitation to attend the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana at Buckingham Palace in London."

Premadasa's Peon story was not only absurd but also insulting to the administration he led during the period July 1977 to December 1988. Next to J.R. Jayewardene, he was the most powerful politician in the country. He was also not at all modest in exercising his powers as Prime Minister. He was concurrently Minister of Local Government and Housing and later Minister of Highways as well. In addition he occupied several offices and official residences. An enormous staff of over 10,000 officials worked for him. He was also the Leader of the House of Parliament. No peon in any part of the world wielded such powers and enjoyed such privileges of office and conducted himself with such pomp and pageantry. Yet, in the presidential campaign of 1988, Premadasa got away with this story that he was only a peon.

It was also interesting to record that while Premadasa told rural audiences that as Prime Minister he was only a peon under J.R. Jayewardene, a full-page newspaper supplement published in support of his candidature stated that Premadasa transformed the office of Prime Minister into a position of tremendous power, significance and meaningfulness [sic]."

#### **Premadasa's estate at Yapahuwa**

Everyone knows that Premadasa owns a well-developed coconut property (inter-woven with spices and other valuable crops) at Ambanwela in the Yapahuwa area of the Kurunegala district. The estate is called Kahabiliyawatte. It is now protected by a strong security force maintained at state expense. Doubts have been cast as to how a poor man (which Premadasa claims to be) came to own this prime estate. Premadasa himself has provided this unbelievable account in a public speech. According to him:-

"Once I had gone with my parents on a pilgrimage to Anuradhapura. On the way back in the Yapahuwa area we had stopped our car to have refreshments and for a rest. My father then noticed a public auction of property being conducted nearby. He went up to the auction site. He had money with him. He bid at the auction and brought this land Kahabiliyawatte for a sum of rupees twenty five. This is how I came to own this land."

So Premadasa came to own this property for Rs 25!

This is another unbelievable story related by Premadasa to gullible rural audiences. He little appreciates that these speeches of his are repeated in the newspapers and some



members of the discerning public instantly detect their falsity.

And why should the President, unless he had a guilty conscience, explain in public as to how he came to own a coconut estate. All ownership of immovable property can be traced by any member of the public by examining the records of the Land Registry in each district. Ownership of land is evidenced by registered deeds which show how the land came to be purchased and from whom, the date of purchase and the price paid. Accordingly, Premadasa should have with him the title deeds to this property and he need not relate unbelievable stories as to how his father brought this land on the spur of the moment for Rs 25 at a public auction while returning from a pilgrimage to Anuradhapura.

It is also noteworthy that Premadasa's first Gamudawa in 1978 was at Beddalgama in Yapahuwa. That Gamudawa site was very close to his estate at Ambanpola so that people say he conveniently used State funds to develop the area around his property such as getting electricity and water supply and also improving the road to his land.

#### **Premadasa and his baby elephant**

Another fantastic story related by Premadasa in public speeches is about how he came to own an elephant. According to Premadasa, "Once when my parents and I were going by car to our estate (Kahabiliyawatte) in Yapahuwa, we saw two elephants and a baby on the road. We stopped the car and the baby elephant came up to the car and put his trunk inside the car on my mother. As a child I was fascinated by what he did and I pleaded with my father to get the baby elephant. My father agreed to my request and purchased the baby elephant, and I can remember walking along with the baby elephant to

our estate. When we were returning to Colombo we brought the baby elephant along with us to Colombo by putting him in the trunk of our car [sic]. For sometime we kept the baby elephant as a pet at our Colombo home and I used to play with him. But later we gave the elephant to a friend of the family."

How many readers of this book will believe this story? But it was related by President Premadasa in a public speech to a rural audience. Even members of that audience would have smiled in disbelief or disgust as he related the story. The audacity of this lie is that Premadasa, without any hesitation as to its credibility, said that the baby elephant was transported from his estate in the Kurunegala district to Colombo by car. Can any reasonable person believe that even a baby elephant can be transported in the luggage boot or trunk of a car? In another story Premadasa had said that his father's car was a Morris Minor. So, in other words, the baby elephant had travelled over 80 miles from his estate in Ambanpola to Colombo in the boot of a Morris Minor car!

#### **His father's carts**

Another unbelievable story related by Premadasa concerns the large number of carts allegedly owned by his father. At a public gathering, Premadasa said:

"In those days my father had about 50-60 bullock carts (at that time owning a bullock cart was like owning a lorry and only a very rich person could own as many as 50 or 60 carts). About once a month my parents and I used to visit my mother's village at Batuwita in the Horana area. On those visits my father used to take about two or three cartloads of rice, curry

stuff and other groceries like flour and sugar. We then distributed these items to the poor people in the area."

The place that Premadasa's mother came from has now been re-named *Mawgama* (mother's village). Premadasa has also added the following statement about his mother: "In those days when my mother used to visit her birthplace, the villagers used to say that the *Maisika Unnanse* has come." The term *Maisika* means "Her Majesty." This form was a reference to Her Britannic Majesty Queen Victoria who as Queen of England was also Queen of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). By usage, the term was associated with a person of high class and status in our villages. And now Premadasa says that this same term was used for his mother as well by the villagers in her area of birth.

The above stories are unbelievable lies. All fables conceived in a sick mind. Since the period referred to by Premadasa is not that long ago, there should be several people of the Batuvita village who would remember such personalities and such visits and such acts of philanthropy if they were true. But people of the area are bewildered by these statements of Premadasa because they are utter lies. They are works of fiction conceived and born of his own imagination. On the other hand, the people of Horana area do remember famous philanthropists like the late Wilmot Perera of *Sri Palee* fame who did so much for the poor in the area.

#### **Premadasa's physical features and food habits**

Premadasa will be 69 years on 23 June 1993. Daily his valet Mohideen dyes his hair jet black so that no trace of any grey hair can be seen. Recently, to please his South Indian (Malayali) soothsayer-astrologer (who it is said also practice the occult), Premadasa shaved off his eye-brows. Television

viewers were surprised on the first few days when they saw him after he shaved his eye brows. "What happened to Premadasa's eye-brows?" they asked. Then they knew that Premadasa's Malayali soothsayer had got the better of him. He will do what his witch doctors recommend, ignoring the consequences. The change of the spelling to *Shri* from *Sri* Lanka by Premadasa was done at the request of his Malayali advisors.

Premadasa does not smoke. Neither does he consume any form of alcohol. He eats little and his meals are always prepared and sent to him from Colombo or his outstation residence. Government helicopters are regularly used to fetch his food from Colombo when he goes to the rural areas for his ceremonial openings and inspection tours.

#### **Absence of diplomacy**

National leaders are expected to be diplomatic, but Premadasa has on several occasions openly and proudly proclaimed that he is no diplomat. Let us give some examples of this lack of diplomacy:

- (1) In the Sri Lankan Parliament he has attacked by name India's Gandhi family – both the late Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. India is our giant neighbour and our national leaders cannot afford to publicly abuse India's leaders.
- (2) One of the first official acts of Premadasa after he became President was to release the naval officer who physically attacked Rajiv Gandhi with a rifle at a President's House honour guard immediately after the Indo-Lanka Accord was signed. In doing so,

Premadasa was pandering to what he thought public opinion was at that time, but it was an ill-conceived act from the point of view of diplomacy and international relations, and common human decency.

- (3) On 23 September 1991 in the Sri Lanka Parliament Premadasa said that the "Israeli people are murderers." It is one thing to close down the Israeli Interests Section and criticise Mossad (the Israeli intelligence agency) but to label the entire Jewish nation and its people as murderers is to say the least, madness. There are over 12 million Jews globally and to brand them as murderers is unforgivable. The reflection is on Sri Lanka as a nation.
- (4) Premadasa's demand to Rajiv Gandhi that the Indian Army in the North should leave Sri Lanka was made on 1st June 1989 on Poson Poya day at a Buddhist temple ceremony. He chose a religious occasion and a temple ceremony to make a crucial political statement which could best have been communicated privately so as to avoid causing public discomfiture to India. The venue did not matter to Premadasa.
- (5) Many people resent Premadasa using the *Dalada Maligawa* (the temple of the tooth) in Kandy on 2nd January every year to celebrate each anniversary of his term as President. This most sacred of religious sites in Sri Lanka is used by him for an annual political *tamasha*. No other leader in the country's 2,500 years of existence has done this. But Premadasa does not care.

### Analysis of Premadasa's words and deeds

By his conduct Premadasa has shown that there is a sharp distinction between what he says and what he actually does. In his Presidential manifesto he proudly asserted:

- (1) "Mine shall not be a government of arrogance"
- (ii) "Mine will be a government of the non-violent man"
- (iii) "I have inherited humility... I will be a humble servant of the common man"
- (iv) Every mother and father can treat me as her or his own son. Every citizen can consider me a brother and every child will find the affection of a father in me.
- (v) In my actions I will always be guided by consultation, compromise and consensus.
- (vi) I will give an enhanced role to Parliament.
- (vii) I will strengthen the role of Non-government organisations (NGOs)

What is immediately noticeable and significant in the continuous use of the words "I" and "mine." Even in drafting his Manifesto his sub-conscious mind was guided by 'one-man show' concept. Normal leaders would have substituted "we" and "ours" for "I" and "mine."

Speaking generally, none of the above assertions in the Manifesto have been honoured. While Premadasa said "mine



shall not be a government of arrogance and it will be a government of the non-violent man," just the opposite occurred. In his four year period of office, the environment was that of a complete fear psychosis. People were afraid to criticize him publicly. The large scale disappearances and killings of youth and the revelations of DIG Udugampola about the use of "Black Cats" (government hit squads) by Premadasa were the reality of Sri Lankan life and not what he assured in his Manifesto. The truth about his desire to treat others as friends, his emphasis on consultation, compromise and consensus, and his stated policy towards NGOs can be best appreciated by his actual persecution of his political opponents and his harassment of Dr. Ariyaratne the Sarvodaya leader.

#### **An illustration of Premadasa's conduct as Leader of the House**

When J.R. Jayewardene became Prime Minister after his victory in the July 1977 General Elections, he made Premadasa, then Deputy leader of the UNP, the Leader of the House of Representatives. As Leader of the House, Premadasa took the liberty to be abusive of his political opponents. In one of his first speeches, he said that "Anura Bandaranaike (then 2nd MP for Nuwara Eliya-Maskeliya) should be hanged in public." Next day in the *Sun* (*Dawasa* Group) newspapers this statement was wrongly attributed to the Prime Minister J.R. Jayewardene.

Making a statement to the House on the next day, Anura Bandaranaike said "when I read the report in the 'Sun' I was shocked and grieved that a gentleman of the Prime Minister's calibre and cultural background could make a statement like that. But when I read the other newspapers and found that it was really the Leader of the House (Premadasa) who had made

this statement, I was not at all surprised but was also mentally relieved."

#### **Premadasa's false life story**

If one analyses Premadasa's life history and biographical statistics very closely, one will notice the discrepancies and the truths slowly surfacing. Parts of his so-called early period are ingenious works of fiction. Premadasa got so used to the idea of falsification that he began to vigorously reconstruct his early family life. He also erected museums for his parents and named them *Piyagama* (father's village) and *Mawgama* (mother's village). Although steeped in supervision and numerology, Premadasa's success grew out of his resourcefulness. He also became an arch con-man and a consummate actor. Although he was well known for his false greetings and insincere smile, he always made it a point to address many well known public servants by their first names, thus making them feel very important. It was all play acting.

Readers will recall another modern national leader, President Ferdinand Marcos, of the Philippines who was a similar con-man. Marcos had got a biography written about himself by well known journalists portraying him as a great resistance leader of the World War II who fought beside American soldiers against the Japanese. The biography added that Marcos was the most decorated soldier in the Philippines Army. After Marcos fell from power, it was discovered that all these stories were false and were deliberate lies written on his specific instructions. Marcos had even used foreign journalists to write these bogus biographies of his. Premadasa was however, not that successful and had to settle for Bradman Weerakoon.

### The Rt. Honourable R. Premadasa

In July 1979, on an official visit to London as Prime Minister, Premadasa threw a lavish dinner party in honour of the Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, then Britain's Minister for Environment in the Thatcher government. To match the status of his guest, Premadasa arrogated to himself the title of *Rt. Honourable*. This is an exceptional title restricted to Ministers of the British Cabinet and Privy Councillors. The two well-known Sri Lankan national leaders who were conferred this title were D.S. Senanayake and Sir John Kotelawela, both appointed to the Privy Council by the sovereign.

Bradman Weerakoon was Premadasa's Secretary at this time and was with him in London on this visit. He knew well that Premadasa was not entitled to use this title but did not wish to displease "The Boss". (Menu card for this dinner reproduced end of this book) The British and Sri Lankan guests were openly amused by this act of cheap subterfuge.

### Aspects of Premadasa's character

Premadasa was a workaholic starting his day at 4.00 a.m. to the dread of his immediate staff as well as departmental heads. He also went to extremes in his attention to details. For example at meetings to be addressed by him to ensure that the lectern from which he spoke was properly sited and the flower vase on the table did not obstruct the public view of him. Some may applaud this quality of minute attention to details while others may agree with Benjamin Disraeli when he said "little things affect little minds."

Premadasa, the master orator, also often got lost in his own verbosity. Some of his recent speeches became no more than a barren superfluity of words. He grew intoxicated with his

own eloquence and his each speech – whatever the occasion and the audience – became somewhat of a sermon. A lesson from the oracle. He also made each political platform a pulpit. The *Dhammapada*, the Bible and the Koran were often resorted to by him to adorn his spoken and written words. One is reminded of Shakespeare's saying.

The Devil can cite scripture for his purpose;  
An evil soul, producing holy witness,  
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek.  
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.  
O what a goodly outside falsehood hath.

As the former English constitutional expert Lord Acton said "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Premadasa, became so intoxicated with absolute power after he became President, that he never wanted to abandon it even for a short time. There is moderation even in excess, but it was not so with Premadasa. To him, disagreement with his ideas and policies was evidence of open enmity and enmity, which in his view, had to be rooted out. "A great man shows his greatness by the way he treats his colleagues." But this was not a quality of Premadasa's. Although accommodation is the essence of successful politics, Premadasa resented men, both in politics and in thought, who were capable of vision. He felt safe only with mediocrity.

While being autocratic and dictatorial, he always took refuge under populist programmes of no meaningful economic value (eg. Janasaviya, free school uniforms, etc) and always declared "I am of the poor, to work for the poor."

Surprisingly, while it is said that superstition is the religion of feeble minds. Premadasa was supremely superstitious. He would engage in no enterprise or programme or plan, no function or event without consulting his astrologers – mainly his Malayali soothsayers on whom he relied on blindly in the latter part of his presidential term. As Prime Minister, all his several foreign trips were planned so that he could be away during "astrologically bad times." For instance although by August 1988 he was declared as UNP's Presidential candidate to succeed J.R., Premadasa went on an official trip to China for fifteen days in September 1988 presumably because his horoscope had said that he should not remain in Sri Lanka during that period.

#### **Premadasa's Morris Minor car**

In the early 1950s, Premadasa the Colombo Municipal Councillor announced that he had been gifted with a Morris Minor car purchased by his supporters. He got a photograph taken with himself and the car, together with Dudley Senanayake, who was then Prime Minister. In actual fact, some Colombo *mudalalis* (merchants) who were helping him and enjoying his patronage had purchased the car for him. But in true Premadasa style the public were made to understand that his voters had bought the car through a "hat collection." Now this car is preserved in a glass case as a museum piece at his Sucharitha residence. What is more interesting is that while outwardly it is still a Morris Minor (a poor man's car), in fact it is a Rolls Royce. This is because after he became Prime Minister, Premadasa got the Maharajah Organisation (as a free job) to strip and completely overhaul and refurbish it with a new engine, a new gear box and luxurious leather upholstery. It is only a Morris Minor in name. This is yet another instance of Premadasa's "Jekyll and Hyde" personality.

#### **Premadasa's craving for television publicity**

From the time he became Prime Minister, Premadasa established his own fully-equipped television unit funded by the Urban Development Authority which came under him and was administered by Paskaralingam (then its Chairman). On his assumption as President, this unit was enhanced into a full Presidential Television Unit which followed his every public action like a shadow. Even when he visited funeral houses the unit was in attendance and his respects to the deceased was shown the same evening on national television. It was only the widow of murdered General Denzil Kobbekaduwa who refused to receive Premadasa at the funeral house unless the Television Unit was sent away.

#### **Premadasa, the poor man's saviour**

In their speeches and conduct, national leaders should at all costs avoid differences of opinions on matters such as religion, caste, class, and community. This is especially important in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society like Sri Lanka. Premadasa, however, exploited the class issue. He created class distinctions as no other leader had done. Highlighting the eradication of poverty he emphasised the distinction between the privileged and the poor, the Haves and the Have Nots.

As the respected Vice-Chancellor of Kelaniya University Rev. Walpola Rahula observed "Premadasa made Sri Lanka the only country in the world where *illiteracy* and *poverty* became meritorious and regarded as qualifications for employment." Poverty and unemployment became a merit.

Premadasa always posed as the poor man's saviour. But the people little realised how the 'poor man's saviour' lived and the wealth he had amassed. From the time he became Prime



Minister in 1978 and later as President from January 1989, he would have received enormous contributions of money from individuals for political and non-political purposes. What has happened to this money? He enjoyed a vast number of official residence and as a third world leader lived more luxuriously than royally in some Western countries.

### **The impeachment motion against Premadasa**

In the last few days of August 1991 an event occurred which in this writer's view – sounded the death knell for President Premadasa. This was the Impeachment Motion against him which was entertained by the speaker of Parliament (M.H. Mohammed) under Article 38 of Sri Lanka's constitution. The main persons behind the Impeachment – Lalith Athulathmudali, Gamini Dissanayake and G.M. Premachandra – had persuaded forty (40) members of the ruling UNP to sign it. Thus, together with the members of the Opposition they had sufficient numbers in Parliament to successfully pursue the impeachment.

The Impeachment Motion set out various facts alleging that President Premadasa had been guilty of intentional violation of the constitution, treason, misconduct, nepotism and corruption involving abuse of power of his office. It also alleged that he had committed offences under the Law involving moral turpitude and grounds of his mental incapacity to govern the country.

The events following the Impeachment Motion and its subsequent failure in Parliament is now part of Sri Lankan political history and need not be recounted here. However, it would not be incorrect to say that Premadasa never recovered from the Impeachment Motion. It affected his mind. Despite all

his cunning, he had broken the UNP into two. The DUNF (Rajaliya Party) was formed and in over one hundred public meetings since August 1991, the DUNF exposed Premadasa. It was Abraham Lincoln (whom Premadasa is fond of quoting) who said "A house divided against itself cannot stand. So also a political party divided against itself cannot last. The Party will not perish completely but it must cease to be divided. It must become all one thing or all the other. This is the truth of all human experience." Future elections will show that DUNF will take at least 15% – 20% of the UNP vote. This is a slice of the vote that the UNP cannot afford to lose.

The writer became aware about an inside story of the Impeachment which is not public knowledge. The idea of impeaching Premadasa originated the mind of no less a person than the Speaker of Parliament M.H. Mohammed. While Mohammed was in London in early 1991, he planned the impeachment together with Ronnie de Mel who was also then living in London. Both of them had worked out the constitutional procedure. They had then contacted Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake and got them to lead the impeachment.

Thus it was the Speaker, M.H. Mohammed, who originated it. Regrettably, it was also the same M.H. Mohammed who decided not to proceed with it. Premadasa through Thondaman intimidated Mohammed and threatened to expose his activities while he was Minister of Transport in the Jayewardene administration unless he dropped the matter. Though the Impeachment Motion itself failed, it was the beginning of the end for Premadasa.

On 24th September 1991 in his address to Parliament after the Impeachment Motion, Premadasa said, "You know very well that I am a person who is prepared to stand any inquiry. But where are the charges? It is also not known who are making the charges."

Indeed this was an absurd statement. The contents of the Impeachment Motion was then public knowledge and for Premadasa to ask "What are the charges?" was cynical as well as foolish. He was the accused, and the charges were public knowledge. This attitude of Premadasa's to the Impeachment reminds one of a similar attitude he took towards the JVP activities in this country in 1987-1988. The common understanding was that Premadasa was in toe with the JVP and had access to them. But he was frequently heard to ask, "How can you say that the JVP is behind all this violence? Where is the proof? Show me the proof."

Instead of answering the serious allegations levelled against him in the Impeachment Motion, all that Premadasa did was to label the dissidents "Traitors and conspirators: rogue elephants who should be tranquilized but not yet killed." Premadasa also published posters and scurrilous pamphlets against them and said the dissidents were funded by "Casino kings" and the Israeli secret service Mossad. He planned 200 islandwide rallies saying that he would expose them fully. But the first rally in Kandy on 20th October 1991 was a monumental disaster and all the other rallies were canceled.

On the other hand, the Impeachment led to the expulsion of the ten UNP MPs and the formation of the DUNF. Ironically it was this party that held more than 100 islandwide rallies and awoke a sleeping "Rip Van Winkle" type opposition which

heralded the beginning of Premadasa's political downfall.

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**Premadasa, the propaganda expert**

From the day he started his political career Premadasa 'marketed' himself. Truly, it can be said that he is one national leader who mastered the art of propaganda and communicating with the people. During the period 1977-1988 J.R. Jayewardene was the only restraining effect on Premadasa in using the government controlled media. But after he became President in January 1989, Premadasa has used the Lake House newspapers, the Rupavahini and the SLBC to project his image in a way that no national leader has done before.

So much so, that it is said that Premadasa sleeps inside Lake house, the Rupavahini/ITN and SLBC. Everyone knows that he even decided on the headline to his speeches and their sub-headings and arrangement as they appear in the newspapers. The photographs of crowd scenes of his public functions are also meticulously "arranged" under his supervision. Photographs are joined up to make the crowd appear larger than it actually was.

Premadasa's early experience of working in a printing press (referred to earlier in this text) and his masterly command of the sinhala language, helped him to become the greatest mass media expert in Sri Lankan politics. None of his predecessors could match him in this area of expertise.

In literacy Sri Lanka stands well ahead of its other South Asian SAARC neighbours (eg. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, etc). Premadasa exploited the state-controlled television and radio to the maximum to reach the remotest villages and thus got his speeches and messages across to them.

Foreign diplomats rarely comment on the internal affairs of countries but Premadasa's exploitation of television went to such extremes that the Japanese ambassador could not restrain a critical comment. To Premadasa's embarrassment, this comment was highlighted in the press because Sri Lanka's television studio (Rupavahini) came from Japanese grant aid. No action was taken against the Japanese ambassador. He was spared the fate that befell Gladstone, the British High Commissioner, who was expelled for voicing his opinion about government party election tactics.

### **Premadasa and 'Casino King' Joe Sim**

The "Joe Sim" saga will be a continuing source of embarrassment to Premadasa in future years. Joe Sim, a shadowy Singaporean, had come to be known as the Casino King of Sri Lanka. He ran his own casinos in Colombo and also had interests in several other Sri Lanka-based casinos. Premadasa's embarrassment stemmed not so much from Sim himself as his politically high-profile patrons. Hema Premadasa, the First Lady, was one of the leading patrons of Joe Sim's casino empire. She attended receptions and functions at the Casinos and the popular gossip was that Joe Sim was very friendly with Mrs Premadasa. A much-published photograph shows Hema Premadasa (in her "at home" attire) with Joe Sim and his family taken at President's House. The location at which the photograph was taken and Mrs Premadasa's dress on that occasion shows how close the friendship was. It is also said that Joe Sim and his family were regular visitors to President's House owing to their close friendship with Mrs Premadasa. There is also a photograph of Joe Sim getting on the stage at a Colombo Municipal Council celebration, where President Premadasa is seated as chief guest.

It is said that there is no smoke without fire. Mrs Premadasa's love of casinos and her friendship with the Sim family resulted in Premadasa's daughter (now married to Hubert Jayakody's son Rohan Jayakody - Air Lanka director and "Carnation King") also becoming a close friend of Sim's. Rumors began to spread that Joe Sim had given as presents valuable jewellery to Mrs Premadasa and also extravagant spending money on her frequent shopping expeditions to Singapore (where Mrs Premadasa's brother - a man with little or no education, is now Sri Lanka's Deputy High Commissioner). I have seen a colour-printed booklet that has been published in Sri Lanka which contains this photograph of Mrs Premadasa with Joe Sim and his family. The booklet also has photographs of Joe Sim with Minister Sirisena Cooray and with Bradman Weerakoon.

### **The Lawrence Gestapo**

A little known fact about Premadasa is that he runs an extra legal organisation similar to the dreaded *Savak* during the Shah of Iran's time or perhaps similar to Adolf Hitler's *Gestapo*.

The organisation is headed by A C Lawrence, a former Deputy Inspector General of Police. Its office is located on the fourth floor of the National Housing Department along Sri Chittampalam Gardiner Mawatha. The personnel in this unit were made up of retired Policemen (almost 60 percent) and lower ranks of the Police who are now in active service. The latter category have been hand picked from Police Stations and the CID.

All private, confidential security work is handled by this unit. It is to this unit that Premadasa refers all petitions he received against heads of government departments, corporations, government MPs and members of the United National Party.



Overt investigations against opposition politicians were referred to the CID or the NIB but all covert inquiries were done by Lawrence and his men. The following is the way in which Premadasa's private hit group worked.

Lawrence was assigned a fleet of Pajero vehicles. Sirisena Cooray's thugs were co-opted for special operations. They would go in an un-numbered Pajeros to the house/office or location of a target with revolvers and threaten to kill them if they do not stop anti Premadasa or anti Government activity. That was the modus operandi to tackle some types of people including businessmen, club owners and those running gambling shops etc.

But Lawrence uses another mechanism to deal with professionals and white collar workers. It is carried out through S.S. (Sylvester) M. Joseph, who was also a one time DIG. Joseph who was very well known as a corrupt officer when he was SP (Colombo South) and thereafter as Commissioner of Police, now lives in a super luxury house at Barnes Place. Earlier he was at Second Lane, Ratmalana and ran a poultry farm which was attacked during 1983 ethnic violence.

For all intents and purposes, Joseph functions officially as a Consultant to the Ministry of Finance. This is the cover. When Lawrence sends a list of names, Joseph writes to the Special Investigations Unit in the Department of Inland Revenue to conduct investigations into the persons so named in the list. Some of the names in the list are given to Lawrence by President himself.

In the Special Investigations Unit, the name used for this kind of request (letters from Joseph) is "orders from the Presidential

Security Unit." When such a request comes, NOT a single office in the Special Investigations Unit sends a file back to the relevant section without finding some faults and imposing a fine or penalty. If no action is taken, the officers concerned are transferred out. So no officer in the Department will refuse or neglect to act when a file is referred to him by Joseph.

There are innumerable cases relating to doctors, engineers, journalists and other professionals who are undergoing untold hardships due to this devious harassment. There are recognized Chartered Accountants who know very well how this extra-legal unit has been working because they have been acting as tax consultants to these victims.

The Investigations Unit reports are channelled back (progress reports, as they are called) to Lawrence. If there are avenues for more harassment, then Lawrence writes to CID (Rajapakse) asking his men to investigate. Rajapakse keeps a personal touch and chases up all these investigations.

There are regular meetings (under Premadasa's personal instructions) among the following: Lawrence, Joseph, Rajapakse, Zernie Wijesuriya (Director, National Intelligence Bureau). Specific cases are discussed by them and the course of action is mapped out.

Lawrence is being paid both by the Ministry of Policy Planning and by the Department of National Housing for working as "Security Consultant." There is very little work he does. Earlier, he was paid by Air Lanka. Besides, President Premadasa, the only other persons who have access to this Gestapo type unit run by Lawrence are Sirisena Cooray and R. Paskaralingam.

### Nawaloka – a Premadasa stooge

Dharmadasa alias Nawaloka Mudalali became one of Premadasa's closest allies. With Premadasa's patronage, Nawaloka amassed a fortune for some land he owned near the Colombo Port he got compensation of over Rs 90 million when the land itself was valued at no more than Rs 20 million. All equipment for his luxury Nawaloka hospital was also imported free of duty – a concession not available to others. Nawaloka was also appointed a director of the Bank of Ceylon. Apart from financial benefits, Premadasa bestowed on Nawaloka the country's highest honour "Desabandu." Nawaloka's good financial fortune under Premadasa earned him the nickname "Nawa Loka Bankuwa" (New World Bank).

Many of the present generation Sri Lankans may not be aware that it was this same Nawaloka who supplied the ammunition that was used by the buddhist monk Rev. Somarama to kill Prime Minister Bandaranaike on 25th September 1959. It happened this way. Rev. Buddharakkita who was one of the main conspirators in the assassination had suggested that the bullets for the revolvers to be used be got from a Police officer. He had contacted Nawaloka then a small time businessman in the Kelaniya area of Colombo who was also well known to the criminal underworld. And Nawaloka had obliged and obtained the bullets from a Superintendent of Police B W Perera. It was these bullets that entered the body of Prime Minister Bandaranaike and killed him on 25th September, 1959. All these facts came out at the trial and is now recorded in Lucian Weeramantry's book – "The Assassination of a Prime Minister." The man who found the fatal ammunition to kill a Prime Minister now holds Sri Lanka's highest honour – 'Desabandu'.

### The Jayakodys

The spectacular success and rise of the "Huejay" Jayakody financial empire which now spreads from Sri Lanka to Tokyo to London – is a good example of President Premadasa's poverty alleviation programme (Nethi Bari Aya – Athi Haki Aya Kireema).

"Huejay" (which stands for Hubert Jayakody) knew Premadasa when he was Prime Minister. Jayakody had gone to Japan (Tokyo) as a young man. He built up a successful business exporting Sri Lankan gems and jewellery. He has now expanded into tea, spices and cut flowers (carnations). The Jayakody's are of goigama caste. Thus there is little information as to the origin of his close friendship with Premadasa who was of the padu caste. Mischievous people have said that the Premadasas (both husband and wife) used to "smuggle" expensive gems into Japan for Hubert on their "official" visits. By 1977 when Premadasa became Prime Minister Hubert Jayakody had become "a good friend" of the Premadasas. Mrs Premadasa was closer to Hubert than her husband and it was Hema that gradually introduced her daughter Dulanjali as a prospective bride for Hubert's son, Rohan.

The talk is that Hubert Jayakody's wife was not keen on the proposal because of the caste issue. Nor was Rohan Jayakody. He regarded Dulanjali as too domineering having inherited her father's qualities while her brother Sajit had taken more after Hema. Close family friends however, say that Rohan Jayakody's decision to marry Dulanjali was taken prior to Premadasa's election as President, for which Premadasa was grateful and became even more fond of the Jayakody's. From then on life for the Jayakodys became a prosperous bed of

roses although they are better known for their carnations which they grow and export for sale.

The Jayakody's sold their carnations and other flowers at their shop (shirohana) at Sir Marcan Marker Mawatha, Colombo. The bulbs of the flowers are exported mainly to Japan.

Rohan Jayakody was made a Director of Air Lanka in January, 1989. Air Lanka was asked to have weekly flights to Japan and stop at two Airports in Japan. Flowers exported by Jayakody are carried on Air Lanka flights at concessional rates. Sometimes the flights are delayed to accommodate the shipment of flowers. Thus, these special Air Lanka flights are popularly called "Carnation flights."

Thus, Rohan Jayakody, one of the main users of Air Lanka was made a Director. As a Director, Rohan Jayakody and his family (parents, sister and wife (Dulanjali) are all entitled to free flights on Air Lanka not to Japan but anywhere in the world. The Jayakody's travel often. (They have a huge house in London also). Air Lanka also carries special items for them. Once a special dress for Dulanjali was flown from London for the New Year's dance in Colombo.

The Jayakody's flower business is roaring. The flowers are grown on valuable State land given at a very nominal rent - 42 acres of the best land from the Nuwara Eliya race course.

About 400 - 500 poor rural girls are employed in the flower project. They are paid under Rs 25/- per day. No one complains about this low pay because the project belongs to the President's son-in-law and daughter. The President has fixed a minimum wage of Rs 2000/- per month for the

garment factory girls, but the Jayakody's pay only Rs 25/- per day - that is less than Rs 1000/- per month. No pay is given for days on which the girls are absent. They are all casual employees.

Recently, the Jayakody's bought a huge three story house in the heart of London, paying nearly two million pounds. It is said that some of the carpenters and masons that went to repair the Sri Lanka High Commission in London were also used to renovate and improve the Jayakody residence in London.

Hubert Jayakody was appointed Honorary Consul in Tokyo, the capital of Japan. This is absurd because Sri Lanka has an Ambassador and an Embassy in Tokyo. But now the Honorary Consul (Jayakody) is more powerful than our ambassador.

But this was not enough for the Jayakody's. The Sri Lankan Tea Commissioner's office in Japan was closed down and Hubert Jayakody was appointed to represent Sri Lankan tea in Japan.

Part of the Air Lanka office in Japan was given for Hubert Jayakody's use. Of course, he took the better portion of the office.

Hubert Jayakody has also been given a diplomatic passport. This contravenes all our Foreign Ministry conventions.

For the last several years without calling for tenders Hubert Jayakody has also been awarded the contract to run the Sri Lanka stall at International Expo exhibitions. Expos are trade exhibitions held in different countries and all countries of the world take part. Each country stall makes a huge profit in



foreign money. Hubert Jayakody ran the Sri Lankan stalls at Expos in Canada, Australia and Spain. No tenders were called and other business people could not compete. To run the Expo. Hubert Jayakody also gets all assistance from the Sri Lankan government free of charge. Air Lanka flies out his entire staff (more than 100 people) at concessionary rates. But he keeps all the profits. The Sri Lankan shipping Corporation takes all the goods and materials for the Sri Lankan stall free of charge. Premadasa must explain how Jayakody is given this valuable Expo contract without calling for tenders.

More recently on 5th March 1993, Hubert Jayakody was awarded the contract to run the famous Sri Lanka Tea Centre at Picadilly Circus in London. This is a highly profitable contract for Jayakody. How was this given to him and at what price?

The Jayakody's have also purchased three huge holiday mansions near the race course in Nuwara Eliya. These houses are near the Boat House at the Nuwara Eliya Lake. The houses are called "Yalta," "Queen's" and "Sinhagiri."

More recently, not satisfied with Nuwara Eliya's cold climate, the Jayakody's have built another mansion at Morawewa Beach in Duwa about 1/4 mile from Negombo town. You can go to it on bus route No: 273 on the Pitipana Road from Negombo and the telephone number to this holiday home is (031) 3439. It is close to the Welle Vidiya Church in Duwe. A huge wall has been constructed right round the house so that the poor people cannot see the house or the inside of the house.

No tourist resorts have been permitted in Duwe which is a village of about 22 Acres containing 600 families. How did the

Jayakody's get permission to build this house in Duwe. No plans have been submitted to the Wattala Pradesiya Sabha for their approval of this building. Also no property rates are being paid to the Pradesiya Sabha by the Jayakody's. The land on which their house stands is about 1/4 acre.

During the monsoon, the sea water came too close to the house. So what did the Jayakody's do. They contacted the Coast Conservation Dept. and because of the connection to the President - nearly Rs 15 million worth of huge rocks were transported from Colombo and piled up in front of the Wall to the house to protect the house. Huge machinery was also brought to do this job. None of the poor homes and huts of the 600 village families that live in Duwe were assisted in this way. If the sea water caused a danger to their houses it did not matter. The total cost of placing rocks opposite the Jayakody home could have cost over Rs 20 million if one takes account of the cost of machinery and labour also. The Jayakody's got all this work done free. So as regards the Jayakody house at Duwe.

- (a) The plans were not approved.
- (b) The rates have not been paid.
- (c) No payment has been made for the work done by the Coast Conservation Dept.

The Jayakody's have constructed a seven storey huge building at Sir Marcan Marker Mawatha Colombo, next to the Holiday Inn Hotel. This building is their Sri Lankan headquarters. The building also contains a posh Japanese restaurant. It is said that this seven-storey building is an unauthorized structure and has violated normal municipal regulations but no action is taken because of connections to the President.

### **Janasaviya benefits to Hema's family**

Not only the Jayakodys, but Hema Premadasa's (nee Wickramatunga) family members also benefitted from the *Janasaviya* Programme. One brother was sent as Sri Lanka's ambassador to Sweden, but he had to return in disgrace because of his well-known homosexual tendencies. Not only did he lose his diplomatic job, but also his newly-married Sri Lankan wife. Hema then "persuaded" Premadasa to give him a lucrative petrol shed at Narahenpita, almost free of charge.

Another brother (with very average qualifications) got a senior staff job at the Bank of Ceylon's London Branch and has been there since 1978 – now more than 15 years! A third brother who was posted as a clerk to the Sri Lankan High Commission in Singapore was suddenly made Deputy High Commissioner in February 1989 – one of the first acts of Premadasa as President. No members of the First Lady's family have been left out. One of her few requests that Premadasa avoided granting was to make Rosie Senanayake Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to Canada!

The Jayakody companies are called the *Huejay* Group. *Huejay* means Hubert Jayakody. Following are some;

- (i) Huejay International Ltd.
- (ii) Huejay Horticulture Ltd.
- (iii) Huejay Investments Ltd.
- (iv) Huejay Multiflora Ltd.
- (v) Huejay Orient Ltd.

They also have a huge building at No. 166/2 High Level Road, Maharagama and they have houses in Nugegoda. So sum up the Hubert Jayakody empire is a huge one – all supported by

Premadasa. Apart from the huge offices and buildings he owns in Japan, he has

- (1) The large flower project and several lake-side mansions in Nuwara Eliya, "Sinhagiri," "Yalta" and "Queens," to name but three, all furnished by Sotherby's of London and worth more than Rs 25 million each.
- (2) the headquarters building in Colombo.
- (3) the house in Duwe, Negombo.
- (4) the buildings and houses in Maharagama and Nugegoda.
- (5) the mansion in England.

All his buildings and houses in Sri Lanka are guarded by the Police and other Security Personnel (Special Task Force) at State expenses. The State also provides personal bodyguards for the Jayakody family.

The Jayakody's because of their close connection to President Premadasa, also make huge sums of illegal money by acting as commission agents. It is said that in the recent purchases of Seven (7) Air buses by Air Lanka at a cost of nearly Rs 5000 million (5 billion) the commission was shared by Maharajah organisation and the Jayakodys.

This is one good example of President Premadasa's poverty alleviation programme. The Jayakodys are true *Janasaviya* recipients.

### Plight of Premadasa's own sisters.

While the Jayakody and the kith and kin of Mrs Hema Premadasa basked in the glory and patronage of the Premadasa Presidency, Premadasa's own three sisters – Rupawathie, Somawathie and Ariyawathie – were thoroughly neglected by the all powerful eldest brother. As a critic of Janasaviya commented: "charity must begin at home. Premadasa should have looked after his sisters before thinking of others". But not only Premadasa, even Hema, Dulanjali and Sajith ignored the three sisters and behaved as if they did not exist. They did however surface when Premadasa's casket lay for public reverence at President's House. It was the first time that most members of the public saw them and knew of their existence !

### Premadasa sues Upali Wijewardena

In June 1982 when he was Prime Minister Premadasa sued Upali Newspapers for defamation. The "Divaina" paper of 22nd May 1992 had reported a speech of Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike where she had stated that leading UNP politicians were corrupt and questioned how Prime Minister Premadasa (who claimed to be a poor man) found the money to educate his son and daughter in England. The number of the case filed by Premadasa is 86759/Money District court of Colombo.

Upali Wijewardena decided to fight the case rather than pay Rs 2 million damage claimed by Premadasa. His newspaper filed a defense stating that the statements made by Mrs Bandaranaike were in the "public interest" and were true. He also served several interrogations (questions) which he asked Premadasa to answer. Some of the items Upali Wijewardena

wanted Premadasa to produce were:-

- (a) All receipts of payments made to Mill Hill School, in England where son Sajit was educated.
- (b) The Registrar of Births Colombo to produce the birth certificate of *Ranahimalage* Premadasa (for caste reasons, Premadasa had changed *Ranahinnalage* to *Ranasinhge*)
- (c) The proceedings in District Court of Colombo case No. 36707/M (This is the case where Premadasa was caught with knuckle dusters and which is referred to earlier in this book).

Prime Minister Premadasa's case against Upali Newspapers never went to trial. President J. R. Jayawardene did not want the UNP government to be embarrassed by such a trial. So according to well informed sources he gave Rs One million from the Presidents Fund to Upali Newspapers to give it to Premadasa and the case was settled for Rs One million. Often Premadasa boasted how he sued the Upali newspapers and won One million – but few know the real truth as to how the case was settled.

### Premadasa 's testamentary case

The Daily News of 25th August 1993 reported that Mrs Hema Premadasa had filed a Testamentary case in the District Court of Colombo stating that her late husband had died without leaving a will and asking that she be appointed to administer his assets which she valued at Rs 8.9 million. The following is a schedule of the assets left by Premadasa and their value as given by her.



Any reader will laugh at the valuations given by Mrs Premadasa of her husbands 52 acre estate at Ambanpola and his houses at - Sucharita and at - Wijerama Mawatha Colombo seven. All these houses and properties were vastly improved at - state expense and now must be worth several millions. They have been heavily undervalued with the sole object of paying less in stamp duties and death duties. Also according to this petition Mrs Premadasa claims that the Late President had only Rs 80,000/= in cash at the time he died. No one will believe this. Everyone knows that President Premadasa had over Rs 300 Million in cash at Sucharita. Huge sums of money had been collected and given to him for the UNP's Provincial Councils election campaign and all this money was with Premadasa at Sucharita when he died on 1st May 1993. Even Sirisena Cooray the UNP's General Secretary wants to know who took this vast amount of money.

Mrs Hema Premadasa is said to have come to Sucharita and taken away all the cash and other valuables that was there, but she has not disclosed this wealth to the District Court of Colombo.

### **Paskaralingam and Premadasa**

Today the greatest danger to Sri Lanka is Paskaralingam. Like Premadasa's, Paskaralingam's initials are R.P. and his birthday falls one day before Premadasa's (22nd June). Paskaralingam is running our country. He is above all Cabinet Ministers and nothing can get done in Sri Lanka unless Paskaralingam gives approval. In our entire history since independence no single individual has wielded so much power as Paskaralingam. The well known magazine AsiaWeek has said that "Paskaralingam is the second most powerful man in Sri Lanka next to R Premadasa". Paskaralingam through illegal commissions has

also amassed a huge fortune even larger than that of the Maharajahs and the Jayakodys. All his wealth is kept in foreign bank accounts in London where his wife and family live. His brother Mahalingam who also lives in London is the contact point with the LTTE. Our sinhala nation will be destroyed by Paskaralingam because he is ready to run away at a moment's notice. He has no ties in Sri Lanka. He has no family that lives here. No one knows how he operates. There are enough able efficient and honest public servants in our country who can easily replace him. Why does Premadasa entrust so much power to one individual? The obvious reason is that like Premadasa, Paskaralingam is also a man of action. He is also extremely efficient and can get any directives implemented without delay or question. Because of his long years in public service he knows who is who in the administration. The other reason is that since Premadasa became Prime Minister in 1978, it was Paskaralingam who managed Premadasa's overseas funds which accumulated in increasingly large amounts as time went by. It is said that Telecom officials with radio scanners have picked up Paskaralingam negotiating money on his mobile phone. On one occasion in October 1992 Paskaralingam had wanted to bring a foreigner who wanted to give a donation to any premadasa sponsored fund. Premadasa who was at the other end of the phone conversation, had said " yes I need about Rs 500,000 every month to pay the monthly salaries of the party office". Whether this money went to the party pay roll or not, let the reader be the judge. Premadasa could never trust someone of his own background to look after his ill-gotten gains, so he relied heavily on Paskaralingam and Paskaralingam knew this and took full advantage for his own personal benefit as well.

## Some of Paskaralingam's silent deals

### *4000 buses ordered under cloud of mystery*

He was behind the multimillion rupee deal involving about 4000 new buses for the peopolised depots ordered through a Sri lankan based company in London. Informed sources say that Premadasa government had ordered them in october 1992. According to news paper reports the National Transport Commission and the Sri lanka transport board officials have denied there involvement in the order. There were paper cuttings and photographs in the london news papers, where Paskaralingam was shaking hands over the same deal with a British businessman and one Ravi Wettasinghe, from Sri lanka.

### *Billion rupee 80 mega watt diesel power plant in Sapugaskanda*

Eyebrows were raised by the new Wijetunge administration when they discovered that the above project was forced to be accepted by the Ceylon Electricity Board, outside normal tender procedure's. Another Rs 2000 million project promoted by the maharaja group, on a build own and transfer to the state basis. This project would have never been pushed without the blessings of Premadasa and Paskaralingam. Paskeralingam would have been very unhappy with the cancellation of this private sector involved project, where one of his nominees would have been made a share holder of the power plant company.

### *Chartering vessels for the shipping of petroleum and wheat.*

Paskaralingam is said to have amassed millions of rupees as commissions by appointing shipping companies at his discretion to ship all oil purchased by the petroleum corporation.

## *DAE WOO oil deal*

This was the first deal struck by Paskaralingam after Premadasa came to power. In this deal Premadasa and paskaralingam flouted all practises followed by the treasury, and the petroleum corporation. It has been the practise to buy the petroleum requirements in the spot market as and when the stocks run low at the depots in Sri lanka. Paskaralingam is said to have signed an agreement to purchase the oil needed for one whole year from a non oil producing company, without taking into consideration exchange rate fluctuations.

These are some of the deals that paskeralingam has been directly involved in. one would ask is this all what this man has been fixing. Contrary to this, senior civil servants have discovered that paskeralingam has had a way about him, by appointing officials to tender boards and evaluating committees who could manipulate tenders in favour of his nominees. During the past four years Paskeralingam has had an excellent run fixing tenders in the Telecommunications Ministry and in the Ceylon Electricity board. After the new administration had removed his direct involvement in these two ministries, the Engineers unions of both ministries have petitioned against the appointment of stooge tender boards to these organisations. Some engineers have even gone to the extent of accusing the Director of external resources Akiel Mohammed as being Paskeralingam's front man. He is also the permanent chairman of the Cabinet appointed tender board of the Ministry of power and energy under which the largest government contracts are awarded to the tune of 3000 million Rupees annually. His signature alone is said to be costing the contractors millions of Rupees per contract in kickbacks. Akiel Mohammed is said to be in the hands of the Maharaja

organisation, who has helped Akiel and his family to build expensive houses in Colombo and with money over seas.

*"Wije, Wije, Wije "*

I end this book on *Premadasa of Sri Lanka* with a popular anecdote and it is recorded so that all may share it.

When Premadasa was Prime Minister under "JR", he had asked his Malayali astrologer in South India whether there were any persons who were serious obstacles to Premadasa's succession as President. The astrologer had replied *"Wije, Wije, Wije"*. Premadasa understood the reply and very soon his arch enemy, the business tycoon Upali Wijewardena disappeared in his private plane which had taken off from Malaysia.

Premadasa thanked the astrologer and said 'surely now the path is clear', to which again the astrologer replied *"wije, Wije, Wije"*

Alas, in a short time the popular film idol and political star, *Vijaya Kumaranatunge* was brutally slain at his Colombo residence.

Premadasa then became President. He now consulted the same astrologer and asked "are there any people who will prevent me from stabilizing my Presidency". The astrologer gave the same reply *"Wije, Wije, Wije"*.

Very soon Rohana *Wijeweera* was captured and killed, but yet the Malayali astrologer warned Premadasa saying, *"Wije, Wije, Wije"*.

Then, state Minister for Defence the powerful *Ranjan Wijeratne* was killed by a bomb. Premadasa had stabilised his Presidency. He then asked the astrologer, "who will prevent my second term as President" to which the astrologer gave the same reply *"Wije, Wije, Wije"*. Soon Brigadier *"Wijeya"* *Wimalaratne* was killed. Premadasa felt comfortable, despite this the subsequent killings of General *Kobbekaduwa* and DUNF leader *Lalith Athulathmudali*, Premadasa felt that he will win a second term and then rule for ever. But he himself was killed on 1st May 1993.

His lieutenant *Sirisena Cooray* was puzzled. He and his boss had attended to everyone that stood in their way. So he travelled to Madras and asked the Malayali soothsayer as to what had gone wrong. The astrologer stood his ground and said "I have always been right," and added *"Wije, Wije, Wije"*. Not blessed with too much intelligence, *Sirisena Cooray* was still non-plussed. *"Wije, Wije, Wije"*, he pondered; who could this be? Then one of his more educated aides said why sir, *D.B.W.* - *D.B. Wijetunge*.

So as many years ago, the Roman Emperor *Julius Caesar* was warned "Beware the Ides of March", in more modern times, the Sri Lankan Emperor, *Ranasinghe Premadasa*, was warned *Wije, Wije, Wije"*.

**End**





# DINNER

in honour of

Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, M.P.,  
*Secretary of State for the Environment*

given by

Rt. Hon. R. Premadasa, M.P.,  
*Prime Minister of Sri Lanka*

Monday, 23rd July, 1979

ROYAL GARDEN HOTEL  
LONDON



A close look at this photograph will reveal that the head-comb has been painted over later.



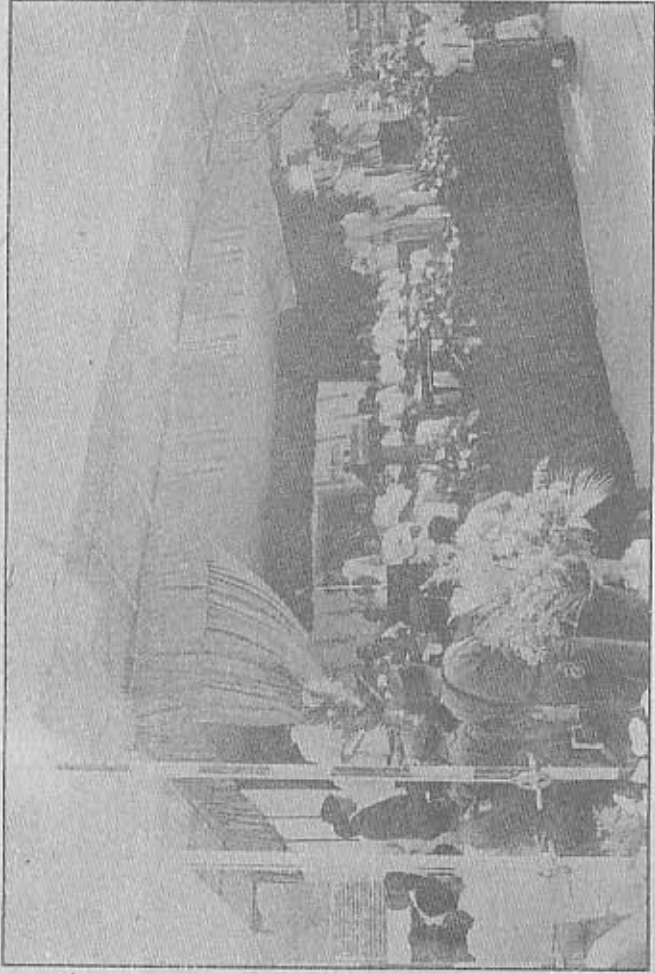
It is mentioned in Bradmon Weerakoon's "Premadasa of Sri Lanka" that this is Premadasa when he was at St Joseph's college.

But "Premadasa Abinandana" (Tribute to Premadasa) in which this photograph appeared for the first time did not mention about St Joseph's college.

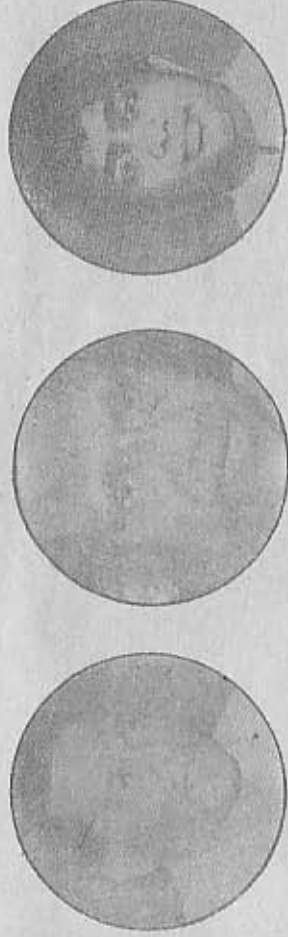


Joe Sim with Presidential adviser Bradmon Weerakoon.

34816



President Premadasa and other Ministers waiting to receive Joe Sim on the platform.



Note the similarity among these faces.





Hema Premadasa with the Joe Sim family.

## Late President left estate worth Rs. 8.9 m

A testamentary action has been filed in the District Court of Colombo by Madam Hema Wickrematunga Premadasa with regard to the intestate estate of the late President Ranasinghe Premadasa valued at Rs.8.9 million.

Mr. Sajit Ranasinghe Premadasa and Mrs. Dulanjali Chandraketha Jayakody (nee Premadasa) have been cited as first and second respondents by Madam Premadasa who has asked for letters of administration to the intestate estate.

She has said in her petition filed by her lawyer Mr.

S. Sundaralingam of Sundaralingam Associates that she apprehended no opposition to her application to the grant to her of the letters of administration and the minutes of consent of Mr. Sajit Premadasa and Mrs. Dulanjali Jayakody have been annexed to the petition.

Additional District Judge Upali Abeyratne has given time till November 1 for any interested party to appear in court and show cause why the Order Nisi should not be entered declaring Madam Premadasa of No.93, Wijerama Mawatha, Colombo 7, as entitled to the letters of administration.

The following schedule of assets have been filed in this action:

(a) Immovables

1. Agricultural property Udangawa Kahabiliyawa Estate at Ambanpola. Extent 52 acres together with the agricultural equipment and machinery lying thereon. Rs. 199,568.00
2. Premises bearing assessment No.15, Sucharitha Mawatha, Colombo 12. Extent 14.30 perches. Rs. 175,000.00
3. Premises bearing assessment No.93, Wijerama Mawatha, Colombo 7. Extent 1 rood 8.94 perches. Rs. 968,020.00 Rs. 1,342,588.00

(b) Movables

1. Motor vehicles
- (i) Motor car - Benz bearing registration No.15 Sri 8669. Rs. 810,000.00

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Rs. 968,020.00 Rs. 1,342,588.00

### (b) Movables

1. Motor vehicles

(i) Motor car - Benz bearing registration No.15 Sri 8669.

Rs. 810,000.00

(ii) Motor car - Proton Saga bearing

registration No.15 Sri 8939

Rs. 105,000.00

(iii) Motor car - Morris Minor bearing registration No.EN 1952

Rs. 20,000.00

(iv) Pajero Jeep bearing registration No.32 Sri 4845

Rs. 71,500.00 Rs. 1,006,500.00

2. Jewellery

5 Rings

Rs. 60,000.00

Rs. 300,000.00

3. Personal household furniture & equipment

4. Annuity Policy

Policy No.581191 Total amount due together with interest

Rs. 165,506.00

5. Costs awarded in S/C Case No.1/89 (Election Petition) (Amount under appeal).

Rs. 1,712,917.00

Investments - In Unit Trust

Management Co. (Pvt) Ltd

Rs. 108,247.00

7. Bank balance as at 31.04.93

(i) Bank of Ceylon Hulsidorp. (a) Current A/c No.1014

Rs. 703,728.69

(b) Savings A/c No.2282

Rs. 68,481.92 Rs. 772,210.61

(ii) National Savings Bank Fixed Deposits (a)

FD:TAX:12:17:1546

Rs. 1,114,986.00

(b) TAX/12/17/1204

Rs. 500,561.00

(c) FD/CB/TAX/12/15/702

Rs. 1,200,165.00

(d) TAX/15/12/108

Rs. 16,335.00

(e) TAX/15/12/107

Rs. 567,055.00 Rs. 3,399,100.00

8. Cash in hand as at 30.04.93

Rs. 80,000.00

Rs. 8,947,068.61

Total assets

Less - Liabilities

Income Tax and Surcharge 1992/93

Rs. 37,000.00

Rs. 8,910,068.61

