

**Agonies**

**&**

**Aspirations**

**of the Tamil Struggle**

**S. J. Emmanuel**



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Dedicated to the Memory  
of



Three Friends who were  
Courageous Champions for Truth and Justice,  
and who were murdered  
by the enemies of Tamil Liberation

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## **Agonies and Aspirations**

### **(Key Facets of the Tamil Struggle)**

Right from my undergraduate days in Colombo (1954-8), I have been a keen observer of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, in its various stages of degeneration to violence and war. During the last two decades I have had the privilege to accompany my Tamil people in their struggle for truth, justice and freedom. I myself was a victim and a witness of the multifaceted struggle going through various phases in which Tamils were subject to horrendous destruction through aerial bombings, mass murders, rapes and starvation. In such a context I felt it my sacred duty as a christian priest to be a voice for my people - who were crucified and made voiceless.

Thanks to the heroic Struggle under the leadership of the LTTE on the battle front as well as among the people. The sacrifices of the people in the war zones and the services of the expatriate Tamils on the international front provided valuable strength to the struggle. With such a unity in ideology and leadership, the Tamil cause for Truth, Justice and Freedom is destined to triumph. It has matured with crystal clear aspirations and unity of leadership. It has of late won international understanding and sympathy.

With the longest Cease Fire Agreement and Talks with the Sri Lankan Government, the LTTE has proved its commitment to a just and peaceful solution of the conflict. With the resounding victory of the Tamil National Alliance in the last parliamentary elections, the Tamil people have given a clear mandate as to how the parliamentary leadership and the LTTE leadership stand as one united Tamil leadership for Tamil Nationalism, homeland and self-rule.

Unfortunately, there is still suspicion, misunderstandings and even anger and hatred on the Sinhala side about the Tamil Struggle. Further there is lack of good will to understand the problem in all its dimensions. The only intention of many Sinhalese still appears to be to wipe off the unique leadership of the LTTE as mere terrorists. They want either the Sri Lankan Forces or the super powers like the US or India to do it. There is no strong will and statesmanship on the part of the Sinhala governments to take bold steps towards seeking a just and peaceful solution.

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I present here another collection of my writings on some of the key facets of the Tamil Liberation Struggle. I have brought them under the title „Agonies and Aspirations“, because I am convinced that the Tamil Aspirations, were neither formulated by academics nor imposed on the Tamil people but were born out of the prolonged Agonies the Tamil people suffered under the Sinhala governments for over fifty years. Thus Tamil agonies are the foundations of the Tamil aspirations.

While strengthening further the convictions of the Tamils, I want to clarify the misunderstandings and antagonisms of those opposed to our struggle and thus pave the way for a just and peaceful settlement of the conflict. I am proud to dedicate a first edition of this effort to Mr. Kumar Ponnambalam, whom I admire for his courage and with whom I had the privilege to stand for truth and justice.

I express my sincere gratitude to good friends -Mr. Ivan Pedropillai, who helped in the proof-reading, Mr. Camillus Thuraisingham for page-making, Mr. Marisal Gabriel for art work and Mr. Ambalavanarpillai for printing.

July 2004

S. J. Emmanuel

*A note to this second edition:-* In the present phase of the Tamil Struggle the second generation of diaspora Tamils have a key role to play. I am interested that they be well informed of the different phases the struggle has gone through during the past 58 years. Since I look forward to write about the present political developments of the last two years, I have not attempted additions to this edition.

I dedicate this second edition to the memory of two more friends who were champions of Truth and Justice and who were murdered, like Kumar Ponnambalam by the enemies of Tamil liberation.

I am thankful to Mr. Sarvanamuttu Muttiah of London for his valuable suggestions and corrections in re-editing this book and to the family of Mr. Valentine Kurusumuttu of Warstein for their hospitality during mypreparation of this edition.

July 2006

S. J. Emmanuel

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## HISTORIC EXODUS OUT OF JAFFNA

*„This mass exodus of half a million Tamils proclaims to the world that our people are determined to live as free beings with dignity and prepared to face any form of suffering to be independent rather than subjecting themselves to domination by the aggressor” (LTTE Leader Velupillai Prabaharan on 27th Nov.1995)*

The night of Monday October 30, 1995 was a black night in the entire history of the age-old City of Jaffna. Never has history witnessed such an exodus of fear and panic stricken people screaming and squeezing themselves out of the narrow roads and lanes of Jaffna. Nearly half a million population in and around the



Town was literally on the roads in pouring rain inching its way out of the densely populated town into the sparsely populated and ill-equipped suburban villages of the southern Peninsula. For each of these 500,000 it was a flight for survival.

### 1. Tamils fleeing away from Sinhala „liberators”

In 1987 when the then Minister for Security Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali suggested that the people of Jaffna move to the South of Vavuniya so that the Sri Lankan Army could take on the LTTE in a straight war, the Tamil population laughed it off as a joke. It was such an impossible and ridiculous task to evacuate the large population of the once second largest town of Sri Lanka. But this „impossible and ridiculous” scenario was forced on us and was happening before our very eyes in 1995.

The fear and the horror the Tamils have for the Sri Lankan Forces are well known. The Colombo Government kept proclaiming loudly to the world outside that the State Forces were moving into Jaffna „to liberate the

Tamils from the clutches of the LTTE". But the bitter lessons, the Tamils had learnt for four decades at the hands of the Forces, were never to be forgotten. Hence at every military operation the fear-filled Tamils were fleeing with all their might away from an advancing army as if all hell had been let loose on them! The *Riviresa* Operation to capture Jaffna and the consequent exodus out of Jaffna was no exception.

Those who sat in authority in Colombo continue to think that their army is disciplined and courteous. This may be true to a certain extent in the South where an almost hundred percent Sinhala army moves at ease among its own people. But when the same army is among those whom they consider as potential terrorists, if not LTTErs, their behaviour is charged with fear and anger reaching a heightened level of state terrorism. The attitude of a nearly one hundred percent Sinhala Army to the exclusion of Tamils has been an important factor in the escalation of anti-Tamil operations of the army. Even the break down of the cessation of hostilities on the 19th April 1995 many Tamils know, was largely due, to the Army being unwilling to implement or give in to the decisions of the Government

Hence on the whole, the Tamil experience of Sinhala army during the last few decades was never a fearless one, but one fraught with unforgettable incidents of death, disappearance, destruction, loot, rape and bribery. And these hard learnt lessons of bitter experience cannot be easily erased off from the Tamil mind.

## **2. Waves of Displacements**

Already as a result of the earlier military operations against the LTTE, the Peninsula had experienced many waves of heavy displacements. As soon as Eelam War II started in 1990, the Army had forcibly occupied the villages of Mathagal, Ilavalai, Vasavilan and the islands of Mandaitivu, Kayts, Delft and Pooneryn. The people who fled the atrocities of that military occupation moved into Manipay, Sandilipay, Chunnakam and even Kilinochchi. Many were surviving in cadjan-sheds and tents made out of their rags without proper shelter against wind and sun. They had already lost their only means of livelihood, namely fishing, because of the military ban on going out into the

seas. Their survival depended entirely on the rice-rations distributed by some cooperatives and non-governmental organisations. Their ill-fed children were accommodated in make-shift huts looked after by some volunteer teachers. This situation had already continued for almost five years and their survival under such inhuman conditions is almost a miracle.

The Talks between the Government and the LTTE broke down on April 19, 1995. The economic embargo on the Tamils which was partially lifted during the Talks were again brought into full operation with lightening speed and a series of three military operations followed. As a result, between April and September 1995, three mass displacements had already taken place in quick succession before operation *Riviresa* started in October for the take over of Jaffna.

After much planning and shopping for weapons from many countries around the world, the Government heaped up nearly four



thousand troops with sophisticated weapons in about five large army camps around the Peninsula to take over Jaffna. The Sri Lankan Army's first major operation in Eelam War II was operation „*Leap Forward*“. The army kept harassing and threatening the population from their Palaly Base with long-range artillery shells. Even after a limited operation the so-called „*Shake-Hands*“ the people didn't have the courage to go back to their badly destroyed homes for fear of land mines.

Besides the heavy death toll for the Armed Forces and the LTTE, the destruction of homes and the displacement of people from almost 78 square kilometres of the Peninsula, Jaffna town witnessed the second wave of displacement from Valigamam West and its peripheries towards the centre of the Peninsula. Soon afterwards, in a bid to extend the Air Base at Palaly

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to suit the landing of planes with the monsoon change in the direction of winds, operation „*Lightening Thunder*“ started moving in the direction of Atchuveley. This brought a third wave of displaced people into the Jaffna area.

The newly occupied area of the Army around Atchuveley and Urumpirai was the rich red soil region of Jaffna which produces good fruits and vegetables for the Peninsula. The people who were chased by shelling and bombing had to leave behind all their fruits of labour to the state-forces and flee for survival. The Jaffna population, now swollen by many waves of displacements, was already experiencing heavy shortage of fish, vegetables even plantains and were driven further into malnourishment.

Above all, these shortages caused by the inhuman embargo of the Government on essentials for life coupled with the army occupation of Tamil lands with vegetables and fruits, there hang over the dense population of residents and refugees in Jaffna, the dark clouds of an imminent major military operation to capture the densely populated Jaffna. The artillery shelling of the outskirts of the town with increased frequency both during day and night, heightened this imminent danger and kept the population nervous and in a state of unending anxiety.

### **3. Presidential Excuses to cover up the Sinhala Invasion**

Just before the longer „*Riviresa*“ Operation towards Jaffna, the Sri Lankan war planes dropped two types of handbills in Tamil around 10.00pm on October 12 and 13, 1995. Because of the monsoon winds, the handbills were carried largely into the army occupied areas. By some chance, some fell into the fields around Kilinochchi, a refugee-centre for people fleeing away from the Peninsula. What was in these hand-bills?

After setting in motion a series of military operations against the Tamils from April 1995, President Chandrika came out on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. of August 1995 with a set of proposals which were held out to the Sinhalese and the international media to justify her military operations. These proposals were not sent to the LTTE nor were they addressed to the Tamils in their language. But now on the eve of capturing Jaffna, war planes were dropping two types of handbills giving a summary of her peace-proposals to the Tamils who were fleeing for

survival. These proposals at the time were of least interest to the majority of Northern Tamils living on that dark prison-peninsula in their refugee camps and shivering with fear about an imminent attack.

But the larger handbill, with a good colour picture of the President, carried a letter of the President, addressed specifically to the civilians of Jaffna, not to the de facto leadership- the LTTE. It was like an invitation into a spider's web, to wean the people from the LTTE's protective and defensive leadership into her destructive war. It was addressed to a people for whom she first promised „peace and no more war“ but now dropping bombs over them. Even here she tried to speak of this destructive war as a „war made for peace“. Apologetically she spoke of „a war thrust on her“. And finally she told the Tamils, already shivering with fear for their lives, that this war was not against the Tamils, but only against the LTTE! Was this message of the President not a last minute effort to quieten her own conscience? With her promises of peace was she not trying to cover up the atrocities committed in that massive and murderous plan to take over Jaffna?

The Paris-educated lady knew only too well how densely populated the Jaffna town was. She knew of the waves of displacements which had made Jaffna already a badly congested town. She knew that it was a spacious town now reduced to be like a dark dungeon of a prison, without basic facilities of electricity, transport, and communication. She knew the desperate situation of a congested population eating the bare minimum and languishing on the borders of death and destruction. She also knew the anguish and agony of the increasing number of orphans and widows as a consequence of the twelve years of war waged by the State from 1983. But all these were drowned in her lust for power and in her loyalty to the chauvinistic ideals of her race and above all by her rage against the de facto leadership of the Tamils, the LTTE.

#### **4. Last Days of Jaffna**

„*Operation Riviresa*“ the finale for the take over of Jaffna, commenced on October 17, 1995 under a cloudy weather with signs of imminent monsoon showers. Day and night it thundered and shuddered and people trembled and shivered. The whole peninsula was vibrating day and night with the tremors of aerial bombs and shells, which were directed to scare and drive away the people from the approaching State Forces. They were falling far beyond the

combatant area of Atchuveley, Neervely and Kopay obviously directed into the densely populated town of Jaffna. Powerful search lights rotating from the army camps lit up the skies periodically and kept up the fear among a people engulfed in darkness.

How could the population survive such aerial attacks, bombardment and artillery shelling and wait for the arrival of their „Sinhala liberators“? The Sri Lankan Army having learnt many useful lessons from the experiences of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) against the LTTE in 1987, started its own Operations after many weeks of intense military planning and preparation.

The approaching sounds and tremors sent a cold and frightening message into the heart of the Jaffna population, that was fast becoming a dense dungeon already overflowing with three waves of refugees from the peripheral villages. The message was fatal. It read - The Sri Lankan Army is poised for a ruthless and destructive but definitive takeover of Jaffna

In summary, with nearly forty thousand troops and tanks with modern weapons of destruction surrounding them, the population of Jaffna, shrunk with fear and hopelessness, summoned utmost courage to face the ordeal of a final encounter.

If the intended take-over was to be a direct confrontation on land, then the people could have, to some extent, relied on the defensive and protective strength of the LTTE. But the Army movement towards Jaffna was prepared for many miles ahead by indiscriminate shelling and aerial bombing against the civilian population. The State Forces purportedly coming „to liberate Jaffna and the Tamils from the clutches of the LTTE“, were not approaching them with a bouquet of *suthu nelum* (white lotus) for the people of Jaffna, but with a shower of shells, bombs and bullets. The world has still to learn from the Sri Lankan government Forces how to liberate a people by showering destructive weapons over them!

## **5. A timely warning from a responsible Leadership**

The Sri Lankan Government may have partially succeeded through its false propaganda in convincing the world that this war was a war for peace and not war against the Tamils. But the Tamils of the North knew by bitter experiences

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of forty years of death and destruction what the state with its military was up to.

Day by day the LTTE followed the advancement of the military operation code-named *Riviresa* and on the eve of October 30, 1995, the final warning was made by the de facto leaders of the Tamils and it was a necessary one. It said:- *The State Forces are approaching the town of Jaffna and the Tigers will fight tooth and nail to defend it. It is advisable for the people to move to safer areas of Thenmaraadchy, Vadamarachy or Wann.*

This warning was enough to move a whole population into a panic-stricken exodus. There were no forcing or threats from the LTTE as made out by the Sinhala journalists and some anti-LTTE Tamils living far away from the Northeast in their Colombo hide-outs. They were the Judasses earning their living by sending false media reports to the world outside.

Surprised by the massive exodus from Jaffna, the hired Tamil politicians of Chandrika, started shedding crocodile tears for the Tamils. They first accused the LTTE of having forced the people out from Jaffna at gun-point. Unable to sell their own version to the people, they turned around in favour of the Government and said that the Armed Forces gave wise and timely instructions to the people to move out of the war Zone. Naturally those who lived away from Jaffna did not hear the shells nor saw the bombs, they only saw Tigers in every nook and corner of Jaffna. They did not hesitate to tell contradictory lies to the world in an attempt to discredit the LTTE.

When there is a fatal threat to life of a people, it is the duty of all responsible leaders to warn of the dangers to life and even help people to move out of the danger zone. This is what the LTTE did on the days around October 30, 1995. They announced by means of loud speakers the growing threat to life and provided whatever transport possible to the old and the sick to move out of the danger-zone. It is true that this sudden exodus for safety caused much hardships, especially for the old and the sick, and deprived many of taking all their belongings with them. But the most important thing was survival.

Because the Tigers were successful in delaying the army-advance near Kopay the civilians were allowed and even helped with vehicles in the case of transferring the sick and the aged even to re-enter Jaffna and recover some

more essentials. Many made use of the first week of November to re-enter Jaffna and collect a few more belongings while others were not able to do so due to reasonable fear and high cost of transport. A timely warning given to flee away from the dangers of bombs and a help-given by the LTTE for the orderly and safe removal of certain belongings from Jaffna was mischievously construed by the Government propaganda and anti-Tamil agents as „forcing the people to flight at gun point“

## 6. Squeezing out „through the Eye of a Needle“!

The attempt of a few hundred thousand people rushing with their belongings to go through the one and only exit-bridge at Navatkuli was almost like the biblical camel attempting to go through the eye of a needle. But, thanks to the street-discipline maintained by the LTTE -Police Force, the population really went through this eye of a needle-bridge.



With the successive coalescence of all the previous waves of displacements, the number of civilians fleeing from the threat of Sri Lankan Army atrocities during that fateful night of October 30, reached an unbelievable 300,000 people in flight.

The monsoon rains beating hard on the faces of weeping mothers and hungry children washed away the sweat and tears. They were all drenched, not so much by the night rains but in the sorrows and pains of leaving their houses in the much loved citadel of Jaffna. Most of them had to leave behind their treasured houses, furniture, gardens and produce - not once, not twice but even thrice, before they undertook this ultimate flight for survival. There was a sorrowful silence enveloping the slow and reluctantly moving crowds. Whenever they spoke each had a more sorrowful story to tell the other.



## 7. Moving out with deep sighs of desperation

They were like those rushing out of a house on fire, neither screaming in fear nor yelling in anger. It was a serious and sorrowful rush for survival, slowed down only by heavy hearts, massive crowding and bad roads. This panic and fear-stricken population evacuating the Peninsula was forced further to slow down as it approached the 6 feet narrow neck of the town - the Navatkuli bridge. Here they were literally trying to inch their way out of danger zone. True, they were moving out of a dangerous zone, but their destiny was still unknown and undecided.

They had no choice between life and death. For survival, they said „let us move out, as quickly as possible and with the maximum that we could carry in our hands, or on a cycle, or in a shared tractor or kerosene van“. But once they passed the Navatkuli bridge, they sighed relief, having come beyond the dangerous zone, but their journey continued. The biggest question of survival now was: „Where are we to seek shelter?“

While standing for hours in the rains in that long queue towards some unknown destiny in the Thenmaraadchy and Vadamaraadchy districts, babies cried for food and drink, some vehicles impatiently tooted their horns while all the others were sunk deep in their silence of sadness.

Either about 15 people of all ages were moving in a single row or six or seven bicycles or kerosene-powered motor cycles, each loaded with at least two bags of personal belongings on the carrier filled the narrow road. Elderly mothers and fathers were seated on the bars of cycles - either ridden or pushed by their younger sons and daughters.

Yet another scene was kerosene-oil powered tractors with trailers loaded with people as well as a variety of things - mats, pillows, kerosene oil lamps, cooking utensils, domestic pets and some food-stuff.

A third pattern was that of a few well-to-do and the aged - in an old Austin A40 car running on kerosene oil (Rs.200 a bottle!) packed with one or two families, their belongings loaded into an open dicky and on the hood-carrier. In between these modes of transport, walked the majority poor with their half

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naked little ones most of them carrying at least one plastic bag of belongings - their goats and cows meekly following them.

Even this inching in the rains ground to a halt when a heavily loaded lorry or tractor turned off the track or one of its tires went flat. Between 5.00pm on Monday and 5.00am on Tuesday three babies had died through the stampede and a pregnant mother gave birth on the road. Hundreds of the aged who crossed the bridge that night did not survive for long. They died a short while later in exile.

There was not a single good hospital outside Jaffna town to cater to the thousands who suffered. Chavakachcheri and Manthikai hospitals were too small and ill-equipped to cater even to a few hundreds.

The pathetic exodus of people carried the inhuman marks of cruelty inflicted over a long time by many of the anti-Tamil measures taken by successive Sinhala Governments, especially by the present one. The inhuman economic embargo enforced by the government on the Tamil people, reduced them to primitive forms of life. The embargo on fuel and closure of the peninsula for outside vehicles made all petrol fuelled vehicles disappear out of Jaffna. Only kerosene fuelled motor cycles and old cars were available for transport. Instead of diesel for lorries, some Tamil brains developed a new fuel from vegetable oils and other chemicals. Though the last 13 years of war and economic blockade have shattered the general quality of life of people, reduced many of them to their skins and bones, isolated them without communication and transport these have spurred them to new discoveries for survival.

## **8. Seeking shelter in the wilderness**

Those who had some relatives or friends beyond Navatkuli, on the safer side of the Bridge, made a bee-line to those houses for refuge. But to each house in Thenmaraadchy and Vadamaradchy came not just one relative or friend from Valigamam, but several hundreds were knocking on their doors for help.

Those who rushed for help claimed different degrees of relationship and friendship with the prospective hosts. Sri Lankans in general, and Jaffna Tamils in particular, cultivate an „enlarged family relationship“ which includes third and fourth degree relations. In Western countries there is a distinction made

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between a very small circle of people called „friends“ and a larger circle of acquaintances - people referred to as known to one another. In Sri Lanka, almost everyone, once met and shortly spoken to, is referred to as a friend. And in time of need, these quickly built relationships become very useful and made best use of. Hence almost every house in Thenmaraadchy was flooded with friends - guests without prior notice - and had to host at least five to six families of instant refugees.

Those who knew no one in these regions went to public places such as temples, churches and schools. In the temples and the churches, no place was too sacred to be reserved for the divine. Even the presbyteries (houses for priests), convents (houses for nuns) and sacristies ( preparatory rooms for divine worship) were overflowing with priests and nuns and some of their bed-ridden parents.

The poorest of the poor were still left on the roadside, under trees, in old and dilapidated shelters at bus-stops and in railway stations, unused for almost a decade. The Sri Lankan Railway and Transport Services had already stopped their services in the North for over a decade. We were a people not only forbidden to go out of the North but also 'a frozen people' devoid of mobility and transport services within our homeland in the North!

### **9. Providing minimum food-clothing-shelter for so many**

A sudden and massive influx of refugees from the Valigamam urban area into the sandy suburban area of Thenmaraadchi with very limited facilities posed a huge human problem. Besides the inclement weather, the dewy nights, the food shortages, problems of sanitation, shelter and medical care there was the absence of any organizational structures to meet such a sudden and heavy demand. But with willing co-operation from all sides, the impossible ceased to be so.

It is to the credit of the LTTE that within two days of the exodus, the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) with assistance of the Government Agents, Non-governmental and religious organizations set up a network of services to cater to the very minimum needs of such a massive population:- cadjan-sheds to protect the people from the rains, tube wells at crowded centres, temporary toilets-ditches to preserve sanitation, distribution of clothes, mats and sheets

to stand the colder nights of November, dry rations or cooked food at least once a day kept the population alive.

Without a single hospital with reasonable facilities like sufficient medicines, drugs, antibiotics, lab-facilities leave alone operation-theatre facilities, the biggest problem was the sanitary-threat to the survival of the refugees. And that too was solved to some satisfactorily level within a week.

#### **10. Government unwilling to accept the Tragedy caused**

Unashamedly, the government was unwilling to accept the reality of this tragedy of a mass exodus and gave false statistics to local and foreign media. The President meeting a high religious dignitary as the Bishop of Jaffna dared to tell him that the exodus was forced by the LTTE and it numbered no more than 50,000 people! Mr. Kadirgamar, the Foreign Minister was reluctant to recognise the displaced as refugees by his sardonic reference that they had not crossed national borders! Based on his own definitions of „national boundaries“ and „refugees“ he found fault with the appeal made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations for international help to aid the half million „Tamil refugees‘. Had these refugees been caused by a flood in the South, this same minister with a Tamil name would have brushed aside all definitions and protocol and himself appealed for help.

Reluctance in accepting the truth of this exodus caused inhuman delays on the part of the Colombo government and its offices. Aid delayed was aid denied and hundreds succumbed to hunger, thirst, inclement weather and sickness.

The growing restrictions imposed by the Government on the flow of food, medicine and other essential items for life, the restrictions on the NGOs in not allowing them to get their means of communication, the restrictions on the media and prohibition of journalists to the North, and continued aerial attacks even on the displaced population were all causing the slow death of the Tamil population as exiles even within their own homeland.

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## 11. Humiliation and Fear of the Tamils in the South

While celebrations were high among the Sinhala majority in the South over the conquest of Jaffna, security measures had to be tightened up to prevent them becoming another anti-Tamil racial hunt for civilian lives. All the Tamils living in the South, especially in Colombo, whether they were supportive or not supportive of the Tamil political demands, whether they were supporters or sympathisers or even opponents of the LTTE, they were all reminded of the ghastly and genocidal horror of the 1983 Holocaust of Tamils. They stayed away from offices and abstained from using public transport. Staying behind closed doors they left no signs outside their houses as to their identity. Even the arch enemies of the Tigers, who might have wished a complete defeat of the Tigers, were not happy about the capture of Jaffna nor about the Sinhala euphoria that might spill over into anti-Tamil riots again.

At least for the previous few weeks following the capture of Jaffna there was a tightening of the security measures in the City of Colombo. The Tamils coming from the North and even those living in the South for many years, were subjected to tight security searches. By these measures the Tamils were painfully reminded who they were in this country and how they were tolerated in the South. The house to house search done on the Tamils, the suspicion cast on them even by their long-time Sinhala neighbours and even friends, the checking done on them by any Sinhalese on the road humiliated them a lot. Even the three-wheel drivers and hawkers overnight turned out to be Sinhala security personnel suspecting every Tamil to be a potential bomb or Tiger. The unlimited detention of Tamils in police stations without questioning, the denial of public transport to them in some areas, and a number of inhuman checks done on their person and their belongings, insisting on special police passes in addition to their national identity cards, were all shameful and humiliating acts done as „security measures“ by a Government and people who keep just saying for the last fifty years that the Tamils are „equal citizens“ in the island as if to satisfy their own conscience. Without finding the facts and the truth whether the Tamils in effect are treated as equals, whether the Tamils feel as equals, it is unwise and counterproductive to force them by military might to that conviction.

## 12. Irrepressible Truth emerges and challenges

After a few weeks, the euphoria of victory fades away, the celebrations too come to an end and real life begins. It is then that the true significance of this deceptive victory begins to emerge. The enlightened Sinhalese begin to realise that it was an expensive pyrrhic victory at the cost of peace and conflict-resolution in the country. So long as the Sri Lankan Army holds on to Jaffna, Sri Lanka has to pay the high price of occupying an alien territory and the Sinhalese will be haunted by a continuous „fear of a Tamil victory”.

The government conducted its war in the Northeast with draconian measures such as media blockade (war behind closed doors!) and using „inhuman weapons“ such as economic blockades. Not allowing local or foreign journalists to go into the war zone, dishing out military reports as media reports, censoring all war-reports in the Colombo media, cutting many essential food and medicine supplies to the North, were resorted to unashamedly by a so called democratic government of Sri Lanka. Were these measures intended to be a „slow death of a population within a gas chamber? The diplomatic missions of the international community and the foreign media correspondents did far too little or nothing to cross into the war-zones to find out the whole truth about the war waged behind closed doors and to ascertain the plight of the population dying there. Thus the war waged by the Sri Lankan Government behind closed doors and economic blockades was in open contravention of all Geneva conventions.

Thanks to the modern ways of communication which pierced through military and diplomatic curtains, reports about the real situation found their way to the Home Pages of the expatriate Tamils all over the world. The international media, which depended heavily on government and Colombo-based reports and were deaf to the cries of the oppressed victims were questioned, if not challenged, by these expatriate efforts. A true interpretation and analysis of the political and imperialistic forces behind the Second World War emerged only after decades of search and study. And the reconciliation of those peoples, even after decades, is not yet complete. Hence the deaths and destruction in the Northeast of Sri Lanka through so many military operations - *Leap Forward, Thunder Strike, Hand Shake and Riviresa* just to mention a few within a short period of three months in the tiny peninsula - may remain hidden

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or covered up for many years, but truth will emerge sooner than later. And hopefully, there will be still time for repentance and reconciliation!

Already three months have elapsed since the alien Sinhala Military occupied Jaffna and chased out the indigenous population. The world has neither known the whole truth of this exodus and massive suffering nor has any Government condemned the actions of the Sri Lanka Government for its inhuman military action. Thus the world which is quick to condemn the counter-violence of a desperate people but reluctant, if not sinfully silent, to condemn state-terror or to search out and treat the underlying cause of violence will one day wake up to this reality and answer its own conscience.

## SINHALA RAPE OF THE TAMIL CAPITAL

### 1. Military Occupation of Jaffna - Victory or Defeat?

The historic military conquest and occupation of Jaffna Town by the Armed Forces of Sri Lanka had been acclaimed as a unique achievement by the



Government of Sri Lanka and its Armed Forces. It has been spoken of by the Government as successful completion of a first phase towards a peaceful solution of the 50-year long ethnic conflict. It has been celebrated by the Sinhalese in general, the Sinhala extremists in particular, as a severe defeat, if not a death-blow, to the Tigers and to the Tamil claim for autonomy. Though these southern reactions have left an indelible mark of humiliation on all self-respecting Tamils both within and outside Sri Lanka, the consequences of these events - the mass-exodus out of Jaffna and the capture of an empty town devoid of its inhabitants - have been interpreted by Tamils as well as by independent political analysts as a defeat for the Government, and worse still, for peace and reconciliation in the country.



## 2. Capture of Jaffna is a historic blunder

Capture of Jaffna was the main target of the final military Operation starting from the military base in Palaly and moving towards the town of Jaffna. The proclaimed intention of the government for this „War for Peace“ was announced to the world as the wiping out or weakening of the Tigers and thus liberating the people of Jaffna from „the clutches of the LTTE“. But that proclaimed intention was only a cover for an imperialistic agenda of the majority Sinhalese, namely, to be the rulers of a subjugated „Tamil minority“. The real intention of the Government was to break the backbone of Tamil resistance, destroy the political fortress of the Tigers in Jaffna and thereby strengthen their own political image in the South as the saviours and defenders of the whole country and its majority race.

Chandrika in her best of intentions, may have planned a strategy of winning over the Sinhala chauvinists to support her and her political package by establishing a triumphant and imperialistic victory over Jaffna. But it has turned out to be a costly experience for her from both sides of the divide. The chauvinists who have once tasted a power-victory by the hoisting of the Sinhala -flag over Jaffna, have not the slightest intention of any power sharing with the Tamils. They are clamouring for one centralised powerful Sinhala Government. And on the Tamil side, the exodus of the Tamils from Jaffna has resulted in the army occupying a ghost-town within fortified high security zones and thus falling into its own ditch. How and when this Sinhala Army of occupation will „liberate itself from its own imprisonment“ is an open question. The subsequent events in the country point towards a historic blunder that the Sinhalese will never be able to justify or rectify!

## 3. Unforgettable Destruction of Tamil Memorials

A mobile guerrilla group, as everyone knows, has no permanent fortress; it has many make-shift bases for existence and combat. Besides its military defences against the Sri Lankan Army, the LTTE has actively fostered, especially during the last five years, the growth in consciousness about the Tamils as a nation and a people with a distinct history and culture. They have established institutional substructures like the police, courts, transport, administration of all social activities and made Jaffna the historical and cultural centre of Tamil Eelam.

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For the Tamils of Sri Lanka, and even for all the Tamils the world over, Jaffna meant not a mere region or a town. It was much more. In recent times it has become a title for a whole nation and its history. The city was proudly adorned with commemorative places of historical importance, statues of Tamil kings and their palaces, literary giants and ideological figures. These were all systematically razed to the ground with vengeance and contempt by the armed forces. Worse still the statues and large cut-outs erected by the LTTE for their fallen heroes were destroyed. In Kopay the large and spacious war-cemetery for over 5000 heroes built painstakingly by the LTTE were bulldozed. In 1981 the Sinhala police in Jaffna, encouraged by leading Sinhala politicians of the UNP, had already started the cultural genocide and set fire to the Jaffna Public Library - a once proud possession of all Tamils, containing over 90,000 valuable and irreplaceable books and manuscripts. Hence these are but barbaric acts of a racist army and police - a historic rape of a people and their culture - never to be forgotten in the history of the Tamils.

Unable to face up to the just claims of Tamils articulated by the LTTE with word and sword for recognition of their nationhood, homeland and self-rule the Sri Lankan Government and its armed forces have ended up in capturing an empty Jaffna devoid of its people. They had hoisted their Sri Lankan flag - an unloved and controversial Sinhala Buddhist Lion flag in the eyes of the Tamils - to continue their military oppressive rule, as if over the tombs of the Tamils. Under the guise of fighting Tamil terrorism, the Government had clearly articulated and continues its plan to starve and subjugate the Tamil nation! If this is not the barbaric rape of a nation, then what is it?

#### **4. Sinhala Euphoria and Celebrations**

The massive effort of the Sri Lanka Armed Forces in establishing a twenty Kilometres long security-corridor from the occupied Palaly Airpot to Jaffna Town, the continuing struggle to bring the depopulated ghost-town under military control, the ceremonial helicopter flights of the Sinhala Flag over the Peninsula as a sign of Sinhala conquest, the hoisting of the Sinhala flag in the middle of a ghost town Jaffna, the euphoric celebration with the lighting of crackers in the South, the ceremonial proclamation of the victorious conquest of „Yaapanama“ by the Deputy Defence Minister Anuradha Ratwatte to his niece- the President in her Palace, the overtones of a royal ceremony inside

a Sinhala Palace of earlier periods and the „well done“ pat given by the President to her uncle - all these televised to the nation as a unique victory in the history of the country symbolising a successful completion of a first phase on the road to so called permanent peace in this country.



The Government of the day officially proclaimed to the world outside that this military occupation was a necessary step towards achieving a solution to the ethnic problem! And the Armed Forces were proud of their historic achievement against a most powerful guerrilla group. Hence the majority of the Sinhala people - both Government-supporters as well as those who disagreed with the Government - were one in celebrating it as a victory of the Sinhala people against the Tamils. It meant for them not only a defeat of the Tigers in their Jaffna-den, but also of the Tamil aspirations for autonomy which they thought threatened their brand of Sinhala nationalism. This became clear both from the mode of celebrations as well as in the interpretations and publicity given by much of the media in the South.

### **5. Tamils witness the face of Sinhala Imperialism**

The Tamils saw in the capture of Jaffna the true face of Sinhala Imperialism and the chauvinistic intention that was hidden behind the pious proclamation of „Peace through War“ or „War for Peace“- a ridiculous and contradictory concept! The intention of the majority race to subjugate and subordinate the Tamils of this county was never so sharply articulated as in the events during the latter half of 1995.

An imperialistic desire, emanated from the Mahavamsa chronicle, appears to be ingrained in the Sinhala nationalism ( in orderly desire is the worst sin in Buddhism!) trying to be the sole proprietors and rulers of this country, with the Tamils as the “dependent tenants” or „the subordinate minority”. This feeling has been given expression, not only by chauvinistic politicians and narrow minded monks of the South but also by no less a person than the former President Dingiri Banda Wijetunge. He declared rather poignantly that the Tamils of this country have to survive by their dependence on the Sinhala race „like the creepers of a huge tree”.

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With the defeat of the UNP at the last elections, the Tamils hopefully thought that such extremist and imperialistic intentions among the Sinhalese were on the decline, if not altogether dead. This optimism was based on Chandrika's statement that the wrongs done to the Tamils should be rectified and her promise to usher in peace. They naturally entertained hopes that the Paris educated Chandrika at least will follow a non-militaristic approach of Peace. But these hopes were soon dashed to the ground. The chasing away of a whole population by shells and bombs from their homes, the capturing of the empty town and the celebrations of the conquest had proved to the Tamils the return with vengeance of the old Sinhala imperialism into the heart of Jaffna.

### **6. A humiliated people who will challenge the future**

In 1948 the Tamils, like the majority Sinhalese, rejoiced over the conclusion of 450 years of colonial subjugation. All rejoiced in some form of self-rule, self-development and above all self-respect for all the people of Ceylon to live as equal citizens. But it was not to be. The majority Sinhalese had their own agenda for a post-colonial Sinhala Buddhist Imperialism with Tamils to serve their agenda. And we Tamils were led up the garden path of majoritarian-democracy, elitist politics and bartering away of their rights by Tamil leaders for ministerial positions and privileges. One of the two Sinhala major parties the UNP and the SLFP always came to power with the help of some Tamil or Muslim MPs bought over with ministerial privileges. The Sinhala majority-government served the interests of the majority, passed discriminatory laws against the minorities and used the Sinhala Army to suppress any opposition to their agenda. Even the horror events of Black July 1983 failed to wake up the country to seek an urgent solution. The ethnic conflict has deteriorated from bad to worse, from state-terror to a spiral of Sinhala and Tamil terror and finally to a war.

What has become quite evident from bitter experience is that the principle of majority rule of the Westminster type of democracy introduced into Ceylon in 1948 has been hijacked, albeit perverted, to majority race-rule from 1956 to date. Thus as far as the Tamils are concerned democracy in Ceylon and Sri Lanka has been dealt with a severe body-blow.

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It is not easy to forgive or forget this historic but arrogant imposition of Sinhala rule over an unwilling Tamil people. History will tell how costly it is going to be to maintain this Sinhala hegemony over the Tamils. Soon after the fall of the Elephant Pass into the hands of the LTTE, the Government was sending SOS calls to the world to save its 40,000 troops within the Jaffna Peninsula. The shivering Sinhala Army were taking cover under a Tamil population. Many countries were helping Sri Lanka with more weapons. Indian forces were ready and kept on alert to do a rescue of the 40,000 Sinhala troops in the event of an LTTE offensive into the Peninsula.

LTTE was the militant arm of the Tamil people to establish their right of self-defence. It is an army of the people and derives its power from the people. How can then LTTE launch an operation against its own people? Knowing fully well how the Army stationed itself among the people, it never dreamt of an irresponsible bloodshed on the Peninsula. This shows clearly how responsible and concerned the LTTE leadership was about the people, unlike the Sinhala foreign army who with a thirst for Tamil blood acted irresponsibly and even inhumanly.

### 3.

## MAKING WAR AND TALKING PEACE



#### 1. At first, a War for Peace and then some Proposals for Peace!

After the break-down of the Talks between the LTTE and the personal representatives of President Chandrika on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 1995, the latter announced her „War for Peace“ and quickly clamped down all restrictions and blockades against the Tamils of the Northeast. A few months later, on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. of August 1995, the President in order to show to the world her concern and commitment for a political solution, put out a political package as first proposals to end the ethnic conflict. Though these proposals were not fielded in the Tamil media nor sent to the Tamil leadership, they have been evoking much discussions in the South. Though both the war and the debate were proclaimed to be for peace and unity of the country, in reality they were being conducted on two different fronts. The debate on the proposals were limited to the Southern constituency as propaganda for her party. But the War was

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conducted in the Northeast with all ferocity against the Tamils and their leadership. Thus effectively the debate in the South and war in the Northeast tended to scuttle one another making peace and unity more evasive than ever before.

However good and promising these proposals and debates may be, how mesmerised or fascinated the majority may feel with their leadership, their promises and their proposals, one cannot afford to lose sight of the tragic consequences of what is really going on in the country, in terms of an escalating war and its irreparable losses. It does not require much intelligence or commonsense to see that the present pattern of escalation of war and acquisition of hardware for prosecuting this war as a permanent policy of the state are taking the country towards an irreversible disaster.

Though the proposals were for a radical change in the structure of the Government and enthusiastic debates were about the golden promises it made, the people of the country as a whole are not at all moving in the direction of reconciliation, peace and unity of the country. With every death and destruction going on in the Northeast theatre of war, we are definitely and for all time, moving away from reconciliation peace and unity - the very ideals, which the peace-proposals proclaim to achieve.

However much the Government and the people of the South may try to justify the war in the Northeast as a war for peace, as a war directed only against the LTTE, and not against the people of the Northeast, as a war to liberate the people from the LTTE, as a war to weaken, if not wipe out, the LTTE, the naked truth is that it is totally against those living in the Northeast. Much lives and property are lost every day and the gap between the South and the Northeast is widening beyond any hope of reconciliation.

In short, the approach of the Government amounts to dangling - an attractive set of proposals before the international community and the southern constituency as its sincere attempt and willingness to solve the problem peacefully through political reforms and at the same time pursuing a war of weapons on the LTTE and of restriction (embargo on essentials, denial of communication, transport, prevention of journalists to Northeast etc.) on the people of Northeast. This approach of dangling the carrot to the South and

wielding the stick to the Northeast will only aggravate the situation in the long run and become counter-productive to the whole country.

## 2. Throttling a Population with economic embargo

The inhuman economic embargo on the essentials for life in the Northeast disproves the government claim that the war is only against the LTTE and not against the people. Is keeping a population in an enlarged prison-peninsula without basic amenities for life, without sufficient food and medicine, without electricity, transport, postal services etc. and then subjecting them to continuous shelling and bombing to take over the land and people - are these going to pave the way for a reconciliation? Or is it not making the Northeast another colony - imprisoned and supplied with minimum food facilities till they are killed or captured alive?



## 3. A War behind closed-doors

Keeping the Northeast closed to diplomats and journalists, the Army was dishing out its well-cooked news reports to local and international media in Colombo. This was an attempt to lead the Southern constituency and the world up the garden path by a grave deception about the Northeast war. Trying to label and count all those Tamil civilians killed by the Forces as Tigers and intensifying hopes of a war victory over the Tigers is nothing but a dangerous deception of the people of the country. The bodies of Tamil civilians killed by the army were not given to the families until and unless they signed a statement to the Army to say that those killed were members of the LTTE! If one adds together all the „Tigers“ killed by the Army, the LTTE ought to have got wiped off many years ago.

While forbidding journalists from Colombo and elsewhere from entering the Northeast and the theatre of war with its tragic consequences, the National TV in Colombo was giving details of the Bosnian war and its consequences through pictures. Whereas giving only an army-tailored report of tragic events



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just a few hundred miles away from Colombo, it was making a ridiculous attempt to hide the truth from millions at home. The fact that people and journalists of the South were not protesting against the denial of access to truth with regard to the war zone indicated how concerned they were about the life of Tamils in the Northeast. The poor Sinhala parents who sent their sons and daughters into the army often for employment and livelihood may be concerned for the safety of their dear ones. But the rest of the southern population and the elite or the ruling class were waiting only for victory-reports from paid-soldiers.

#### **4. Options for Peace and Unity**

In the context of a war that is consuming not only lives and property of the Tamils of Northeast, but also sons of poor sinhala parents, and drastically weakening of the country's economy, are there viable options left for the Government to move towards reconciliation, peace and unity?

One option is to go back into the history of the conflict and consider with realism a withdrawal of all the state forces stationed against the will of a people in the Northeast and to enable a natural death of all militancy. The second is to stabilize the war as a permanent way of containing the Tamil demand for self-determination. This will require compulsory military service, for all youth, including those in robes, as well as sons and daughters of politicians in order to maintain a Northeast colony! The third and the more realistic is to recognize willy nilly the militant leadership of the Northeast Tamils, normalize conditions for human life in the North-east and move towards a negotiated political solution.

#### **5. Extricating from mistakes without loosing face**

From the beginning when the State Forces were sent to the Northeast to put down with ruthless force allforms of Tamil opposition, the Government has overreacted to Tamil opposition and put its foot in the wrong place and in the wrong way. It is still striving to extricate itself without losing face. That is the bitter truth about this military mission to the Northeast.

As evidenced from the history of colonialism (British, French, Belgians etc.) and imperialism (Americans in Viet Nam), true freedom and peace can be

ushered in only with the withdrawal of the provocative Forces stationed in those lands and the consequent disappearance of all militancy. This is hard to digest, but that is history and reality. If pulling the Forces out of the Northeast is considered a shameful defeat by the Government and not a rectification of an earlier error in governance, if the majority still want to foster a superiority and dominance over the minority Tamils, then continuing the war with the support of a compulsory military Service with international borrowing and misuse of international aid is inevitable. With every Tamil being increasingly considered as a potential threat, if not a terror to the majority Sinhalese, then we slide into a horrible intractable situation. Hopefully and happily, there is still wise counsel from among the enlightened Sinhalese who are clearly against such an end game.

## 6. The saner way

The only sane and realistic approach is to begin acting from the de facto situation in the Northeast. Not all is lost. Neither the people have lost their humanity in the face of this prolonged war and inhuman restrictions on life nor are the LTTE adamantly war hungry and blood-thirsty as made out in emotionally charged reports from the south, the people are still open to common sense and saner ways.

The present path of a war for peace, war to weaken or exterminate the Tigers and in that operation destroying what is left, is counter productive, if not suicidal. There is no justification for continuing this war. The immediate need is to show true statesmanship, create conditions for a truly human living in the Northeast and call for a resumption of talks directly with the LTTE or through a third party from where it broke off.

The LTTE leadership, in spite of their going away in desperation from their talks with Chandrika, have expressed their willingness through the international media that they are still open for peace - talks. Without giving too much into a pharisaic mistrust of partners, let an opening be made for such talks even with the help of third party mediation.

A government that claims itself to be democratically elected and mandated to bring peace and unity must show more understanding and statesmanship. Nothing by way of a return to the table is too costly to avert a disaster to

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the whole country. There is still hope for sanity, reconciliation, peace and unity of the country.

## RACISM OF THE STATE FORCES

The successive political parties that ruled this small island of Sri Lanka, not only played politics with human rights of the ethnic nationalities but also have built up a mono-ethnic Armed Forces as a parallel power to execute its discriminatory policies and crush down all opposition to Sinhala government. The importance and powers enjoyed by the Sinhala Armed Forces in deciding and determining the life of the Tamils amply illustrate this horrendous situation. The promoter and executor of the discriminatory policies of governments has created more problems than solving any problem. These Forces have often become a necessary headache to the government of the day.

Chandrika and her government are trying to come to terms with the Army they built beyond proportions. They are called to tame the weapon-handler and weapon-holder to accept a peaceful settlement. At this stage it is relevant to examine the record of connivance and collaboration which have grown between the Government and its Sinhala Army.

### 1. A ceremonial Army at the beginning

When the British left our shores, we inherited a small but well disciplined national army under the first Army Commander Mr. Anton Muttukumar, a Tamil. He and his officials were all well educated, trained and disciplined. Most of them came out of highly disciplined institutions and had their quota of local and foreign training. It was an army well trained for the time. They fulfilled their respected roles mostly at ceremonials like the Independence Day parade and welcome ceremonies for Heads of states. Very rarely were they called to perform any security service to people and certainly not against a foreign enemy.

But this was only for a very brief period. With the central Government initiating discriminatory policies that earned the anger and protest of the Tamils, the Army, which became increasingly Sinhala, was soon called in to baton charge or tear gas all forms of protest. Although these protests were democratically justifiable and non-violent, the Government encouraged the

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Forces to handle the Tamils not as citizens of the country but as enemies of the Sinhala Nation. And this was continued by successive Sinhala Governments and the situation steadily aggravated.

## 2. Protectors of the Sinhalese and their Government

From a Sinhala military perspective, the Tamils were a lower class of citizens, a problematic ethnic group and a common enemy threatening the true Sinhala Nation. During the last thirty years when the Forces stationed in the Northeast of this country enjoyed almost a wild freedom and when protests were made by Northeast political leaders about „army excesses“, the South turned a deaf ear to them. When there came the first signs of a militant action against the unbridled forces of governments, then the Government introduced its notorious *Prevention of Terrorism Act* (PTA in 1977) whereby the powers of the State Forces were increased beyond imagination „to arrest, torture, kill and bury without any inquiry.

A failure on the part of the southern political parties to understand the Tamil problem combined with the narrow military perspective of a one-race-army aggravated the Tamil problem. For many decades, the Tamils were knocking at the doors of Government pleading for more understanding, justice and fairplay. But a basically racist Government refused to listen. Like the proverbial rich of the palaces setting their dangerous dogs free on innocent beggars at their gates, the Sri Lankan government was setting free the so called „guardians of democracy“ on the Tamils.

Even those Tamil Members of Parliament mandated by the Tamil people to make a demand for survival and separation were barred from entering the Parliament by the notorious *Sixth Amendment to the Constitution*.

At least now it should be clear to the South that the militancy of Northeast was called for by the unbridled army excesses in the Northeast state terrorism for several decades. Instead of harping on the falsehood that the present war situation is a consequence of Tamil terrorism, at least the enlightened South must know the truth about the role of the Army during the last forty years. Hence the connivance and collaboration between the Government and the Armed Forces have in effect given birth and nurtured Tamil militancy.

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The Sinhala Forces have grown and become important - not because they defended the country from foreign invasion, but because they terrorized and killed innocent and non-violent people who opposed the unjust and discriminatory policies of Governments. The Government is obliged to the Forces and must be thankful, because they sent them to kill all those against the „unity, integrity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka“. Majority of the forces did not even know what these words meant, but they executed blindly the orders of the government.

### 3. Violence of the Forces

The intake to the army as well as promotions were more and more in line with the Sinhala Only policy of Governments. To silence and suppress any form of Tamil opposition the Sinhala Army was stationed already in the Sixties in Jaffna, Mannar, Trincomalee and Batticaloa. With the army baton-charging and tear-gassing even non violent protest meetings of the Tamils in the Northeast, a purely military solution had already been initiated by the Governments.

The Sinhala Army was already stationed in the sixties and seventies among a 100% Tamil population that was unarmed and by character shy, submissive and obedient. Soldiers stationed in the Northeast were conscious of representing the Sinhala State and they were a power of evil with their guns and batons. They were representing the ruler in Colombo and were not accountable to any authority in Jaffna for their moral behaviour. The civilian population had no recourse to redress whatsoever. The Tamil population was expected to cow down to these ill-disciplined men travelling in government trucks and jeeps. The immorality of these men with respect to the shy Tamils behind those cadjan fences of Jaffna was degrading fast and went unchecked.

These men were not products of good educational institutions in the country, where there was a possibility of learning better human and civic values and coming into contact with Tamils and Muslims. These young men were from village schools of the South, from a Sinhala-only environment, from very poor homes, with very little discipline or moral responsibility. Their understanding about the Tamils was only from the village Buddhist monks. And these monks,

inspired by the Mahavamsa chronicle, consider the Tamils as illegal immigrants (*Kalla thonies*= *Illegal entrants by boats from India*) into Sinhala Buddhist Sri Lanka! No wonder the slightest protest of Tamils angered the Sinhala soldiers to violent action.

#### 4. State Terrorism and Rowdyism

Right from the beginning (1956) all non-violent protests of the Tamils against injustices were to be met either by violence from instigated Sinhala mobs, at which the Armed Forces and Police simply looked on, or worse still, the Army itself acted violently against unarmed Tamil protesters. At every racial riot incited by politicians and the monks and directed against the Tamils in the South, the thugs or *goondas* were given indirect protection by the Army and Police. In the same spirit, peace-loving residents of the Northeast were kept on their knees by the power of guns.



While the Government went ahead with its steam-roller majority in passing unjust and discriminatory laws and regularising even illegal Sinhala settlements, the Armed Forces were expected to give cover for all such actions. Without the help of an army that was violent against the Tamils, the government could not have executed its avowed policies of state - aided Sinhala colonization. Whereas Tamils were openly chased away even from their traditional and private homelands and their belongings were looted in broad day light. Complaints of Tamil Parliamentarians on those occasions fell on deaf ears. Like putting salt into open wounds, the Government promoted such army men for heroic deeds and sanctioned army looting of Tamil properties as benefits for their brave deeds! The Army of occupation was able to loot valuable jewelleryes and furniture, TVs and decks from Tamil homes in the Northern islands and even ship them to their families in the south. Such was the height

of collaboration and connivance between the Government and the Army, that it is very difficult to tame them to civilian life.

The corrupt practices of the Army ranging from Arms deals to extortion of money from Tamil businessman and their lorry drivers for the transport of disallowed items are well known. Everyone hopes that the present phase of war between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Armed Forces is perhaps the last stage of the long drawn out ethnic problem unsettled by successive Governments. The atrocities of the war on a people, the economic blockade imposed on the Tamils and the denial of basic amenities for life and the closing of all legal routes out of the Jaffna peninsula are clearly the throttling of a population under the disguise of fighting terrorism.

The prolonged Emergency Rule for years and the oft imposed curfews over a dark peninsula devoid of any electricity, gave the army personnel freedom, immunity and encouragement to break into houses at night, forcibly take young women under pretext of terrorist leanings, rape them and even murder them. The rape and murder of numerous young Tamil women like Krishanthi and the mass graves in Chemmani with hundreds of young men and women killed and buried, the over 600 disappearances reckoned by Amnesty International, - all speak volumes for the misbehaviour and criminal conduct of Sinhala soldiers and their Generals. When these stories come to light, stories of misbehaviour of American and British soldiers in Iraq will be put in the shade.



Even the other Forces of the State - the police and the prison guards were racists. Tamils know very well how the police and the army baton-charged and tear-gassed even an unarmed crowd of *Satyagrahis* in the December night of 1961 within the Residence of the then Government Agent. The citizens of Jaffna knew it too well (even before President Premadasa let it out) as to which ministers were behind the police in setting fire to the Public Library in



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the heart of the City. The torture and murder of 53 Tamil political prisoners in Welikade state prisons and 33 Tamil inmates in Bindunuwewa Rehabilitation camp exhibit the racism of Sinhala prison guards.

### **5. Sinhala Solution tends to be a Military Solution**

It was a Sinhala army of occupation, boosted as the saviour of unity, sovereignty and integrity of Sri Lanka, that reacted violently to the smell of any Tamil blood. The final consequence will be that the Army will determine the future of the country - whether Sri Lanka should have peace or war, whether the Tamils should be given a war-less situation, whether a democratic outlet should be open to them or whether even basic facilities for life should be given to them.

Although the people voted this Government to find, not a military solution as favoured by the earlier Government, but a political solution, the tendency for the present Government appears to be to lean heavily on the military. If military solution means only killing opponents, then the people are totally opposed to it. If it means that the military will have a major say in the political decisions, then the Tamil people who voted Chandrika to power will be again disappointed. The option of Chandrika seems to be a political solution which is banking heavily on the opinion of military personnel. That is the new situation we are in. Is that in any way better than the previous one? Tamils are caught between the devil and the deep blue sea

### **6. Is there a way out?**

The LTTE for their part have matched a terrorizing Army with much vigour and protected as much as possible the interests of the Tamil people. They have become their protectors and spokesmen of the Tamil cause. The call has been made by them for the last two years, to give up the throttling of Tamil civilian life by means of a cease-fire, to remove the economic blockade, to open a legal pathway to the South and to open talks towards a just and peaceful solution of the ethnic problem.

Already with regard to granting basic facilities for normal civilian life for the Tamils, the Government is dragging its feet because of Army pressure and delay tactics. The whole country is witness to this impotence of the

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Government. Chandrika, as Commander of the Armed Forces, can succeed only to the extent that she can act boldly, quickly and prudently in taming and pruning the Armed Forces, while at the same time using the so-far-ill - used media to tell the whole truth about her problems with the army and educate the people and politicians of the South for peace. Will she?

## 5.

# SINHALA BUDDHIST NATIONALISM

### 1. Ressurgence of Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism

Under 450 years of successive colonialism, it was the majority Sinhala people and their Buddhist religion suffered most and were greatly disadvantaged. In comparison to those who followed the religion and life-style of the colonial masters, the Sinhala Buddhists had less of religious freedom, education and social welfare. Hence with the dawn of Independence for the island in 1948, a combined resurgence of Sinhala Nationalism and Buddhists Revivalism, was justified as necessary and important. All the people of the country wholeheartedly wished for such resurgence and revivalism and none expressed any opposition to it.



Even today no one will question the right and privileges of a people and religion which have been identified with this island for more than two thousand years. The people, their language, culture and history have been enriched by the religion they embraced. Similarly the religion that flourished in Sri Lanka has been characterized and enriched by the rich heritage of the Sinhala people. What came to be evolved later as Sinhala Buddhism, distinct from other forms of Buddhism found in other Asian countries, definitely has a unique value and a motive force in determining the destiny of this island. This is well understood and recognized by all the non-Sinhala-Buddhists of the country.

The claim that the Singhalese people and Buddhist religion must be honored as the original or the earliest on the island is well understood and recognized by all the people who are neither Singhalese nor Buddhists.

## 2. Historical myths in support of exclusive claims

Unfortunately this movement for resurgence and revivalism was motivated and guided in ways contrary to historical truths and violating the rights of others living on that island for many centuries.

Firstly the claims of the majority for a privileged place for the race and religion in the island were linked to an exclusive role as protectors and custodians of the island and of religion as suggested only from a text of a 6th century Mahavamsa Chronicle. According to K.M.D.Silva, an acknowledged objective Sinhala historian of our times these chronicles „ were the work of bhikkhus and naturally enough, were permeated by a strong religious bias, and encrusted with miracle and invention. The central theme was the historic role of the island as a bulwark of Buddhist civilization, and in *“a deliberate attempt to underline this, it contrives to synchronise the advent of Vijaya with the parinibbana (the passing away) of the Buddha“* (italics mine)



The relevant and key text from the chronicles as translated by him:

*‘When the Guide of the World, having accomplished the salvation of the whole world and reached the utmost state of blissful rest, was lying on the bed of his nibbana in the midst of the great assembly of gods, he the great Sage, the greatest of those who have speech, spoke to Sakka who stood near him: ‘Vijaya, son of King Sihabahu, is come to Lanka from the Country of Lala together with 700 followers. In Lanka, O Lord of gods, will my religion be established,*

therefore, carefully protect him with his followers and Lanka.'

K.M.D. Silva commenting further notes „This was to become in time the most powerful of the *historical myths of the Singhalese and the basis of their conception of themselves as the chosen guardians of Buddhism, and of Sri Lanka itself as 'a place of special sanctity for the Buddhist religion'* This intimate connection between the land, the ‚race‘ and the Buddhist faith foreshadowed the intermingling of religion and national identity which has always had the most profound influence on the Singhalese.“ ( A History of Sri Lanka, p.4, italics mine)

In the post-Independence Resurgence of Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism, this conception has deepened and given rise to a „Mahavamsa mentality“ which overlooks facts of history and the post-colonial changes in ground realities.



Secondly an arrogant exclusivism got embedded in their mentality to discriminate and disadvantage other peoples and the religions. And this was used by Sinhala Buddhist politicians for their ascendancy to power. They legalized discriminations against the

non-Sinhala-Buddhist people by changing constitutions and passing laws to get the extremists into their vote-constituency. But their cheap politics paved the way for the long drawn out ethnic conflict and still continue to ruin majority-minority relations and obstruct any reasonable solution of the national problem.

Further with the growth of a Mahavamsa mentality, the multi ethnic and multi religious character of the Sri Lankan population, which had the potential to build up a unity in diversity and flourish as a model for people of diverse ethnicity and religions, was lost for ever.

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### 3. Political vision influenced by a Mahavamsa-mentality

Analysing the root cause of our failure to build a unity in diversity and the consequent ethnic conflict, it becomes clear that a well intended ethnic nationalism and religious revivalism of the majority have been misused by religious fanatics and political extremists. By promoting the exclusivism of the Mahavamsa mentality they found justification for their narrow and selfish aspirations, namely discriminating against non-Singhalese and non-Buddhists.

Prior to colonialism of the 16<sup>th</sup>. century, when all the Singhalese were Buddhists and all the Tamils were Hindus, there were two Sinhala Kingdoms in Kandy and Kotte and a Tamil kingdom in Jaffna. The differences in race and religion did not create problem within kingdoms. But later when the people of Sri Lanka gradually came under successive colonialism, the ethnic and religious composition of the island underwent changes. It became a multi ethnic multi religious population. This change in the religious and ethnic composition of the people inhabiting the island should have been taken as an irreversible ground reality. But the majority Sinhala Buddhists, overlooked the changes which have overtaken the country during 450 years of colonialism and pursued a nationalism and a revivalism based on the exclusivism of the Mahavamsa chronicle.

With ethnic and religious fervour, the majority justly wanted a revival and a resurgence of their nationality and religion. As in all renewals and resurgence, religious motivations play an important role as motor. In the case of the Singhalese, whose majority were followers of Buddhism - their religion could have been a motivating force for renewal and resurgence.

But unfortunately, the Sinhala politicians found it useful to whip up an emotional nationalism by presenting the legendary Mahavamsa chronicle as a true history of the island. They linked Buddhism in Sri Lanka to the Sinhala people and allowed this chronicle history to play a more important role in shaping their Buddhism as Sinhala Buddhism uniquely linked to the whole island and people.

### 4. State-aided Sinhala Colonisation of Tamil areas

It is true that the majority Singhalese have no objection to others living in their midst on any part of the island as long as the Tamils accept that the Singhalese

are the true owners and primary citizens of this island. But how can the Tamils give up the truth of history and subjugate themselves to another race? The Tamils who inhabited the Northeast of the island for a long time and gradually during the colonial times moved to the South, especially Colombo, for employment and commerce, bought properties and settled down in the South. Similarly some Singhalese too settled in the arid North for commercial purposes. All these went on peacefully under the colonial master.

But with advent of Independence in 1948, this scenario has changed for the worse. The Government of the majority after depriving the Estate-Tamils of their citizenship launched state-aided colonization for the Singhalese in the traditionally Tamil areas of the North and East. Tamil families were ejected from their settlements and Singhalese brought in from the South were helped by the State to settle down. this was a hidden plan to reduce the parliamentary representation of the Tamils and change the demography of the North and East in favour of the Singhalese as witnessed over the past 50 years.

Ownership of land, on the basis of first come first served, has been an established right of peoples over many centuries ago and this right has been changing through wars, victories and defeats until a system of government took over the reins and legalized the handling of ownership. It is an anachronism to argue that the whole island of Sri Lanka belongs only to one people called the Singhalese and others are to be reckoned as "tenants" or "creepers" as claimed by President Dingiri Banda Wijetunge. Equally wrong is for the Tamils or Muslims or Tamils of recent Indian origin to claim exclusively a particular area as entirely theirs. If at all a region is claimed as traditionally inhabited by a people, it must not close its doors to other people coming freely and settling down in a democratic way.

## **5. Re-educating the masses about false Nationalism**

But the post-colonial path taken by the two major political parties of the south made use of this extreme form of Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism for their political adventurism and prevented the masses from even understanding political structures such as federalism which were proposed to keep the island united as a multi ethnic and multi religious reality. Because the proposals came from the Tamils of Northeast, they were presented as poisonous and dangerous to the majority people, their religion and their land.

A series of mob and state terror campaigns aimed at Tamils followed by a 20 years of war have been the price paid so far for the false belief of the Sinhala people and wrong policies followed by their politicians. It is only after such a heavy price in life and property has been paid, that a genuine effort is attempted with the help of the international community to reach out for a peaceful and viable political structure for the island. But here too, the corollaries flowing from Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism impinge heavily on the vital questions to be answered for a resolution of the ethnic conflict and remain the biggest obstacle for any peaceful solution.

Unless and until the political parties of the South have the sincerity and the courage to own up to their past mistakes and take upon themselves the responsibility of re-educating the masses about the basis for a viable and peaceful solution of the ethnic problem, we have no hope for the future. Their job is made more difficult by the resurgence of Marxist radicalism of the JVP and Buddhist nationalism of the SLFP and their ascendancy to power.

## 6. Sinhala Radicalism and Nationalism threaten the future

There is no sign of the major Sinhala parties courageously taking up the responsibility of educating the masses about the whole truth of the national question. Though under pressure the UNP and the SLFP speak to the international donors about devolution of power to the Tamils, but have openly never campaigned for any federal form of government that would accommodate a multi-ethnic multireligious population in Sri Lanka. They still vie for power using their opposition to Tamil claims as criteria. The minimum they give to the Tamils the better for their political success. There is no positive national perspective motivating their propaganda. The southern masses are still asked to vote into power the party that can „protect the country” from „Tamil separatism and terrorism”. Pressure is needed from within and without the island to make them revise their exclusive radicalism directed against the Tamils.





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With the Cease Fire coming into operation the major parties the UNP and the SLFP started opening themselves a little to devolution of power. But the old radical party - the Janatha Vimukthi Perumuna (JVP) and the birth of a new Janata Hela Urumaya (JHU) led by Buddhist monks – have raised their heads in opposing any peaceful settlement with the Tamils. The success of the JVP and the JHU at the 2004 general election brings in a two-way check on the traditional UNP and the SLFP. The historic entry of Buddhist clergy as a political party into Parliament to promote expressly Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism and keep a check on any reasonable compromise with the Tamils will make extremely difficult any peaceful resolution of the ethnic conflict. And the efforts of the anti-Tamil JVP to overtake power from the SLFP spells more disaster for a multiethnic and multireligious Sri Lanka. Thus even the slightest openness due to international pressure shown by the SLFP and the UNP towards finding a political solution is blocked by the rise of Buddhist Extremism and Sinhala Left Radicalism. May Lord Buddha save Sri Lanka from committing a national suicide!

## A SELF-DEFENSIVE TAMIL NATIONALISM

### 1. Tamils steadfast in preserving their identity



Just as the Singhalese have a claim of historical origin on this island, the Tamils too have such a claim. No historian has dared to prove that there were no Tamils on this island before two thousand years. Historically there were Tamils inhabiting the North and East of the island for many centuries and there were Tamil Kings too ruling up to colonial times.

The vast opening to the sea enabled all living on the coastal areas to take to fishing as their livelihood. Those inhabiting the interior, though handicapped by the absence of any river and less rainfall than the South, were industrious farmers - landlords and labourers. Hinduism as the religion of the people influenced social and cultural life. Caste system of social degradation was strengthened by the religious belief of Karma and rebirth as well as by the economic dependence of the less fortunate on the more fortunate landowners. Social structure and governance was pyramidal with the royalty and the rich at the apex and the others down at the base.

With the advent of colonialism social and religious life also underwent some changes. The Portuguese made converts to Roman Catholicism while the Dutch, who came later converted Hindus and Catholics to their Dutch Reformed Church. Both the Portuguese and the Dutch did not make any meaningful changes with regard to the structures of governance. Even the

British attempted their major change in the form of governance only after conquering the last Kingdom of Kandy (1815) and bringing the whole country under one centralised administration in Colombo.

During the British administration, some Tamils of the arid zones of the Northeast moved to the South, especially to the capital Colombo, in search of employment. A few Sinhalese moved to the Northeast to establish some businesses. Although Sinhala and Tamil elites and businessmen lived adjacently for many years in Colombo and its environs, there was hardly any ethnic or cultural fusion between them. Each racial group kept strictly to its religious cultural and social identities. Only the Christians who were either Sinhalese or Tamils mixed a little more at religious and social functions. This distinction is destined to stay as observed by a British historian who said „even after thousands of years, these two races kept up their racial and cultural identities“.

## 2. G. G. Ponnambalam, Father of Tamil Consciousness



On the eve of Independence from the British there were genuine fears among the Tamil leaders about a Sinhala domination of the minorities within a single nation. Mr. G. G. Ponnambalam, founder-president of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress, fought single-handed and very courageously with the British to safeguard the interests of the Tamils against Sinhala domination. Tamils cannot forget his historic contribution to raising the Tamil consciousness. Prof. A. J. Wilson, a son-in-law of Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayagam, sums it up by saying: „He raised the consciousness of the Tamils to the point where they abandoned their sense of national awareness within an all-island polity and began thinking of themselves as having an altogether separate national identity..“ (*Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism*, p.80).

The Sinhala leaders appealed to the Tamil leaders not to make difficulties for the hand over of power from the colonials. They promised to the Tamil leaders that their rights will be safeguarded. And the British who knew well the deep differences between the two peoples made their historic „Blunder“ of leaving

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the minorities at the mercies of the majority. And the Sinhala majoritarian democracy, without any qualm of conscience, took away in 1972 even the one and only article 29a in the constitution that was safeguarding the rights of the minorities.

### **3. A short-lived Tamil hope for a multi-ethnic nation**

In spite of initial fears there was still hope on the Tamil side that with self-rule the country would prosper and all Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims could live happily as equal citizens and partners in building up a united island of peace and prosperity. The first post-Independence Government enjoyed „the responsive cooperation“ of the Tamils. Most of the colleges in Jaffna had Sinhala taught as a second language, in order to facilitate inter-ethnic relations. But that hope of a united nation was only short-lived.

### **4. Exclusive Sinhala Nationalism pushes Tamils to Separatism**

The post-colonial policies of the Colombo Governments pushed the Tamils more and more to look back in the direction of a safe and secure land to safeguard their rights, their profession, development and even to security of life and limb. This led to a gradual but steady conscientisation of the Tamils that living as one Sri Lankan multi-ethnic, multi-religious people was no more possible and that their safety and future development depend on re-claiming their pre-colonial and traditional habitation as their homelands.

The resurgence of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism inaugurated by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1956 capitalized on the exclusivist nationalism nurtured by the Mahavamsa mentality. In order to come to power, he whipped up at the grass-root level a popular but dangerous nationalism that claimed Sinhala Buddhists as the genuine proprietors of the whole island and custodians of Buddhism. This excluded the other ethnic and religious groups. He realised that the language „we people“ could be used emotionally to climb to power over the UNP which had ruled the country up to that time.

His victory in the parliamentary elections of 1956, spelt doom for Sinhala-Tamil relations and soon the Sinhala majority resorted to anti-Tamil mob-terror. What remained as part of a hidden agenda in the disenfranchising of the Tamils of Indian origin and State-aided Sinhala colonization of the first post-

colonial government, now became an open policy of the government. Thus the arrogant policy of exclusivism on the Sinhala side pushed the Tamils gradually along the path of separatism.

### 5. S. J. V. Chelvanayagam, Father of Tamil Nationalism



When the first post-colonial Government of Sri Lanka took the first step already in 1949 towards the exclusive Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism by depriving almost a million Tamils of Indian origin of their civic rights, S.J.V.Chelvanayakam, the Father of modern Tamil Nationalism, was able to foresee many dangers which will threaten their Tamil national consciousness. With prophetic vision he mapped out a path for the Tamils to safeguard their identity and dignity as a people. On the basis of the inalienable right of self determination, the Tamils are to seek maximum autonomy for self rule!

Accordingly, the *Ilankai Thamil Arasu Kadchi*, which he founded in 1949 soon after the denial of Citizenship to Tamils of Indian origin, was with foresight called *Federal Party* in English. Why? He did not opt for an entirely Tamil separate state, but a Tamil government (arasu), whereby the Tamils, as a distinct nation or people, will rule themselves at home with maximum autonomy and still remain within the one state of the island. In other words he proposed *a self rule* in the Northeast and *a shared rule* at the centre in Colombo. That was the Federal structure he proposed and campaigned for.. This was evident in the declaration of the first national convention of the Party held in Trincomalee in 1951

*„ In as much as it is the inalienable right of every nation to enjoy full political freedom without which its spiritual, cultural and moral stature must degenerate and inasmuch as the Tamil speaking people in Ceylon constitute a nation distinct from that of the Singhalese by every fundamental test of nationhood, firstly that of a historical past in this island (which is) at least as ancient and as glorious as that of the Singhalese, secondly by the fact of their being a linguistic entity different from that of the Singhalese, with unsurpassed classical heritage and a development fully adequate for all present day needs, and finally, by*

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*reason of their territorial habitation of definite areas which constitute over one third of this island, this first national conference of ITAK demands for the Tamil speaking nation in Ceylon their inalienable right to political autonomy and calls for a plebiscite to determine the boundaries of the linguistic states in consonance with the fundamental and unchallengeable principles of self-determination.*"

His self-rule for the Tamils (Thamil Arasu) and shared rule of Sri Lanka (Ilankai) was mischievously interpreted by the chauvinistic and extremist politicians of the South as a blueprint for a separate Tamil Kingdom of the Tamils. Thereby the word *Federal* was interpreted to mean a division of one country into two. What was intended as a regional autonomy for the Tamils and a federal structure for the country was mischievously twisted to set the Sinhala masses against the Tamils.

The objective of the Tamils to live as two nations in one island within a federal structure of Government thus became anathema to Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism which was forging ahead with its steam-roller majoritarian-race democracy to legalise anti-Tamil discriminations in language, culture, education, employment and development. Every Tamil effort to protest democratically and non-violently was met with Sinhala mob and state terror. Every effort to explain the Tamil vision for a united country was heckled even within the parliament. Thus the Tamils were deprived even the right of peaceful democratic non-violent protests. Not even in the heartland of the Tamils - Jaffna town - could they have a non-violent satyagraha without getting beaten up by the Sinhala army (Dec. 1961). Hence Tamil Nationalism was forced to move to the next phase of demanding a separate state for survival and security based on its right of self-determination.

The Sinhala media were very chauvinistic and the word "Federal" was anathema to the Singhalese. The English media which had the strategy of reaching out to both sides of the divide, were in the hands of the Sinhala elite and toed the line with the UNP or the SLFP political parties. Unfortunately the Tamil leaders did not make serious attempts to reach the majority of the country at least with an English Newspaper. "*Suthanthiran*", the official organ of the Federal Party was published only in Tamil. Hence the lack of effective communication between the Singhalese and the Tamils further aggravated the situation

## 6. Democratic campaigns for a Separate State

The Tamil United Liberation Front in its first national convention in Vaddukoddai on 14 May 1976 under the presidency of S.J.V.Chelvanayakam resolved thus:

*..The First National Convention of the Tamil Liberation Front, meeting at Pannakam (Vaddukkoddai) on the 14th day of May 1976, hereby declares that the Tamils of Ceylon (Tamils did not accept the Constitution of 1972 in which of the name of the island was changed from Ceylon to Sri Lanka) by virtue of their great language, their religions, their separate culture and heritage, their history for several centuries till they were conquered by the armed might of the European invaders, and above all by their will to exist as a separate entity ruling themselves in their own territory, are a nation distinct and apart from the Singhalese and their constitution, announces to the world that the Republican Constitution of 1972 has made the Tamils a slave nation ruled by the new colonial masters, the Singhalese, who are using the power they have wrongly usurped to deprive the Tamil nation of its territory, language, citizenship, economic life, opportunities of employment and education and thereby destroying all the attributes of nationhood of the Tamil people.*

*And therefore, while taking note of the reservations in relation to its commitment to the setting up of a separate state of Tamil Eelam expressed by the Ceylon Workers Congress as a Trade Union of plantation workers, the majority of whom live and work outside the Northern and Eastern areas, this convention resolves that the restoration and reconstitution of the Free, Sovereign, Secular Socialist State of Tamil Eelam based on the right of self determination inherent in every nation and has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil nation in this country."*

At the Parliamentary elections of 1977, the Tamil United Liberation Front campaigned for the Vaddukkoddai Resolution for a separate state of Tamil Eelam and the Tamils gave a resounding approval with over 70% electoral support.

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Infuriated by the overwhelming verdict of the Tamils for a separate state, the UNP Government of J.R. Jayawardene who came to power with a simple majority of 51% soon brought in the infamous *6th. Amendment to the Constitution* obliging all elected Tamil parliamentarians to make an oath of allegiance to the unitary state and forbidding all talks of separatism as contrary to the constitution. This in effect closed the doors of the supreme democratic institution of the country to the voice of the democratically elected Tamil Members of Parliament. Thus the Sinhala majority closing the doors of democracy to the Tamils opened the way for a militant path of the Tamil youth.

### **7. Militant campaigns for a separate state**

While elected Tamil MPs still had faith in the democratic institutions of the island in protecting the Tamils and were pleading, if not begging, the government of the day to protect the civilian life of the Tamils, those in power took the high road of Sinhala oppression resulting in further denials of the basics for Tamil life.

Tamil youths most of whom witnessed the horrors of Sinhala mob and state terrorism along with the denials of basic rights and facilities to the Tamils in education and employment, realized that they themselves were being pushed against the wall without any hope of a future under Sinhala Governments. They had no faith that their elder Tamil politicians who were elected in the 1977 parliamentary elections could ever democratically and peacefully win the rights of the Tamil people. It is in this context that they took the only logical step to face the enemy - the government and its Forces on their own terms - militancy.

During the initial period there were many Tamil groups fighting the oppressive acts of the Sinhala army with their counter-terrorism. Although up to the Thimpu conference they expressed unanimity with regard to the nationhood, homeland and right of self determination of the Tamils, many of them fell in for the carrots of power and wealth offered by the Sri Lankan government, betrayed the Tamil cause by helping the sinhala government in their false propaganda and their Armed forces as paramilitaries involved in state terrorism.



## 8. LTTE committed to a Liberative Nationalism

It was left to the LTTE to face courageously the oppressive force of the Sinhala government as well as fostering the Nationalism of Thamil Eelam as affirmed by the parliamentary verdict in 1977. The 20 years of war that followed the 1983 Holocaust of Tamils demanded more and more heroic sacrifices of



life from the militants and from civilians. These brought them all into one struggle. What was earlier identified as a militant group of armed youth soon became a peoples' movement for liberation. The anti-Tamil forces in the South tried their best to divide the people and the few elected parliamentarians from the militant leadership of the LTTE. They tried in many under-hand ways to tarnish or bypass the militant leadership and strike a deal with the so called „moderate“ and paid-parliamentarians, but failed miserably.

The broader Tamil nationalism as envisaged by Thanthai Chelvanayakam in 1951 in Trincomalee and in 1976 in Vaddukoddai, now became strengthened by the prolonged sufferings of death and destruction caused to the Tamil people by the government. The people knew as to who protected and defended them from the atrocities of war as well as who carried the noble ideals of Tamil Nationalism without bartering for personal benefits from the Sinhalese. Thus in the period 1976 - 2004, the Tamil people increasingly affirmed the unique politico-military leadership of the LTTE as well as moved firmly under their leadership towards some non-negotiable aspects of Tamil Nationalism.

## 9. The non-negotiables of Tamil Nationalism

What was prophesied by Mr.S.J.V. Chelvanayagam, the father of Tamil nationalism, gained conviction not only among his party members but also throughout the entire Tamil community in and out of Sri Lanka. Three fundamental truths emerged crystal clear to the people and became the corner stones of a liberative Tamil Nationalism:

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a) Tamils living in Sri Lanka are a distinct people with their own history, culture and heritage and not a mere linguistic minority as made out by the Sinhala majority in order to justify their domination. It was sheer arrogance and mischief to refer to a people who have lived their rich heritage so long and have had their kings and kingdoms as a mere linguistic minority.

b) The UN Charter of Human Rights recognizes the right of self determination of such a people, at least in its internal dimension. Failing to realise this internal self-determination, the people have the right to secede into a separate state.

c) The Northeast of the island has been the traditional region of habitation for the Tamils for many centuries. Hence the Northeast is claimed as the Homeland of the Tamils. This does not exclude others from living there, but the Tamils must have sufficient autonomy to determine the development of this region.

These three issues which were agreed by all the Tamil parties in Thimpu were again taken up in Oslo in the talks between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government. An agreement was reached to consider an alternative to the Tamil demand for a separate state and this was hailed as a breakthrough. It was mutually agreed to seek a federal type of solution within a united Sri Lanka based on the understanding that Northeast are areas of historical habitation of the Tamil speaking people and on the principle of internal self-determination of the Tamils. However accepting the Northeast as traditional homelands of the Tamils still find opposition and misunderstanding among the Sinhala majority despite the ground realities.

The Tamil claim for a Homeland is not so much based on nostalgic arguments of historical origins, nor on any arrogance of superiority with regard to race or religion, as it appears in the case of Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism, but more on the argument for a secure home in the face of tragic conditions created by the Singhalese during the last 50 years. Let me mention briefly three such factors:-

#### **a) Tamils fleeing anti-Tamil Riots sought security in the North East**

The slightest protest of Tamils in the capital Colombo against discriminations gave rise to a series of mob and state terror against all Tamils living in the south of the island. The Tamils, who were harmed and whose property were

looted, were forced into huge refugee camps for safety or forced to run for their lives to the North and East of the island. In 1958 some ships had to be hurriedly organized to transport the thousands of victims fleeing the riots from Colombo to Kankasanturai (Jaffna). In all the major anti-Tamil riots let loose in the South (1956, 1958, 1962, 1977, 1983), Tamils, even those from the hill country, fled to the North and East for refuge.

#### **b) Open discrimination or neglect in developing the Northeast**

From 1948, the Northeast was not part of any major development plan of Sinhala governments. Foreign funds flowing into the country were diverted to the South under the pretext of the Northeast being infected with terrorism. Millions were spent on Mahaweli Project, Electricity schemes, building of roads and reawakening of villages (Gamudawa). The long drawn out neglect of the Northeast without any development, with only a harsh step-motherly treatment from centralised governments and their bureaucrats convinced the Tamils that they themselves have to take control of their welfare and develop their own lands.

#### **c) 20 years of inhuman war and restrictions imposed on the Northeast**

The 20 years of war against the people of the Northeast was waged not also with emergency restrictions, economic blockades, rapes and mass murders, even inside state-prisons and detention centres (Welikade, Kalutara, Bindunewa). While claiming the Northeast to be part of the whole island which then Sinhalese own the Government handled the Tamil people as slaves on their knees.

All these three factors have snowballed into a firm conviction that Tamils have to recover their traditional homeland primarily to survive safely, to live in dignity and to develop their region as their own without fear and without depending on the Sinhalese of the south.

### **10. Tamil Nationalism differs from Sinhala Nationalism**

There is a radical difference between the Sinhala claim of the whole island as theirs and the Tamil claim of a region as their homeland for their security. The former claim makes the Sinhalese believe they are the proud proprietors of the island who can by their majority decide and discriminately exclude people of the northeast region (as they have done for over 50 years). The others -

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Tamils and Muslims - they say, can live anywhere in the island, but as „tenants“ and „creepers“ under the majority Singhalese. Thus theirs is a concept of homeland that subordinates non-Singhalese and exclude them from self-respect, proprietorship and self-development. The Tamil concept of a homeland, on the contrary, is not exclusive nor it subordinates other people. It is a land whose development and growth will be in the hands of the Tamils, for whom it has been a traditional homeland and a secure homeland. Non-Tamils will be free to settle down and enjoy all the benefits as others.

and got approved by the people in the last parliamentary elections of 2004. It will never die out from the heart of the Tamils. Whether the Northeast is tomorrow to be a federal state under Colombo or an entirely separate State is to be decided by future political events. But the name of the Northeast region will be *Thamil Eelam* for ever and Tamils will have the will and the strength to rule it as their own.

## **11. Tamil Nationalism offers a Peace-Plan through the ISGA**

It is in this light that the demand of the Tamils for an Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) to rehabilitate and reconstruct their war-zone should be understood. What has been reduced to ashes during the long discrimination, criminal acts of destruction and neglect, must be made a living (livable!) zone for the people. Even after the Cease Fire and Memorandum of Understanding and Talks for over two years, promises about normalising living conditions in the Northeast have been unfulfilled. Many thousands are still suffering in refugee camps because of the vast High Security Zones of the occupied forces. The dividends of peace are not at all felt by most of the Tamils. Except for a few international NGOs who attend to the basic minimum in the army-controlled areas, no significant reconstruction and rehabilitation work has been undertaken. Hence an interim administration for reconstruction and rehabilitation under the Tamil leadership was agreed and proposals for the setting up of it were made by the UNP led government and the LTTE respectively.

Taking into consideration the ground realities and the already available infrastructure put up by the Tamil leadership, serious proposals with the help of international experts have been submitted. These have been made within the agreements already reached in Oslo about the framework of a permanent

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solution as well as in the direction and spirit of a peaceful settlement .But unfortunately, Sinhala extremists are opposing the proposal as a stepping stone to a separate state. In spite of the Tamils agreeing to consider the federal alternative to a separate state and working out a way towards that federal autonomy, the Singhalese seem to have still their traditional fear of seeing a terrorist behind every Tamil and a separate state behind every proposal. Their desire seems to be to use the „Tamil-problem“ indefinitely and get all the foreign financial aid, while keeping the Tamils for ever under their domination. May the Buddha save us Tamils from the Buddhists!

## A UNIQUE LEADERSHIP OF THE PEOPLE

### 1. Tamils pushed to seek an alternative Leadership

Many decades of frustrating experiences within the Sinhala majoritarian democracy that legalised anti-Tamil discriminations and used its Armed forces with impunity to suppress and terrorise all democratic opposition of Tamils paved the way for the emergence of new militant leaderships. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has emerged through a long and bloody revolution into the present unique politico-military leadership of the Tamils.

Understandably for the Sinhala masses and its leadership, which were beset with paranoid fantasies of Tamil domination potentially backed by Tamil Nadu, even the very basic demands of the Tamils to live as equal citizens with dignity on that island were interpreted as counter to their „national interests“ implying Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. Any claim for Tamil birth-rights with regard to religion, language, culture and land was interpreted as anti-Buddhist, anti-Sinhala and anti-national leading to separation or independence or division of the island. Consequently the Sinhala majority, motivated purely by Sinhala Buddhist national interests, used their full power and over-reacted with extreme measures of bulldozing the parliament with anti-Tamil laws and used the Sinhala Armed forces to put down all democratic protests with brutal force.

When non-violent and democratic protests of Tamils were met with more inhuman laws and escalating brutal force, it was natural that the patience of the Tamil people was pushed by humiliation to its very limits and the anger of the Tamil youth grew into seeking a militant response to state-terror. It was this situation of legalised discrimination and oppression of the Tamils in general, and of the Tamil youth in particular, without any hope of a future with respect to their education and employment, which pushed the youth to wrest the leadership from their own “moderate fathers“ and establish a politico-militant leadership to deliver on their promise of self-governance.

### 2. Misunderstandings about the new leadership

Now many doubts and questions are being raised about this new leadership, which the Sinhala people themselves and their leadership helped create! An

ignorance or pretence about the genesis and the causes for this new Tamil leadership raises many questions and make it difficult for the majority Sinhalese and its Government to relate to, talk to and handle with this new leadership.

There are many Sinhalese, including some Tamils, who think that this leadership has to be militarily defeated, if not destroyed, and the Tamils 'liberated' from this militant leadership. The Sinhala Governments have also tried hard, even using under-hand methods, to get an alternative to this Tamil leadership. The government, side-stepping this leadership, offered attractive enticements to win over a few Tamil Members of Parliament capable of slavishly supporting them and with whom they can comfortably „do business“ with as in the past. Such Members were often „labelled and exhibited“ by the government as democratic and moderate forces from among the Tamils. Irrespective of the negligible or no support they had among the Tamils, they were provided with plenty of money, ministerial posts and other privileges and used by the government „as mercenaries and show-cases“ of moderate Tamil opinion. The most notable example is the non-Tamil-speaking man with merely a Tamil name, not elected, but hired to be Foreign Minister, who helps lead a mischievous propaganda in the world tarnishing the image of all Tamils and their militant leadership. But the majority of Tamils have rejected them as betrayers of the Tamil cause. History will judge them in the long run.

Hence the majority Sinhalese and their government, if they want a realistic peaceful solution to the conflict and war, must make an effort to understand the new emergent Tamil leadership, as a new and alternative leadership, without attempting to destroy it. In the process of searching and reaching a true democratic solution, this Tamil leadership will abide more and more by genuine needs for democracy and human rights. At the same time and by the same process, the Sinhala leadership will hopefully be liberated from their corrupt style of democracy, mass and blatant violations of human rights of a people and desist from rowdiness inside and outside parliament.

### **3. Corrupt democracies naturally demand alternative leadership**

Many of the difficulties the so-called democrats have in understanding the new Tamil leadership are also due to their limited understanding of democracy and local leadership. By their education and upbringing they are enslaved in

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their own pro-western and colonial ways of thinking. They tend to make absolute their own forms of parliamentary-democracy as the one and only form of democracy. They have no considerations for the corruption and the injustices happening within such democracies. Democracy all agree is the best form of government we have at the present time. But the different ways in which this democracy is practiced leave much room for corruptions and injustices. Some of them have produced the worst of dictators. Those who were brought up in the western schools of thought often overlook the post-colonial developments and the new problems in the third world. They read everything through their traditional categories of thought and arrogantly pass judgments from their own perspectives about distant events and realities. Hence a genuine effort is needed by all those who wish to understand, accept and handle with leaderships emerging as a result of corruption and injustices within democracies and failed-states.

The Sinhala majoritarian-rule democracy, left behind by the British, has been changing the constitution often to suit only the majority race at the expense of the minorities. It has failed to solve the ethnic problem within its parliament for the last fifty years. It has tried to solve a political problem by resorting to state-terrorism and reckless war against its own citizens. Thus it qualifies itself for a failed-state. It is in this climate of a lack of true democracy and honest leadership that an alternative leadership of the Tamils emerged.

#### **4. Humiliation and Rejection of Tamil MPs**

The art of governing cannot be an exclusive privilege of the elite and the college-educated. In fact such men have made some of the worst blunders in history. In our own history and in our long experience of the political struggle, we Tamils have painfully learnt of some educated elites who have betrayed the Tamil cause for their own personal profits.

Besides, even good Tamil leaders have undergone humiliation and frustration within the Sinhala democracy. The post-colonial leadership fostered by the British period of education and parliamentary system brought out highly qualified and internationally recognized Tamils, mostly based in Colombo yet representing the Tamils of the Northeast. The least qualified among them could only be a lawyer. With clarity and eloquence they expressed their aspirations and argued for the rights of the Tamils, but they were either ignored



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or heckled down to their seats in Parliament by Sinhala extremists. Thus there was no purpose served in sending enlightened but old-style Tamil Members to the Parliament in Colombo. Even today one can see bad behaviour of elected Sinhala MPs right there within Parliament.

The present generation of Tamil youth who have taken up the leadership are promising because they have witnessed bitter experiences of the earlier leadership. Let us therefore not rush to make biased judgements about their style and competence at governance. We welcome the so called educated arm-chair critics from the South to look beyond their newspapers and propaganda and see how well the LTTE, even in the absence of basic facilities, is running a de facto government in Wanni.

### **5. Leadership emerging against State Rejections**

Those in the South who refer to the LTTE as rebels of the Northeast, forget their own significant contribution to the emergence of such a leadership. Who fathered such a leadership? Much more than the politics of the Tamil Congress or the Federal Party, or the combined TULF, it was the adamant and arrogant ethnic attitudes of successive Sinhala governments and the oppressive and violent actions of its Forces. These demanded a new leadership from the Tamils to face the Sinhala army of occupation as well as to articulate forcefully and effectively Tamil aspirations.

The Tamils were well known for their hard work, intelligence, obedience and non-violence. Even in the face of repeated Sinhala mob and state violence, they did not give up their non-violent *satyagrahas* as taught by Mahatma Gandhi. But such non-violent and parliamentary protests were treated by the Sinhalese as weakness and more violence was heaped on the Tamils for several decades. When Sinhala discriminations degenerated into violence, death and destruction, even taking away their education and culture of which they were very proud of – e.g. the Standardisation in admission to universities and the burning of the Jaffna Public Library, the Tamil naturally youth could not accept any more attitudes backed by Sinhala violence. They were driven against the wall without a future sans education, employment, culture and even security to life and limb. Left with no choice, they retaliated to protect the land, the people and their heritage from the degradations of State-terror.

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Even an oppressed people have the right to self-defence to strike back at the oppressor with all their might and with whatever means in their disposal. The oppressor has no right to dictate or lay down rules as to how the fallen victim ought to react. The people of the Northeast were never a chaotic mass without direction, purpose and determination. They are not devoid of a consensus in ideology and suffering. Their long suffering against injustices has bound them together as a people with strong determination and stamina to stand up and face the forces of oppression. The personification of this determination born out of long suffering to face the enemy is reflected in the new leadership of the Tamils in the Northeast.

## **6. A Leadership consistent in their Aspirations**

Whether one likes it or not the de facto situation is that the LTTE has emerged to leadership, admittedly not through parliamentary elections the South is familiar with, but through an armed struggle against betrayers among its own people and oppressive forces of the state. It has established itself as,

- (i) the only group which has consistently articulated and still articulates the genuine aspirations of the Tamils in the Northeast,
- (ii) the only organization protecting the People against artillery shelling and aerial bombings of civilian population carried out by the State.
- (iii) the only group that has sacrificed so many thousands of its cadres for the noble cause of Tamil freedom
- (iv) the only group that has set up the institutions and infra-structures (for law and order - police, courts, for éducation, for transport etc.) for governance of people and for human life to continue against all odds and
- (v) the only group that has been acknowledged also by the elected Tamil Parliamentarians as the sole Representatives of Tamil people in the Northeast.

After a long history of Tamil attempts, marked by suffering and deaths at the hands of Sinhala thugs and soldiers, and after several agreements and pacts being unilaterally torn up by Sinhala Governments, after a series of deceptions and broken promises, the Tamils have at last helped emerge a form of leadership



that the Sinhala Majority and its Governments are finding difficult to deal with, or buy over. Sinhala Governments have their way by buying over some elements of the Tamil leadership with some ministerial posts and privileges. They sign

pacts and make promises which are never fulfilled. They only keep these bought-over Tamil politicians watering in their mouth about promises of sharing power in the future. By clinging to the feet of the Sinhala Governments they make their wealth and try to buy other betrayers to support them. But such a buy over is no more possible with the present leadership.

Neither heavy loss of lives, nor military defeats, nor mounting criticism about its moral conduct, nor international threats from major powers, nor the temptations of power from the Sinhala government could wean away this Tamil leadership from its aspirations and commitments. Sinhala Governments have changed and their leaders have adopted varying tactics and offers, but the LTTE leadership has stood firm on its ground for its ideals and commitments.

The convictions, consistency and firmness in aspiring for the above goals do not mean that they are closed to negotiation, dialogue and arriving at a just and reasonable peaceful solution to the conflict. No. Not at all. In fact, the calls for cease-fires and principled negotiations have been always at the instance of this leadership.

## 7. A principled Tamil Leadership

It is the long and frustrating experience of Tamils that many things promised, agreed upon and even gazetted by the Government were not implemented by the army or the bureaucrats in Colombo. The Sinhala leadership when subjected to the slightest opposition from extremists, has reversed on agreements and

abrogated pacts. A Sinhala leadership whose promises are time and again subject to protest marches, demonstrations and shouts of a few extremist elements, is not a leadership that can handle agreements on behalf of people. And on the Tamil side too we have had leaders who lightly gave into the temptations of power and privileges and finally got nowhere. Hence this new Tamil leadership, conscious of past failures of Sinhala and Tamil leaderships, is determined to have a principled way of action and do business with the Sinhala regime, not only for their own people but also for the good of the whole country.

The Sinhalese governments often tend to accuse the LTTE of having betrayed their trust and gone back to a warpath. They say that the LTTE must be exterminated or weakened before any meaningful action is taken for the good of the Tamil people. This argument of the Sinhala leadership only shows that they are forgetting their long history of failures by going back on their solemn words and pacts. Such arguments only exhibits their helplessness to do business with a principled and determined Tamil leadership.

#### **8. A politico-military Leadership with a parliamentary wing**

The Sinhala Governments, during the first three decades of the ethnic conflict used their Armed forces to put down democratic Tamil opposition in the Northeast. Later the same Army was empowered by the notorious *Prevention of Terrorism Act* to act against Tamil militancy with impunity, thus enhancing their role in the ethnic conflict and become a power itself to the point where they appear even to dictate policy and implementation mode to governments. In effect, this is military trying to be a government in its own right – a government within a government! At present no real political solution can be found without the government heavily depending on the Armed forces. Tamils know by their own experience how the Army personnel have their own agenda and disagree with their own government. They react even against gazetted



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government decisions e.g. lifting the economic embargoes against the Tamils in 1995. This power conflict between the government and its armed forces will remain a hindrance in arriving at any true and stable solution.

On the other hand, the politics and the military force of the Tamils have evolved into a harmonised politico-military leadership of the LTTE, with a parliamentary wing in the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). Out of the 23 Tamil parliamentarians within the Sri Lankan parliament 22 are of the TNA who were elected with the full support of the LTTE. This is the climax in the „peoplisation“ and politicisation of a freedom struggle under one leadership.

### **9. A Leadership undeterred by false propaganda of the Government**

The Government of Chandrika was bending backwards to justify its “war for peace“ against the Tamils. International propaganda was intensified by her Foreign Minister to get the Tamil expatriate organisations banned as „front organisations of the LTTE“. Slogans like „Let’s have a war as a way to Peace“, „Let’s liberate the Tamils of Jaffna from the terrorist activities of the LTTE“, „We wanted Peace, but the LTTE asked for war“, „Our War is against the LTTE and not against the Tamils“ – were false statements to mislead not only the Sinhalese, but also the international community. They were used lavishly even by the Sri Lankan embassies to demonise and tarnish the good name of Tamils and their struggle. But such malicious propaganda never weakened Tamil Leadership nor lessened their commitment to the struggle. On the contrary, the Tamil leadership survived all these false propaganda and the Tamils of Tamil Eelam have grown in their togetherness, sympathy and solidarity. And LTTE have reached the status of being accepted, even by other elected representatives of the people, „as the sole representatives of the Tamil people“. This has been recognised also in the decision of the government to hold talks only with the LTTE.

### **10. A Leadership not gloating in mere military victory**

An adamant and prolonged refusal on the part of the Sinhala majority and its successive Governments to accept the true situation about the Tamils in the Northeast and their contemptuous disregard for the LTTE leadership have resulted in Government’s desperate option for escalating war. Though leaders like President Premadasa have told the Sinhalese people repeatedly that

there is no victor in this war, yet the people without counting the loss of life and property, cry out for a war-victory that will quench their thirst for power and satiate ethnic hatred. The majority are so excited, angered and affected by certain setbacks in the war that they think only of war-victories to wipe out the LTTE in order to keep up their pride about a false ethnic superiority.

In reality, shameful defeat of government forces, as it happened in LTTE's Operation codenamed "*Leap of the Tiger*" was a wake-up call to the Government, if only temporarily, to come to its senses. Even the dead bodies of Sinhala soldiers, from very poor families, returning home in plastic bags did not make an impact for the better on the power hungry leaders in the Capital. The LTTE in spite of its resounding military victories offered unilateral cease fires to the Government. But the latter arrogantly refused to reciprocate them. Dead bodies of Sinhala soldiers unaccepted by the Government on flimsy grounds of deterioration were burnt with military honours by the LTTE. This shows clearly the deep commitment of the Tamil leadership to fallen soldiers as against the Sinhala military which bulldozed to the ground the Cemetery of fallen heroes in Kopay. Even the dead are deccrated. How shameful!

## **11. Tamils aim at a cleaner Parliamentary Democracy**

In recent times Tamils have seen a new brand of democracy and democratic elections emerging in the „democratic south“ as well as in Army-controlled areas of the Northeast. The Sinhala political parties have in recent times, after the Wyamba elections, appeared to have woken up a little to shameful corrupt practices marring their elections and governments, but hardly has anything been done to remedy it

Tamils value and respect democracy as practiced in some countries of the western world. But from the cruel experiences they have had with the Sri Lankan brand of democracy, they are not enamoured of it. The present Tamil leadership is a de facto leadership of the Tamil struggle and is not in a hurry to embrace a pseudo-democracy imposed by the Sinhala South which seems to believe that democracy is only about a mechanical process of conducting elections periodically devoid of good governance of the people, for the people by the people. Looking at the level of corruption infecting the Sri Lankan majoritarian democracy, its bureaucracy, even Judiciary, the Armed Forces

and the Police, the Tamils who suffered for many decades under these corruptions, are not in a hurry to fall prey to such forms of governance. Sri Lanka must not try to impose their forms of governance on the Tamils as if their (Sinhala) forms are idealistically suited for the Tamils. Let the South free itself from the weaknesses it has fallen into. And we Tamils, conscious that we were temporarily forced to go into an alternative style of leadership for our liberation, will endeavour to come up with a cleaner, better and more effective form of governance, for the benefit of all people.

## **12. Creating the right conditions for Democracy and Human Rights**

Once conditions are normalised for Tamil life and Tamils can live in their own land with dignity and security, a higher quality of democracy will definitely set in. Without rectifying the violation of the basic rights of a people for life, security, food, clothing and shelter the Government wants to divert attention with talk of permanent solutions which seems an unrealistic pipe dream.. The Tamils are not prepared for endless political discussion with threat of war hanging over them, with meagre food, clothing and shelter. Hence they demand normalisation of life as the first need.

Till then this de facto leadership has to be understood, acknowledged and encouraged to incorporate gradually the ingredients of true parliamentary democracy, human rights, justice and freedom. Until civilian life returns to normalcy, the government has to deal with the LTTE without getting behind flimsy excuses. The government cannot with an assumed air of superiority talk-down to the LTTE or preach to them democracy and human rights without they themselves practicing them.

## **13. Tamils reject Pseudo Leaderships**

In their inability to deal with the leadership brought out by the Tamils of the Northeast, many Singhalese still entertain the wish for meaningful negotiation with some pseudo Tamil representatives, by side-tracking the LTTE. In their desperation many Singhalese, even at this late stage, hope for a weakening or division of the LTTE, if not its complete disappearance, so that they can promote the emergence of hand-picked pseudo Tamil leaders with whom they can do business with as usual.

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There are those Tamil groups who initially were militant, but in recent years have become armed-politicians supportive of the Government, even to the extent of betraying the struggle. They have managed to enter Parliament through the backdoor by buying a handful of votes with tax-payers money given to them by the government- and that too with the help of the armed forces. Though they cannot speak for Tamils, the government espouses and exposes them as "Tamil democrats".

The Sinhala majority and their political parties have tended to devalue the Tamil Struggle as mere "terrorism" and tried to contain the militant reaction of the Tamils with international help. Time has come when the new Tamil leadership after showing its military capabilities is showing its political acumen and readiness for a political solution. The racism and feudalism inherent in the party leaderships of the Sinhalese are being tested before the world. Whether they can rise up to statesmanship in finding a democratic and just solution to the ethnic problem yet remains to be seen.

#### **14.A Leadership founded on convictions of the people**

It was left to the LTTE to fight state-terrorism with their guns as well as strengthening the political aspiration for liberation among the people. Even at the height of military victories, the LTTE proclaimed the big difference between the state-forces which fight for their salary and the Tamil youth who fight for their convictions. The leader of the LTTE has repeatedly claimed that their strength lies not in the weapons they possess and the military victories they gain, but in the deep conviction that their cause is just and right. This conviction has kept growing as the Tamil people went through their long suffering under the iron heels of the state forces.

It has taken so many decades for the Sri Lankan government to realize that they cannot by their numerical majority or military strength subjugate a people. This temptation is still present among many Sinhalese either to encourage an internecine war of self-destruction within the ranks of the LTTE, as occasioned by the break-away of Karuna recently from the Eastern command, or to invite some foreign powers like India or the USA to rush the LTTE. But the „might is right“ approach can never work nor change the peoples or their leaders' convictions to achieve freedom from tyrannical ethnocentric-governments.



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## 15. A politico-militant leadership with a voice in parliament

The LTTE is not convinced of the democratic nature of the Parliament of Sri Lanka, because it is a majoritarian race-rule democracy capable of bulldozing over the rights of the non-Sinhalese. Nor does it believe in the constitution passed by such Sinhala majoritarian democracies without the consent of the Tamils. Nevertheless it wants to send a clear message to Sri Lanka and to the world in ways understood by the so called democratic world. For this purpose it fielded proxy-candidates for the Parliamentary elections of 2004, prepared a manifesto and campaigned for the election. The resounding victory of the Tamil National Alliance and the routing of the others have proved to the world clearly the strength of the LTTE leadership among the people.

It is the Tamil people who have freely and overwhelmingly voted for the Tamil National Alliance and their manifesto acknowledging LTTE as sole representatives of the Tamils fighting for the inalienable right of self-determination of the Tamil people and for their traditional homeland.

Hence the LTTE leadership, is one that has emerged from below, from among the people, soaked in the conviction of their ideals and strengthened to fight with their lives for those ideals. Thus the parting of ways in 1976 to follow a parliamentary path and a politico-military path has again closed ranks to stand up for one ideal under one leadership. And this leadership now has a voice in the Sri Lankan Parliament too. Their presence and their voice in parliament will draw the attention of the international community to show how unjustly minorities are heard and handled within a Sinhala brand of democracy!

## RETHINKING SELF-IMMOLATION

*(A christian theological view of Martyrdom in an Asian struggle for Life and Dignity. This article first appeared in Concilium 3/2003 - an International Theological Quarterly in eight languages)*



### 1. Need to Revise the old concept of Martyrdom

Karl Rahner, on the eve of his death, rightly called for an enlargement of the concept of martyrdom in the context of active struggles for truth, justice and peace in the world. This call is increasingly justified in the context of the many struggles for life and dignity going on within the Asian continent. Though this continent of peoples is blessed with great religions and age old cultures and traditions, human life is still conditioned and threatened by many man-made practices of social injustices, oppressions and discriminations.

While the governing structures and the higher strata of society in these countries, enjoyed fellowship and recognition as enlightened democracies from their former colonial masters and present counterparts of the first world, much of the Asian population as such still faces many threats to life and its human dignity from these very so called democratic governments. Hence there are many struggles of people against their own governments for survival, human dignity and liberation.

As a result millions of Asians are victims of oppression. They die in their fight against evil; because they do not want to betray the good values of their ancestors, their forefathers and their religions; because they want to defend the God-given land and heritage inherited by them as a people; because they want to cherish the dignity and right conferred on them by God by reason of their likeness to God. Still these victims and defenders are killed as rebels and terrorists and thrown into the dustbin of history.

With Asian struggles becoming the matrix of a new victimhood and martyrdom, going beyond the „catholic concept“ towards a wider concept that will recognize other forms of martyrdom will serve the growing need for religions to join hands in fighting common threats to life and dignity of human beings.

It is with this interest a case study could be made of the long Struggle that the Tamils are waging for life and dignity on the island of Sri Lanka. The so called ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, between the majority Sinhala people and the minority Tamil people degenerated into a 20 years long horrendous war between the Sinhala oppressive State and the Tamil militants who rebelled against it. Such a study can be a resourceful window to see some of the new images of victimhood and martyrdom emerging out of this struggle as well as identifying powers which can turn out to be demoniac forces under a cover of democracy.

## 2. The Tamil Struggle in Sri Lanka

History reveals that by successive migrations from the Indian sub-continent, beginning some 2000 years ago, the south and west of this island were inhabited by the Sinhala people who were Buddhists and the Northeast of the island by the Tamils who were Hindus. Islam, as the religion of the later migrant traders from India and Christianity as the religion of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese and other colonizers, also found a place in the religious niches of the island.

As a result of many south-Indian invasions and feudal wars among and between the Sinhalese and Tamils, there emerged three kingdoms - two Sinhalese kingdoms with their capital in Kotte and in Kandy and one Tamil kingdom with its capital in Jaffna. From the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup>. Century the island came under three successive waves of colonialism - the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British - each ruling the island for about 150 years. The Portuguese, brought

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christianity with them and the Dutch after persecuting the Catholics introduced their Reformed Churches. The British, who took full control of the island and all three kingdoms, including the Kingdom of Kandy, introduced in 1833 one centralized administration of the whole island with Colombo as capital and English as the official language of the country. Under the British, except for the so called Indian Tamil tea-estate workers brought by the British for their tea plantations, others of different ethnicity and religions enjoyed equal rights and opportunities.

The island enjoyed the natural resources and the human potential to become a multi-ethnic and multi-religious island of unity in diversity, but chauvinistic politicians helped by extreme nationalists have ruined it.

When the three waves of colonialism( Portuguese, Dutch and British) came to an end, after almost 450 years, political power went into the hands of the Sinhala majority who overlooking the rights of the Tamils as genuine and equal citizens of the island converted the British centralized administration into a Sinhala Buddhist administration thus forcing the Tamils under a new form of inner colonialism. The last 50 years has witnessed Sinhala majority Government using a majoritarian-race-rule-democracy to pass laws and oppress an ethnic minority by depriving them of their rights, denying their identity and destroying their homeland.

### **3. Ethnic Discrimination, mob-violence and State-violence leads to counter-Tamil violence and War against the State**

When three decades of non-violent and democratic attempts to win their basic human rights failed miserably, the Tamil people faced with further genocidal measures, resorted to a militant struggle against the oppressive forces of the State. State terrorism begot counter Tamil terrorism resulting finally in a war between the State and the LTTE which rebelled against the State in the name of the victims. The war weapons of the state involved not mere aerial bombing and artillery shelling but economic blockade, media blockade, rape of Tamil women, disappearances of Tamil youth and wanton destruction of the ecological resources of the Tamils. To these the Tamil response was guerrilla and suicide attacks on the enemy positions.

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On the one hand, hundreds of soldiers from very poor Sinhala families, who only joined the Army to earn their bread, were getting killed leaving behind many widows and orphans. On the other hand, thousands of innocent civilian Tamils were victims of aerial bombing and artillery shelling of schools, churches and temples. 800,000 Tamils have fled the island for survival to other countries and an equal number are internally displaced refugees.

The human and material loss incurred by the 20 year old war and the bankruptcy of the government coffers from pursuing a war have finally forced both sides to a cease fire and begin direct talks towards a political resolution of the conflict.

#### **4. Glorifying and Demonising tendencies will not help**

The martyrs and saints on one side of the conflict tend to be the enemies and demon-figures of the other. While the State-forces and their actions, are seen by many extremist Singhalese as justified actions of a democratic state to defend itself against separatism and terrorism of the Tamil rebels, the non-violent and democratic pleadings of the Tamils for almost 30 years are overlooked or even ridiculed. The actions and reactions last resorted to by the Tamil militant LTTE against State-Terrorism, are far too easily dismissed as extreme Tamil terrorism to justify indiscriminate killing of Tamils. A basic human principle of the right of victims to self-defence is denied to them.

Hence a dispassionate reading of the struggle, the struggling people and their aspirations, convictions, motivations and mindset of the people who are struggling as victims and as self-giving (*that-kodai*) martyrs has to be undertaken.

Many Tamil Christians forced to live as victims under aerial bombings, artillery shelling, economic blockades and horror rapes of women and murder of innocents were reading the Bible from the perspective of the oppressed. And this gave them strength to suffer and hope to walk along. When they cried out of their experiences for better understanding and justice they were labeled as rebels and supporters of terrorism!

## 5. The Religious view of Tamils about their Victims and Martyrs

All Tamils, be they Hindus or Christians tend to view their suffering very much in the same way because of their common worldview. This view is largely conditioned by Hindu-Saivism, the centuries old religion of the Tamils, which believes in a destiny decreed by the gods, (called *thalai eluththu* in Tamil) and interprets present suffering as caused by the past evil (*Karma*). A form of resignation based on the above belief plays a role in accepting and withstanding much suffering with patience and endurance. Although they suffered and continue to suffer many discriminations and humiliations, immense loss of life and property, yet they were and are resilient, cool and calm against the provocative and inhuman actions of the State. But such a view does not by itself give a direction or impetus to fight back for the alleviation of the suffering or the complete removal of suffering. Instead the Hindu belief in reincarnation of gods as super-human beings to fight against evil plays a role in enabling the people to recognize and accept leaders, who in the name of the suffering people and victims fight back the oppressor. They tend to attribute divinised titles to such successful leaders.

While we Christians believe that it is only by the removal of sin, the root cause of suffering, that we can overcome suffering, Christian leaders may not be doing enough to fight evil on behalf of the people. The Saivites believe in reincarnation of the gods as super human beings in many ways to fight against evil. They live also in the hope that leaders will be born even with divine power to fight for them against the triumph of evil. It is on this view that the LTTE invites all Tamils to two focal commemorations -one on Victimhood and other on Martyrdom.

## 6. Victimhood and Martyrdom: Focal Commemorations of the Tamil Liberation Struggle

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>. of July 1983, thousands of innocent Tamils, were literally butchered to death all over the island. This holocaust is commemorated annually as Black July of victims. And the night of the 26<sup>th</sup>.- 27<sup>th</sup>. of Nov. is observed as the Heroes Night (*Mahaveerar Thinam*), honouring thousands of heroic Tamil youth who



gave their lives in fighting for the liberation of their people. These two events commemorating *victimhood* and *martyrdom* have fostered a powerful growth of Tamil nationalism and an increasing thirst for Tamil liberation.



Besides these there are also commemorations of those who fasted to death against the cruelties of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces. Two well known cases are that of a mother Annai Poopathy in Batticaloa and LTTE-Political Leader Thileepan in Jaffna. Their annual commemorations are focal points of great awakening among Tamils. Both Hindus and Christians participate actively in these commemorations, honouring their dear ones as self-sacrificing heroes of Tamil liberation.

Though the majority of Tamils are Hindus and it is customary in Hinduism to burn their dead, those who die in combat are given burials with due military honours in well-kept war cemeteries and their memory commemorated as *martyrs for the cause of liberation of the Tamil people*.

Without attempting to explain away, justify or encourage violence in any form, one can easily understand how a struggling people and their leaders, are forced by the oppressor to react to state injustice and state terrorism through suicide bombings even overlooking collateral damage to innocent lives. Repeated Tamil pleas not to air-drop bombs on civilian populations under the pretext of targeting terrorists went unheeded for years. Air attacks were carried out even on refugee camps, churches, temples, schools and hospitals. What reaction could be expected on behalf of these victims? Not having any plane or a bomb to retaliate in a similar manner (as in the case of war between two full-fledged states), some suicide cadres of the LTTE secretly penetrated the military base situated next to the civil Airport in Colombo, made themselves into human-bombs and exploded the very *Kifir jet* planes which bombed their brethren for days and nights for years. This was done without killing a single civilian.



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## 7. An Overview

Struggles bring out the best in human beings. In the case of the Tamil Struggle one good thing is that it had motivated Tamil Christians to forge a better inter-religious solidarity in suffering along with the Hindus, to greater awareness of injustices inflicted on the Tamils as well as to recognize values such as self-sacrifice, heroism and patriotism beyond the narrow boundaries of their churches and temples.

The phenomena of victimhood and martyrdom unfolding within the liberation struggle of Tamils, though condemned by the opponents, ridiculed by the media and abhorred by modern society as mere terrorism, they still raise disturbing but valid questions to our present day establishments - be it the so called "democratic State", be it the neutral NGOs or the Church within such a State.

The struggles of people for truth, justice and freedom, have more and more focused the attention of the world on new culprits of oppression and oppressive structures near and far. But unfortunately the major powers of the world tend to strengthen a coalition of oppressors who impose, even with military force, their own values of self-security, order and justice as the one absolute order of the world. The western world proclaiming its „new world-order“ and wielding its political and financial power tends to make absolute its own interests, its form of democracy, human rights and international laws; easily foists on struggling people its own definitions of terrorism; seeks to justify its hidden power-seeking acts of war and horror and bulldozes over the genuine aspirations of people dying for their convictions.

People in struggle, believing in the righteousness of the international community appeal to their highest authorities, for example - to the UN and its Structures. But to their disappointment they find that even these are subject to manipulations by the super powers!

Unfortunately the church founded by Jesus Christ the Prophet, to stand in his name and question the partiality of the rich and the powerful, has succumbed to some of the world views of major powers. It has taken over uncritically the vocabulary and judgments of the oppressor, and has gradually weakened and silenced itself to be part of the establishment. But the majority of humanity,



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suffering and struggling is relying more and more on the cries of their innocent victims and on the heroic martyrdom of their rebels, who have given up their own lives so that others may have a just and free life.

Unless religious institutions like the church stand out, at least now, in the name of God as advocates of these struggles and cry halt to oppressions, injustices and mass killings, they loose the right of blanketly condemning all acts against state-terror as terrorism and suicide. A rethinking of the concepts of "terrorism" and "suicide" as defined by the traditional super powers and the churches is called for.

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## 9.

### CALLING “MODERATES” TO STAND UP

*(Open Letter of 17th.April 2000 to the  
Tamil United Liberation Front-TULF)*

Dear Members of the TULF, As a Tamil Christian Priest of Jaffna, I feel it my duty, at this critical period of our history, to make an urgent appeal to you on behalf of our people. From my student days, I have admired Thanthai Chelva and his leadership and followed up the sad turn



of events thereafter. In recent times, I have had the pleasure of meeting Mr. R. Sambandan, Mr. Joseph Pararajasingam and Mr. Mavai Senadirajah, and of exchanging views with them regarding the Tamil question. Today, while watching the latest developments taking place, both within and without Sri Lanka, I write to you, humbly reminding you of an indispensable role, that the TULF is called to play at this decisive point in the history of the Tamils of Thamil Eelam.

As senior politicians, you all are the most qualified to tell the story of the Tamil struggle to the world, at least up to the decisive turn taken in 1976-77. For reasons well known to you, you have distanced yourself from the militant struggle on behalf of the Tamil people. You have characterised your leadership as that of the Tamil “moderates and democrats who can work within a Sinhala Buddhist dominated democratic system”, to win the basic rights of the Tamil people. However corrupt and dictatorial the Sinhala majority democracy may be, you have opted to work within it. These two terms - moderates and democrats - seen against the ongoing militant struggle of the Tamils - have won for you a respectable niche and credibility, in the so called democratic

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institutions and nations of the world, while those militants fighting and dying for the Tamil cause as well as those innocent Tamil civilians killed by the Sinhala forces have been all branded as terrorists and terrorist-supporters. While innocent people and their defenders are dying with criminal labels, you, as their leaders are hailed as “moderate and democrats”!

During this long 17-year period of death, destruction and displacement of Tamils, you have chosen to play a safe role, first from India, and later in Colombo and in the Army-captured Jaffna. Hoping against hope that some good and democratic solution will come out of the Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist Government, you have bent backwards to support the Government and its devolution proposals, presumably with the intention of modifying them along Thimpu principles which were agreed on by all Tamil groups at Thimpu in 1985.

During the darkest hours of suffering of the Tamil people, some of you have tried from time to time, to run to the President, to bring to her notice the plight of the Tamil people and in your characteristic style pleaded with the oppressor for some mercy to soften the atrocities committed against the Tamil people. In gratitude for your support to her Government, she did at times tone down her aggression and offered temporary favours, only to follow it up with more vengeance on a later date. The bitter price, the Tamil struggle had to pay, for these little and temporary favours, was enormous and devastating. The Government of Chandrika and her Foreign Minister were making the biggest propaganda against the Tamil cause in that the “moderate and democratic Tamil leaders of the TULF were not backing the separatist demand of the Tamil terrorists” but are in support of the Government and its devolution proposals. In fact, making this propaganda to the South and to the outside world, President Chandrika, was oppressing and killing the very Tamil people whom you were, probably in your hearts, trying to protect and defend. Is this not a well designed and determined stab in your back?

While declaring the so-called “war for peace”, I know by my personal experience in the war zones, that the President was not targeting merely the LTTE, but the whole Tamil people. If you sum up all the pleadings you were making to her on behalf of the Tamil people, it will become clear that the proclaimed “war for peace” was in effect a war against the Tamils, escalated by bombs, blockades, rapes and mass-murders behind a media blockade.

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Besides not voting for the extension of emergency, how have you opposed this horrendous war against your people in any meaningful way? Were you not aware, that your style of “pleading with the oppressive powers for clemency” and her benign stepping down to meet you, giving her empty words of consolation or promises of “looking into” were really weakening, if not negating, the whole Tamil Struggle for Justice?

The above double-faced action of the Chandrika Government is not a true democracy, but only a “dictatorial democracy”. By holding parliamentary elections, though they are corrupt with vices, she convinces the world outside that there is democracy in the country. But by imposing the consensus of the majority Sinhala Buddhists for war on the Tamils, she practices ruthless dictatorship of one nation on the other. This peculiar character of the Sri Lankan “majoritarian-race-rule democratic dictatorship of the Sinhalese”, which you have till now faithfully served, has reached the hour for questioning and exposition. Only you “moderates and democrats”, acknowledged by the world as part of this democracy, could tell the world the truth of this “Sinhala dictatorial-democracy”, does not have the political good-will and potential to resolve the present conflict in the country.

Any keen observer of recent developments in the South of Sri Lanka will agree that the historic moment of truth has arrived. With Norway agreeing to play a role of facilitation or mediation, the world is observing the political events in Sri Lanka more closely. The false propaganda so far successfully made by the President and her Foreign Minister, that there is not a Tamil problem but only a Terrorist problem, the increasing consensus between the PA and the UNP that the Tamils must be subjugated and ruled by a slight devolution of power within a unitary form of government (as allegedly agreed with the Tamil moderates!) and the extremist non-negotiable views as expressed by the Buddhist Mahanayakes - are all attempts at twisting the Truths of history concerning Tamils and covering up the multitude of injustices heaped on Tamils. It is at this critical period of our history, I appeal to you, Sir: Stand up! Enough is enough. Stand up and speak with one clear voice the Truth concerning the Tamils and their just demands to be a respectable people in the land of their birth. Are not the cries of the Tamil victims not reaching the Capital?

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The President has made much use of your support as from a democratic and moderate Tamil party and she will go even further with this "stab-in-the-back approach", in order to achieve the verdict given to her by the Sinhala people. Recently she made two claims - one misleading the world that she had a democratic mandate of all the peoples of Sri Lanka, including the Tamils, and the other that she had had successful talks with you on the key proposals of the devolution package. Except for a statement from Mr. Joseph Pararajasingam, denying the second claim, there was no official statement from the TULF denying or questioning her claims to the UNP. Your present silence is an eloquent affirmation of her claims. Dear Sirs, please stand up as democrats and moderates before the world, and speak out unanimously and eloquently the very Truths you yourselves have formulated and professed in Vaddukoddai and in Thimpu?

I am making this appeal to Tamil leaders, conscious that they got democratically elected by some sections of the Tamil people. As a religious leader, I humbly exhort you, Sirs, to stand up immediately and speak courageously for truth and justice concerning the Tamils. The time has come for you either to serve the Cause of the Tamil people, as unanimously espoused in Vaddukoddai and Thimpu Resolutions or to bow out of a situation, in which your „conniving silence“ may further damage the Tamil Cause. At least then, if you bow out of your leadership, the world will come to know, within what type of democracy and against what oppression, the Tamils of Thamil Eelam are struggling to survive.

Thank you,

Yours truly

Rev. Dr. S. J. Emmanuel

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## 10.

### WIPING THE TEARS OF OUR CHILDREN

*(An Appeal to the Medical Institute of Tamils -MIOT-London  
at the Thurrock Civic Hall, Grays, Essex on 9th.Sept.2000)*



It is fitting that this event to focus attention on the plight of children suffering in Tamil Eelam be named Teardrops 2000. During the last fifty years Thamil Thaaai (=Tamil Mother) had undergone untold sufferings of various types and magnitudes. The visible deaths, destruction and displacement caused by the inhuman crimes of the Sri Lankan Sinhala government, may be statistically recorded for history. But the mental and psychological agonies of Thamil Thaaai and her children cannot be gauged easily. They will be felt for a long time to come and some of them are bound to stay as permanent scars on

members of our community.

This event focusing on the physical and psychic consequences suffered by the Tamil children in the war zones of Tamil Eelam and organized by the Medical Institute of Tamils (MIOT) gives us an occasion to appreciate their services and reflect on their role in the context of the Tamil Struggle for human life and human dignity

#### 1. Our common concern for the Tears of the Tamil Mother

A variety of teardrops roll down the cheeks of our Thamil Thaaai. Beside the tears for the physical and psychic suffering of her children about which you all are directly concerned with and trying to be helpful, there are also other forms of tears rolling down the cheeks of Thamil Thaaai. We identify just three of them.

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Her tears for the rising divisions among her children caused by the irresponsible and the power-hungry. Just now when the people of the Jaffna Peninsula are running in all directions for survival, the power hungry politicians are competing for seats in the Colombo government. It is a situation where the mice are dying and the cats are playing. (Poonaikalukku vilayaaddu chundelikku cheevan pohuthu)

Tamil mother is shedding tears for those Expatriate Tamils who waste their hard earned money in extravagance for their children without any thought or contribution to her suffering children at home. The blindness of foreign powers to her situation is another cause for her tears. Foreign powers, like the UK, who once occupied and plundered our homeland, reaped the benefits of her educational and administrative potentials, and now in spite of knowing the truth and having in some way caused the problems of the present suffering are still parading as innocent neutrals and observers, if not accusers and helpers of war against her.

How much of suffering can this Tamil Thaaai endure? Can we all here assembled as expatriate Tamils, afford to be deaf and blind to this suffering? Can we afford to be insensitive and unsympathetic to our mother's cries? Surely not. Children who do not love their parents are not worthy to be called children. Tamils who do not respond to the cries and agonies of Thamil Thaaai cannot identify themselves as Tamils nor justify their Tamil names. We have a duty to be concerned and caring for all the suffering Thamil Thaaai is undergoing these days.

## **2. We appreciate the work of the Medical Institute of Tamils**

I am happy that an institute of this nature was founded in London about eleven years ago and that you all are trying to channel your services through it to help the victims of war in our homeland. The Tamil expatriate community as well as our sisters and brothers struggling to survive in our homeland gratefully appreciate your services to them.

Motivated by my convictions to serve my people on the basis of my birth and faith, I like to share with you, men and women of the medical profession, some thoughts about the role of an institute such as yours in the context of our Tamil struggle. I am not in any way trying to deliver a pious exhortation from

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a religious pulpit. Nor am I appealing merely for your material and financial aid to support the medical efforts in the war zones of our motherland. You have already started helping projects and sending aid to these regions. I only wish that it keeps growing in keeping with the increasing demands of the situation. I wish instead to call your attention as individuals, as families and as an institute, to the noble ideals of your profession and its indispensable and important role in the larger context of our Tamil struggle for survival and dignity.

### **3. Medical profession is humanitarian service par excellence.**

Medical profession is in fact a noble vocation where the goal is no more a service for self-fulfillment or for commercial interests, or for status. The measure of your success in this vocation is not measured by academic excellence or discoveries you make in research laboratories nor by the amount of wealth you make out of this profession, but by the depth of dedicated service you render by giving your whole self in service to life of individuals and communities. It is a service that aims also at self-realization and satisfaction that you have given your best of service to others.

### **4. It has been a favorite and a forte among the Tamils**

Due to many factors such as the arid nature of our homeland and the talent for hard work, education became our forte. Blessed with a network of good schools, many of them started by the missionaries of colonial times, we entered the portals of higher education including that of the medical profession. Although hard work and persistence kept us moving into a broader spectrum of jobs and services, the medical profession came to be loved and respected as an eminent profession within the Tamil community. University professors, surgeons, doctors, medical technicians and nurses - all those connected with medical services won respect and appreciation, not only within, but also outside our community. First among those who benefited by Tamil medical profession was the general population of our majority Sinhala brethren, and later the outside world too. It is for this reason, even before anti-Tamil discriminations, riots and holocaust forced a Tamil exodus to almost all parts of the world, Tamil professionals migrated to the greener pastures of Europe and America as welcome and recognized skilled-workers. Unlike those in other professions you already have a second and even a third generation taking up to this



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profession. I am happy to see so many Tamils well established in different parts of the world, doing well and serving in very high positions of service even at the international level.

### **5. An attractive profession even for prospective partners**

It is true that you were attracting top grade dowries, even when your partners were attractive and qualified. Whether it is still so in the matrimonial market, I do not know. But your profession has become attractive and even captivating for some. Some may justifiably question it as a weakness, I am addressing my minds to those who are really talented for such a profession and carry with them all that is required to make of this profession a happy way of life and service. Yes, I say life and service because service is an integral part of this profession in an outstanding manner.

### **6. We are proud of you, your achievements and your service**

We are aware of the high quality of medical services you are generously rendering to the people of your host-country. It is but just and right you serve in that manner. But at the same time let us ask ourselves: what are we doing for our people in our motherland?

While we are thankful for whatever you are attempting to do to relieve the agony of children in the war zones, we hope and pray for more help from you. On one side, the agonies of the people caught in our Tamil struggle are so indescribable, the inhuman blockades of a non-sympathetic Sinhala government and its military are so insensitive to the Tamil cries for survival, and on the other side, the war-drums of the Sinhala chauvinists are so full of hatred, not even the Dharma preachers have any consideration for those dying and struggling beyond their borders, that your efforts to help Thamil ThaaI and her children to survive have to be doubled and trebled. Only then can the agonizing cries for survival be met in some meaningful way.

I hope and pray that in comparison with your voluminous service to life in the host-country, your response to the Tamil cry does not reduce itself only to a few occasional gifts out of your abundance and done only through a fraction of the professionals. Then the sad situation will be fittingly described by the age old Tamil saying - The son is throwing a banquet while the mother is

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begging for crumbs. (Thaai pitchchai eddukka mahan virunthu pohddathu pol)

## **7. Your convictions about life, truth and justice must lead you to a deeper solidarity with the suffering**

Solidarity means compassion for and with the suffering. ( cum + patere = suffer with, solidarity with our suffering people). It does not mean giving something out of our abundance, or occasionally, out of whatever falls out or overflows. It means in the first place, reaching out to the suffering with our minds and hearts, reaching out with our emotions too. We are called to embrace a suffering and weeping mother of our own. We know the injustices she is suffering at the hands of an inhuman enemy and its forces - deaths by the thousands, destruction in millions, humiliations at all levels, discriminations in all forms. In addition, even the little innocent children are victimised.

## **8. A Sacred Duty for the benefit of our own children.**

As families connected with this profession, let humanitarian concern and aid become almost a second religion - a sacred duty for you. The Tamil saying reminds us of our duty to care for the children of others too. Pirar pillaiy naan thadavinal, en pillai thanaka valarum. If you are concerned and loving about the plight of other's children, your own will grow by itself. This saying illustrates clearly something your families must cultivate in the heart and minds of your children. It is your responsibility as parents of the medical profession, to inform, motivate and cultivate a culture of humanitarian services directed towards the unfortunate sisters and brothers of our homeland.



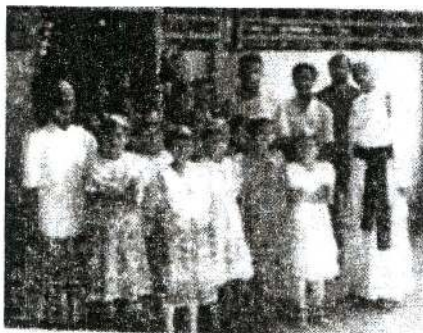
This is true when the enemy is challenged courageously by our heroic youth who are sacrificing their lives through self-giving (thatkodai). They are not dying with the pleasure of causing harm to others, but are targetting those who destroy us and our land.

We, who are expatriates, gifted with talents, intelligence, comparative comforts and regular income have a sacred duty. Yes sacred it is, because the cries of innocents are the cries of gods. If we are deaf and blind to these agonizing cries, what blessings can we expect for our own children? Whatever sacrifices we make and whatever contributions we make, they are rewarding for our own children. Think of the efforts which we make to give the best of everything to our own children - at home and in schools, in the playing fields and in their hobbies, in their travels and recreations. Think of the enormous amounts spent for such things. You have a right and a duty to give the best to your children But let us not forget, there is another mother and father of your own blood looking up to you to save their own children. Have pity on your kindred.

Finally, I will exhort you of the medical profession in UK, to spread wide this institution and its efforts to other places like the United States, Canada and Australia. There too many of your colleagues in the same profession can make similar efforts towards solidarity and support to our suffering brethren.

### **9. If foreigners are rushing aid for our motherland, why not we?**

Dozens of foreigners supported by foreign funds dare to go into the war zones, share a hard life with the suffering Tamils and are serving the needs of the people? We cannot dismiss those services as purely for the love of money. Our people bear witness to their heroic services. I myself have seen how sick people are carried with love and transported in the ICRC ship and in Red Cross vehicles to hospitals. They undergo several hardships and forgo so many comforts their compatriots have in Europe.



On the background of the heroic services and sacrifices of these foreign humanitarian servants, the question or challenge before us today is - how much are we doing from here for our own mother - Tamil Mother? Can't we set apart a small fraction of our time, concern and income for these unfortunate sisters and brothers of our own blood?

## Growing Together in Solidarity and Sharing

*(At the Annual Charity Dinner of the TRO-UK Branch  
On 16.12.2000 at Walthamstow Assembly Hall in London.)*

### **1. Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO) has come to stay as a growing togetherness in solidarity and sharing!**

Dear friends, I have the honour to speak to you this evening as a witness of the charitable services rendered by the TRO in Jaffna and in Wannai, especially during those years of mass-exodus and displacements of Tamils from their homeland. I had the privilege then of accompanying my sisters and brothers in their suffering. And today I stand here on their behalf to thank and encourage you all to go further.



As you all already know, those who wage a racist war against the Tamils of Tamil Eelam, have been throttling the lives of the Tamils, by using a prolonged and inhuman economic blockade as a weapon of their war. They are now trying their utmost by means of false propaganda and accusations in western countries, to hinder Tamil expatriates from further feeding, sheltering and clothing the victims of war.

But the deaths, destruction and displacements inflicted by successive Sri Lankan Governments and their forces on the Tamil people and their homeland, have gradually given birth to a new force of oneness among our people. This new force we recognise is our definitive growing togetherness, solidarity and sharing. In other words, the humanitarian tragedies created by the policies of the Sri Lankan governments have pushed the Tamils to become more conscious of their togetherness, to become more eloquent of their solidarity and to become more generous in sharing what they have with the unfortunate ones.

I want to assure you my friends, helpers and well-wishers of the TRO, that so long as there exists a discriminated and suffering Tamil people in Tamil Eelam

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and an expatriate Tamil community in strong solidarity with their suffering brethren, this organisation, the TRO, is bound to stay and will only grow from strength to strength.

Let those who try to stifle, if not extinguish, this new force and spirit of Growing Togetherness, among the dispersed Tamils and their suffering brethren realise, that this TRO-spirit and force cannot be so controlled. It is a force born out of the crying needs against atrocities and denials of the basic needs of the Tamil victims of war. It cannot be weakened by the jealousies, suspicions and malicious manoeuvres of racist politicians, Tamil traitors and hired journalists. A genuine spirit of solidarity with the suffering is divine and bound to grow, not diminish or die.

## **2. Tamils will overcome the suffering of displacements**

Sri Lankan governments and their armed forces, by their racist policies and imperialistic occupation have been driving out the Tamils from their homelands, both within the island of Sri Lanka and out across into the world as refugees. This has caused agonising separation, dispersion and even disintegration of the traditional ties within Tamil families. Thousands who were forced to flee away from Eelam are still suffering in foreign lands. These are some of the invisible but immense tragedies suffered by the Tamils at the hands of the Sinhalese. Despite all these satanic forces, the new Tamil nation, I assure you, is bound to overcome the suffering and grow from strength to strength.



## **3. An “internal liberation” within the Tamil communities**

This togetherness has won for us at least partially a needed “internal liberation” within the Tamil communities of Tamil Eelam. Irrespective of traditional differences like caste, religion, village and educational barriers, which have been for centuries standing in the way of our unity as a people, we have been forced by suffering and loss of lives and properties to grow together as a

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nation, both within the war zones of ThamilEelam as well as in all the foreign lands across the world.

The immediate sufferings and needs have forced those still struggling in the war zones to liberate themselves from the clutches of man made differences and struggle together supporting one another. In the expatriate situation, where such sufferings are minimal, if not absent altogether, this togetherness will take its own time to grow. Cultural events and celebrations are important and necessary for us to be united and to be united and to grow, but inadequate to nourish and cement a firm togetherness that can undertake international engagements in favour of the Tamil struggle.

Events like these, where we express our solidarity with our suffering and our readiness to help them, have a liberating effect on ourselves. We feel freed from our own boundaries and slaveries of wealth, status and position, as we gather and work for a noble purpose of helping our unfortunate brethren at home towards an ultimate liberation.

#### **4. The growing oneness I witnessed at the ground level**

I have witnessed at close quarters, how the threat to life through aerial bombs, scarcity of food, clothing and shelter moved the hearts of those who still had a very small house or some food, to share even that little with their unfortunate brethren. The solidarity among the poor often put us to shame.

During those rainy days following the exodus of 500,000 people from Jaffna, when the few community-buildings like schools and temples of Thenmaradchi were totally inadequate to accommodate the displaced, how generous were those simple and poor people of Thenmaradchi in accommodating 3,4, or even 5 families within their houses and premises. Welcoming, accommodating, sharing and caring - these were the noble human values that fostered that togetherness and gave our people strength to survive.

These sufferings did liberate us Tamils from clinging on to our traditional values of caste, religion, status, wealth and education. They liberated us to stretch out our hands - both to beg and to share. Whether it is for a little shelter to rest for the night, a concrete-roof to protect us against the bombs, or some food and water to keep body and soul together, the Tamil hands readily clasped one

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another in warmth and mutual help. And that had strengthened them towards a new liberation. Not only did the shackles of slavery, which we carried within our race, fall by the wayside in our march towards freedom, but a new culture of togetherness, solidarity and sharing has grown across the borders to bind us together as a new and strong Tamil nation in adversity.

## 5. The heroic services of the TRO as I saw it

I have witnessed the heroic services of the TRO during the historic exodus from Jaffna in November 1995 and from Kilinochchi in July 1996. A few of those services are well registered in my mind and worth recalling.

Within a space of few days and hours TRO had to organise a network of humanitarian services ranging from distribution of cooking utensils, sleeping-mats and cadjan leaves to constructing sheds for cooking in that rainy weather. At least one meal a day had to be organised for the many thousands both with help of other NGOs - both national and international - as well as with young volunteers from among the displaced. The NGOs and the government AGAs in Thenmaradchi, Vadamaradchi and Wanni were witnesses to the efficient co-ordination of humanitarian services and administrations of orphanages and relief centres in those areas by the TRO.



Similarly, when the second exodus took place around July 26th. in 1996 from Wanni, into the jungles around Madhu, our unfortunate brethren devoid of the basics to life walked in rain and through jungles in the night with nothing more than a few plastic bags in their hands. The TRO, like the hand that rushes to hold the loincloth in place, (Udukkai Illanthavan Kai pole ) rushed prompt assistance to these people.

The people of Wanni had no access to electricity or torch batteries to enable them to listen to radios. But the Sri Lankan government on 25th 1996, declared through state-radio a curfew over the Wanni region from the 26th. July. It warned against all movements of vehicles - not even those of international

NGOs like the ICRC and UNHCR even with their flags. These NGOs, which were already frustrated with a two weeks long army-blockade of their requirements, felt the restriction on their movements as a further freezing of their activities. In their helplessness almost all of them moved out of Kilinochchi area and went to Madhu, thus leaving the people of Wannu as “orphans” to face the bombs of the Sri Lankan forces. Again it was left to the TRO to summon all its resources of personnel and material and stand by these people to give them basic possible assistance. This fact of TRO’s heroic service was acknowledged by the representatives of the NGOs at a meeting 14 days later at Madhu, presided over by the Government Agent of Mannar and attended by me as the then Vicar General for Jaffna.



## 6. The Role of the TRO among the Tamil expatriates

The expatriate Tamils generously extending their helping hands have become an important dimension of the growing togetherness of Tamils of Tamil Eelam. It is already a habit or second nature of expatriate Tamils to send gifts and financial assistance from their hard-earned money to their own family members and relatives in need. This may be entirely new to the westerners, but it is taken for granted in our culture as almost a family obligation. Now this family- and cultural obligation is extended to the larger community of Tamils. Without any constraint or compulsion, without any wish for recognition or praise, purely on the basis of a growing togetherness, Tamil expatriates have given heroically, their contribution through organisations like the TRO to help their suffering brethren without revealing their identity to the beneficiaries. But this noble mediatory action of the TRO in enabling expatriates to help lessen the suffering of their brethren has unfortunately become the object of sheer jealousy, of baseless suspicions and even of wild accusations from the majority Sinhalese and their government.

If not for such vital aid from the expatriates channelled through the TRO, the number dying without food clothing and shelter in our homeland would have been catastrophic.



## **7. TRO necessitated by the gross intransigence of the government.**

It is a well-known fact, that without foreign money into the war zones, the people struggling there did not have the financial capacity to buy those goods. The finance flowing from the Tamil expatriate community, first flows into the coffers of the central bank - bringing a sizeable amount of foreign currency into the war-chest of the Sri Lanka government for its war against the Tamils. Only thereafter, does the local equivalent money reach the hands of the victims of war and helps them to buy the few necessities at exorbitant prices caused by government's economic blockade against the Northeast.

Government was justifying the shortage of food and the exorbitant prices by making the LTTE the scapegoat. The amount of food sent from Colombo harbour was far below the needs of the people, they were delayed by harbour workers and consequently a good part of them was spoilt. Bureaucrats without a heart for the Tamil victims of the North often shipped very low quality food-stuffs. In spite of all these shortcomings, Rupavahini - the state Television - giving maximum (or repeated) publicity to the loading in Colombo make the majority in the south exclaim that such huge quantities are being sent to the problematic North. In such context it was easier for Government to make LTTE the scapegoat and say that most of the food sent had been taken away by militants and that the exorbitant prices were due to taxes by LTTE. They went on boasting that their Government was unique in its generosity in sending food to its enemies!

Neither the complaints from the war-zones taken with due seriousness, nor these accusations were proved by any independent body visiting the war zones. The truth was that foreign funds received by the Government to help the Tamils who were war victims were unashamedly utilised for feeding and transporting the state forces!

The Sri Lankan Government can beg, borrow and even steal, in order to kill and destroy. That does not stir the conscience of the Sri Lankan Government nor of the countries producing and selling weapons. But if Tamils, by their own blood and sweat, earn their money by hard work, and pool a part of their earnings to help the Tamil victims of war, then it is mischievously labelled as money collected for war!

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The simple truth is that the Sinhalese governments are begging for millions of dollars to buy arms and train more men for the war against the Tamils while the Tamil expatriates are sweating hard to send small sums of money as alms, to help the victims of war to survive. And the Foreign Minister goes round the world asking governments to ban all organisations of Tamils because they are front-organisations of the LTTE raising funds for terrorist activities.

## **8. Self-support among Tamils strengthens our right of self-determination**

Our right for self-determination, though refused to be acknowledged by the majority Sinhalese, is beginning to be acknowledged by the international community. It is interesting to hear the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister's comments regarding our right of self-determination. Completely blind to the fact that Sri Lanka not only failed during the last 50 years to solve the ethnic problem but also engineered a genocide inside the country as well as create a huge refugee-problem for the rest of the world ( 800,000 Tamils have fled their homeland since the holocaust of 1983! ) . In spite of the latter consequence, he wants the world to believe that the ethnic conflict is an internal crisis and that Sri Lanka has the right, namely, of continuing to solve its problems by further genocide and exodus of Tamils. A failed-state cannot have any more right to rule an unwilling people and create problems for the rest of the world.

While begging the whole world for money and weapons to effect genocide and create a world-wide refugee problem, he dares to tell the world:- we want only your money and weapons, but not your advice or mediation for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Self-respecting Tamils still believe on their right to rule themselves. Those Tamils, who like the Foreign Minister, may have mortgaged their rights for other favours do not believe in their right of self-determination. The international community increasingly understand this position and are seeking new ways of accommodating this right of self-determination within present borders of states. Why not for Sri Lanka?

We all know too well how the North and East has received a step-motherly treatment with regard to development through foreign aid. It is a well-documented fact of history. Even before this war started, there were many *instances of money*, received for development projects in the North and East, unjustly diverted to developing the South only. And now with the war against

the Tamils escalating, can we expect the government to do any better? In Tamil there is a saying to the effect - people who beat their breasts even at weddings, will they stand quiet at funerals (*Kalyaanaththil maar adiththavan, Seththa veeddil chumma irruppaano.*). In other words, can Sinhala governments, which have successively discriminated against the Tamils during peaceful times, be expected to be just and fair to the Tamils during a war situation? This is the hard reality.

In the context of escalating discrimination against Tamils, not only before the war, but also during and after the war, we Tamils are left to care for and tend our own wounds. Looking after the Tamil-victims of war is our responsibility - the responsibility of the still surviving and the more fortunate here. We are forced to stand on our own feet. Thus self-supporting becomes a necessity and a strength for our right for self-determination.

## 9. False allegations about TRO

Regarding the allegation that funds raised by expatriate front organisations of the LTTE are channelled into the war-chest of the LTTE to purchase more weapons of war, we know the truth and the reason why Sri Lanka is making such accusations. It is Sri Lanka which does such channelling of funds into hidden directions. If money is collected for peaceful motives at the international level and then used for war, the foremost culprit is the Sri Lankan government. Where is all the skyrocketing aid from western donors flowing into?

What about the millions given for rehabilitation of North and East? Even now, citing rehabilitation and reconstruction work in war-torn areas, the government gets much aid for rehabilitation and reconstruction. We all know too well about funds used for political bribing and bargaining with Tamil traitors. How much of aid flows into the pockets of ministers, army commanders and other VIPs? It is this governmental habit of diverting funds meant for peaceful purposes into the national war chest, which enables the government to suspect and accuse others by their own standards.

It appears the Sri Lankan government has told some foreign governments, if the expatriates cannot be deported or prevented from gathering or prevented from collecting funds for the TRO, let them channel their collections through

the Sri Lankan Embassies, and the government will look after the Tamil victims of war. Ridiculous! We know well how the foreign funds intended for assisting the victims of war are either diverted only to Sinhala areas such as Anuradhapura and Amparaai - purposely included as „North and East“ by the Sri Lankan government. We are also aware how money is entrusted to Tamil traitors from the North to buy votes and hire murderers. Hence it will be foolish for the expatriate Tamils to entrust this service to the Sri Lankan government. It is because the expatriate Tamils do not trust the Sri Lankan government's will and ability to help Tamils, that they want to send their aid straight to reliable people who will spend their money in feeding and housing the victims.

Let Sri Lanka first establish its good will and credentials to help the Tamil victims of war, by allowing into the war zones those basic goods already paid for by foreign donations and demanded by the birth-right of citizens in the island. When it is not prepared to fulfil its minimum obligations by Tamil citizens still struggling there, how can it carry out faithfully the wishes of expatriate Tamils to their kith and kin?

## **10. Double-talks about Peace-Talks**

I cannot conclude my address to you without a few comments about the current state of the proposal for Peace-Talks. As a close witness to the last rounds of Peace-talks in 1995 and basing myself on the exchange of letters between the LTTE and the Government, I have analysed the reasons for the failure of those Talks elsewhere (Ch.18.)

Recent events have shed further light on the insincerity and the incapability of the Sri Lankan government for any meaningful talk for a peaceful settlement. We are asking for peace-talks without pre-conditions. While the world welcomes the proposal of Prabaharan for unconditional peace-talks to restore conditions of normalcy, the government of Sri Lanka, is cornered by the clear stance of the LTTE. From different ministers orbiting around the President, we hear contradictory and shameful responses to the one clear stance of the Tamil Leader. Ministers are already fighting among themselves as to who and who should go for the talks, without understanding or clearly responding to the call for talks.

While the President is in Europe lobbying the donor countries before the decisive meeting for aid, her „boys“ stationed in different corners of the globe, as ambassadors are making different noises exposing the utter bankruptcy and helplessness of the government, when faced with reason, truth and justice. Those who cried eloquently for an all out war to wipe away the LTTE do not know how to do the somersault from their extremist views to moderate views. And the President is in a fix as to how to respond to the pressures of the international community and its donors.

## 11. A Foreign Minister who does no homework

Foreign ministers, it is true, have to be often in foreign countries. But they must do the minimum homework of being in touch with ground realities at home. The Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, hired for his legal talents of tongue twisting, often does shadow boxing in misquoting and attacking the LTTE leader. He challenges the right of self-determination of the Tamils with the right of his Sinhala government to solve the ethnic problem which it failed badly for the last 50 years. By



causing such a destruction of people and their property, and causing a refugee-problems for other countries, the Sri Lankan State has qualified in all respects to be a failed-state. It is time for other countries to tell Sri Lanka that this right proclaimed by its foreign minister to resolve its „internal problem“ ends where the right of other countries affected by the flow of Tamil refugees begins to question their governance in handling the refugees.

Instead of doing the homework at home and bringing about a just and peaceful settlement through talks, the foreign minister is going all over the world, trying to teach the foreign governments how to oppress the Tamils in their lands, how to close down any association the Tamils have for their welfare and how to stop them pooling their money to help the victims of war.

Mr. Minister, believing your propaganda, laws may be passed and offices may close, but the growing togetherness, solidarity and sharing of resources among us Tamils will not be reversed by such moves. At least for the sake of carrying

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a Tamil name, please visit once the war-zones of the Northeast, talk to local people and see their plight at least once. You will then be another human being!

Solidarity, Sharing, Togetherness among the Tamils of Tamil Eelam have awakened the attention and admiration of all the Tamils in the world. Any attempt by the Sri Lankan Government to throttle the services of the TRO through false propaganda is a crime against humanity and will not be easily forgiven.

## 12.

### CALLING INTELLECTUALS AND PROFESSIONALS

( A talk delivered at the annual Lunch of the Standing Committee of Tamils SCOT in London on the 30th.of April 2000)

#### 1. The contribution of the educated expatriates is woefully lacking

Dear Friends, I am happy to be an honoured guest at this lunch organised by the *Standing Committee of Tamils* (SCOT). As a group of concerned Tamils, your group has for the last 22 years done a valuable „service for the relief of poverty and social uplift of Tamil people” in our homeland. As one who knows, to some extent the beneficiaries of your help, I praise your common effort to help our people in their struggle for life.

After many years of teaching Theology in Kandy, I went back to Jaffna in 1986. My sense of belonging to a larger family of Tamils, both within the island as well as outside, has grown. As a Tamil Catholic priest from Jaffna, I try to harmonise and be loyal to both my ethnic and religious identities, and the more I attempt to do this, the more I feel it my duty to share with my countrymen and contemporaries, what I feel to be important in the Tamil people’s long walk to freedom.

Today I want to share with you as friends, contemporaries and countrymen, *Udan-pirappukkal* some of these thoughts related to our place and our role in the Tamil struggle. Though as individuals, some of us are already active and contributing in some way to the struggle, yet a collective and concerted contribution, in keeping with the intellectual, professional and social talents of our life as an expatriate community in Europe is, I think, woefully lacking.

Our presence here today and our participation in the activities of the SCOT are surely signs of our solidarity with one another and of our common concern for the people caught in the struggle and its war. My speaking to you today is, not to pretend that I have done my part well, nor is it an exercise of preaching to the converted, but an attempt to collectively search and probe our conscience to identify and acknowledge some of our common and collective failures in

relation to the Tamil struggle and to see in what ways we can improve on the quality and quantity of our contribution to the struggle.

## **2. A long struggle, but still not understood by the Sinhalese.**

Looking back to the last 50 years of our journey to freedom, the enormous suffering endured by our people and the heroic sacrifices made by our youth, it is only right and fitting that we raise the question: what has been our contribution during these bloody decades? Military set-backs and victories can evoke feelings of sadness and joy, heated discussions and arguments can split us into opposing parties and blocks, but the Tamil struggle, unlike the free-lance politics of self-centred politicians, has been shaped in form and intensity by an oppressive government and its anti-Tamil politics. This struggle has taken on a well-defined direction and determination to resist the anti-Tamil politics of the Sri Lankan government. Its determined will to liberate us from Sinhala subjugation and enable us to decide our future have never been disputed.

The direction and determination of the Tamil struggle is so founded on Truth and Justice, that it means no ill-will to others in any way. Nor does it beg anything from others. It is much more serious and noble than what it is made out to be among our Sinhala brethren in their writings and discussions. It's interesting to note the type of discussion going on among the Sinhalese extremists, even among their educated.

Recently, Mr. Kiriella, the Deputy Foreign Minister was educating his countrymen in London about the many Kingdoms in that island, including a Tamil one, before colonial times. Some learned Sinhalese at that meeting, who readily accept the mythical chronicles of a 6th. century Mahavamsa as genuine history, were contesting the abc of a much later history. Again Mr. Kiriella was explaining to his brethren, that the Tamils - in 1956 demanded only a right for their language and now they are demanding more. So even the educated Sinhalese, still talk the language of the proprietors and donors and expect the Tamils to plead and beg as dependents and recipients. There is no talk of citizen's rights, human rights, human dignity and nationhood for Tamils!

Even a top Sri Lankan economist Lal Fernando, writing a forward to Stanley Thambiah's *Buddhism Betrayed*, reduces the ethnic problem to economics and suggests that if more foreign aid is given, Sri Lanka could accommodate



the Tamils peacefully in the island. He was almost telling the world: „if you give more money we will tolerate and keep the Tamils alive on that island“! Thus Tamils, in the minds of some Sinhalese, are a people who could be conveniently bargained for the welfare of the Sinhalese.

These two examples show that the Sinhalese have not taken into account neither the fundamental principle of Sri Lankan citizens nor the greatness of the Tamil people nor even the genesis of the Tamil Struggle. The series of mob-attacks and army violence against innocent Tamil civilians living in the south, the batton-charging of non-violent democratic protests in the North the arrests and imprisonment of political leaders and Tamils - have not been registered in the minds of the Sinhalese as shameful wrongs on their history. Only after twenty years of such protests the Tamils came up with the resolutions of Vaddukoddai, asking the majority to leave us alone in a separate state. This was overwhelmingly voted for by the Tamils in the parliamentary elections of 1977. Since then Tamils have faithfully adhered to those demands and a heavy price has been paid by the self-sacrifice of thousands of our youth. Thus the question of Tamil demands and its heroic leadership have become clearer than ever before. Only those who stood loyal to the parliamentary verdict of the Tamil people and paid with their lives can claim true leadership. Hence it is the hour of the expatriate intellectuals and professionals to accept this leadership and help the struggle.

If the present moment is important and critically decisive, then what is our place and role at this juncture as senior and educated members of the Tamil community in London? We need to examine this more closely and more responsibly.

### **3. A damaging gap among us Tamils**

We all know of generation-gaps created by the fast changing world of today. Efforts are made by educators, formators and target-setters of future society, to arrest or narrow down this gap. To my mind, there is a similar gap that has crept into our Tamil struggle. This gap is not a result of the fast changing world of technology and science. It is more a gap created by our understanding of and approach to fundamental problems such as oppression and injustice, the style of seeking solutions to problems affecting the greater mass of people, not just individuals. Lack of self-respect combined with a slavish mentality, could encourage more an academic and a diplomatic approach. Such

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approaches by Tamils are pleasing not only to former colonial masters and present global financial and military powers, but also to our Sinhala extremists trying to practice an internal neo-colonialism in that island.

Such approaches by our traditional politicians, who were mostly lawyers, has widened the political-gap between the Tamil masses (*hoi poloi*), and their more educated brethren. The majority of Tamils are deeply affected by the anti-Tamil politics of the Sri Lankan government and are struggling for survival. The Tamil-elite and the establishment of the earlier years, who were fortunate to be less affected, following the leadership of the educated Tamils tend to pursue a policy of distant-relationship to the present struggle and its leadership. This gap is also a result of the younger generation of the Tamil masses, loosing faith in many of those English educated lawyers and politicians, who falling head over heels for Sinhala baits, were not committed to their ideals.

This political-gap which has a longer history with various reasons for its growth is very damaging to our Cause for Freedom. Hence arises an urgent question: what could be undertaken even at this late stage, to narrow down the gap and enable the senior educated sections among us to play an active role in the struggle.

Making ourselves available and giving our contribution to the Tamil struggle is not a question of finding a fitting job in an institution in keeping with our educational qualifications, experience, service and honour. It is a question of availing oneself, dedicating oneself in all humility to suit the job to be done, to strengthen the hand of those doing the job. If our house catches fire, we will not look for a fitting job, we will all not be doing the same job, but do the needful, from where we are and in the best way possible. So is it here too. We are called to serve the cause of freedom in the way it demands of us and in the place where we are.

Under the British, the English educated from both races were competing for better positions and more. These competitions had no base among the people - who remained poor, uneducated and caste-ridden. It was a competition only among the privileged elite for better jobs and promotions. Let not these pre-independence jealousies prevent us from doing our duty by our people.

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#### **4. Post Independence Struggles among the Leaders.**

Under the colonial master, the political tension or competition for power, between the Sinhala and Tamil leaders, were not so much filled with racist intentions or hidden plans. After all, they were all servants of the same white master who looked into the merits and the best way to get good service. The eve of Independence already saw the surge of anti-British Sinhala nationalism, influenced also by Buddhist monks like Anagarika Dharmapala. The Sinhala Buddhists felt more humiliated by the white oppression than their Tamil counterparts who went along with the British as good and obedient servants.

The wish and enthusiasm of the majority Sinhalese to take over effective and complete power from the British was just and evident. The clash of agenda of the majority Sinhalese to capture power and of the hidden-thirst of the minority-Tamils for some crumbs of power - was masked with a language and rhetoric that appeared to be the language of parliamentary democracy and respectability, but in fact it was a pharisaic cover up of their common greed for political power.

By way of political wisdom and foresight there was more union among the Tamil leaders in their dealings with the Sinhala leaders. But the Sinhala leadership that came to power played on the Tamil weakness for power and was able to buy over the needed Tamil support. This art of a Sinhalese majority permanently governing the island, with a bought-over support of Tamil leadership had continued for a long time. It is hopefully coming to an end sooner than later.

#### **5. Decent Tamil leadership was met with Sinhala rowdiness and terrorism**

The Colonial Constitution paved the way for a permanent majority Sinhala Rule (Dictatorial Democracy) over the Tamil minority-subjects. We know well what happened during this period from 1948 to 1977, when the majority Sinhalese used their bull-doing power in parliament to impose their will on all others based on racially and religiously motivated agenda.

For Tamils who have been excelling in intellectual life, the Sinhala-only language policy and the Standardisation of entrance to the universities were more

harmful than the other issues like denial of citizenship rights to Tamils of Indian origin or the State-aided colonisation of Tamil areas. Not much protest was made against these issues. While younger generation of Tamils were refused higher education and a future, the senior Tamils already holding higher positions in government services were only worried about their last promotions and increments. Their concern for the problems of the youth was minimal.

Though the Tamil reaction to the above discriminatory, if not genocidal, politics of the Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism (SBN) has been well within the frame of the island's Constitution and in accordance with all civilised forms of disagreement and protests, the Sinhalese acted violently against these protests. The repeated and decent appeals to rectify injustices and violations of the fundamental human rights of the Tamils and a demand for a federal constitution to resolve the ethnic tensions and discriminations amicably were heckled within parliament and met with mob-violence outside parliament, while the Sinhala forces of law and order looked the other way or connived with them. These uncivilised and arrogant responses repeated by the Sinhala Buddhist majority and their governments for well over 25 years were too much for the better educated and decent Tamil leadership.

## **6. Foundation laid for Tamil Nationalism**

It is in blatant disregard of civilised and democratic protests and against uncivilised and arrogant attacks on us, that a historic Resolution was moved at Vaddukoddai in 1976, and voted overwhelmingly by the Tamils in the Parliamentary Elections of 1977. The Sinhala response to this democratically arrived Tamil consensus was further escalation of State-terrorism and parliamentary imperialism. With their bull-dozer majority, they enacted the savage *Prevention of Terrorism Act* to deal with the opponents of State-terrorism and the notorious *6th Amendment to the Constitution* to prevent the Tamil Parliamentarians taking their seats in a Sinhala Parliament. This was followed by the 1983 Holocaust which was the beginning of a new leadership - the militant leadership of the LTTE.

## **7. Emergence of the militant leadership**

This new type of young and militant leadership - is a response to decades of naked Sinhala state-terrorism in the Northeast of the country. You and I may

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have not directly experienced or met this leadership. It has been called by the majority Sinhalese and their government propaganda as unprovoked and unjustified Tamil terrorism. Unfortunately much of this propaganda has been uncritically swallowed by the international media too. But one good is that it had brought to light more than ever before the hidden agendas of the Sinhala leadership to hold the Tamils in subjugation to practice an internal colonialism arising from deep-rooted Sinhala-Buddhist racism that inspired a politics of domination. The new Tamil leadership will challenge this on many fronts outside parliament.

Whatever said and done against the militants, they have carried high, at the expense of so many lives, the aspirations of our cause for freedom. It is not merely fighting the armies of India and Sri Lanka, it is not fighting the rape and murder and hunger going on among the people, but also fighting the international community and its media, to the point of recognising them as indispensable for the solution. The day will come when the international community will see the real situation and fight on our side.

## **8. The hour of the educated, the elite and the non-militants**

The International community is bound to watch closely and listen to the voice of the elites, democrats, moderates, more than that of the militants. Hence the hour of the so called democrats and moderates and elites to speak up their conscience. Keeping away from young leaders or not contributing to any militant motives, do not make angels of us. We have to do our sacred duty of telling the truth loudly to the world. The silence of the democrat and the educated will mean the betrayal of the mother, motherland and people. Are we ready to be counted as betrayers of the Tamil nation? Or are we prepared, even at this late hour, to stand up for truth and justice?

## **9. Collective responsibility of the privileged elder children**

We are the elder children of Eelam mother, who benefited from the pre- and post-colonial English education in the good schools of the Northeast. We occupied important positions at home or are having good professions abroad, because of the good English education we had. Unknowingly we were drawn into an elite English education group without any fault of ours. The Tamil political leaders in whose hands rested our destiny, thought and acted as much

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as they could with foresight trusting the Sinhala counter-parts. Even at the eve of or turn to Independence from the British, we were forced to trust the good-will of the majority Sinhalese.

We must accept the fact that the Tamil politics dominated by the post-colonial politicians, mostly lawyers, have been betrayed by their Sinhala counterparts. They have been selfish in seeking power and have betrayed the cause of the Tamil people. Hence our contemporaries, professionals and intellectuals are called upon to accept the historical reality and compensate for the mistakes of their past colleagues.

The entire blame for all that happened during the earlier period cannot be laid entirely on the Sinhala leadership. While time was running out and Sinhala nationalism was growing in the south and Tamil children born after Independence were increasingly the victims of discrimination and disillusion, our Tamil leaders were still running after Governments lodging complaints, getting assurances of rectification and hoping against hope that the Sinhala leaders will one day become generous enough to dish out some rights to us. This was the serious blunder made by our English-educated Tamil leaders. Even the then non-English-speaking M.P. of Batticaloa - Mr. Rajadurai became one amongst them.

## **10. Our collective responsibility**

There is a collective guilt and responsibility on the shoulders of all of us born before Independence. In the history of peoples and in the political developments, a collective memory, responsibility and future vision are called for. In Germany recently the Bundestag, their parliament, unanimously laid the foundation in the name of the people, to pay compensation to victims of forced labour during the Nazi war. Although, the present people and government had nothing to do with the events of the Nazi regime, they have realised the importance of retaining in collective memory the horrors and unjust events of Nazis forced labour, realising their responsibility as a continued-people and in the interest of their future development. With the Foundation called „Memory, Responsibility and Future „ ( *Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft*), the present generation of Germans remember, take responsibility and act to rectify past mistakes of their forefathers.

The expatriate English educated elite professionals and intellectuals have a historic responsibility of stepping out for truth and justice concerning the Tamils of Tamil Eelam. Yes, for truth and justice, not merely as humanitarian help to temporarily lessen the pain of the Wannu suffering, but lobbying for truth and justice that will lead to a durable solution. It is on this point I dare to raise the question: What are we elder sons and daughters of Tamil mother been doing so far and now?

There are difficulties and hindrances which we seniors face in serving the young leadership and their way of the struggle. The structures of a freedom struggle are quite different from those structures in which we served or are serving still. The talents needed to serve the struggle are different- not mere education, titles, honours but more



dedication to a cause, possessed with an ideology, submitting to certain discipline. The militants on the battle front observe very strict anti-alcoholism and sex behaviour. Those living outside the battle fronts, but serving the same cause and in solidarity with them, are called for a disciplined life. Dedicating to a cause such as the noble cause of freedom, is like dedication to a religious cause.

## 11. Liberation of the Intellectuals to serve the struggle for freedom

There is a need to liberate ourselves from our own forms of socio-economic slaveries. To believe and work for the total liberation of our Tamil people, we ourselves, before anyone, must liberate ourselves from our own slaveries. Education and educational qualifications are not everything in life. Some of us are drowned in books or university education and measure all men by educational qualifications. Others drowned in wealth and casteism measure others by such status. We fail in true wisdom to guide our destinies. Eric Fromm in his book - *To be or to have* - has demonstrated the intrinsic worth of persons. To be a good person is more important than to have or possess many good qualifications and much wealth. Gold and Dowry, Degrees and Professions are not everything. Self-respect, patriotism, love of our people and motherland are superior values.

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Many of us are square pegs in round holes, having difficulty in serving a noble cause. Our status in caste, wealth and education prevents us from serving noble cause of freedom of our people. In this sense we are slaves within ourselves and to certain values and to certain people. We have an inborn or deeply ingrained servitude mentality. We cannot work for freedom unless we are freed from our slaveries. Political freedom or freedom of the Tamils is linked up with the freedoms the Tamils have in themselves and among themselves. If our attitude to caste, to women, to youth, to other people including the Sinhalese, are tainted with a slavish mentality, then we cannot serve the cause of freedom. Thic Naktan - a Vietnamese Buddhist monk living in Paris says "If you want peace, become peace. If you want freedom become free" Just as the Sinhala Buddhist extremists have a need to liberate themselves from their Mahavamsa mindset, we Tamils have a need to liberate ourselves from the colonial mind-set of caste or possession of wealth and education.

Our importance is gauged, not by what we have accumulated as wealth as gold, not in the higher jobs we have done, higher service we have done, but in the service we have done for our people, for our country, and for what we are to our land and to our people. President John F. Kennedy often reminded his Americans: Ask not what the country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.



## Calling the American Tamils

*(Talk to the N.Y. Tamil Sangam at their annual meeting  
in New Jersey on 01.11.2003)*

1. I congratulate the Tamil Sangam for the successful completion of a quarter century of pioneering service, in bringing and building together a Tamil diaspora community and encouraging it to be consciously faithful to Tamil ideals and values. It is a fruit of your maturity that you show an extra interest this year in the next generation of Tamils so that with good will, interest and readiness they can look beyond their family circles to the world outside, and also to see among the unfortunate of the world, their own kith and kin discriminated, handicapped, wounded and crying for survival as a people with due dignity. I exhort you to look with greater interest at how the present young leadership of the Tamils in Sri Lanka has taken up with heroism and sacrifice their responsibility of leading the struggle. Hence at this hour of internationalisation of our struggle the new generation of American Tamils has an important role to help their brothers and sisters who are leading the struggle.



## 2. Tamils have waged a long struggle towards Freedom

Parallel to your settling down here, parallel to the birth and growth of your children here, during the last five decades, the post-independence Tamil struggle which began in the fifties has gone on through the vicissitudes and challenges of the different phases of a liberation struggle. Its long and winding history has been written with blood, death, destruction and determination. It has weathered all seasons of the conflict, and has matured in age and wisdom. It has now reached a turning point - a decisive and important turning point- to forge ahead with more determination.

For the benefit of defining our present role clearly and for the benefit of the new generation of American Tamils, who hold the keys to a future engagement

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and contribution, let me briefly recall some important stages of our history of our struggle,

### **3. The significant mile-stones on our Road**

#### **a) Resurgence of Sinhala Nationalism and the consequent Oppression of Tamils**

What went into history as the end of 450 years of successive colonialism by the Portuguese, Dutch and the British, turned out to be a Trojan Horse for the Sinhala majority of Sri Lanka to smuggle in a resurgence of Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism at the cost of oppressing the Tamils.

#### **b) Democratic and Non-violent Protest of Tamils**

Believing firmly in the principles of democracy, as exposed and espoused by the British colonial master and the Sinhala majority Government of Ceylon, the Tamils did not take their grievances and discrimination to someone outside of the country - not even to India. None of the elected leaders of the Tamils went across even to Madras, asking for help to solve their problems. We trusted the Sinhalese people and their politicians very much and for too long.

#### **c) Tamil Resistance met with Sinhala mob- and state-Violence**

The mistake that our elected political leaders of the time made was that they allowed themselves to be bought over for ministerial posts and power. The Sinhala parties alternated as power holders and our Tamil leaders were kept satisfied with personal privileges and ministerial posts. Hence the racial discriminations and oppression were carried on by the Sinhala majority, changing laws with the approval of the bought-over Tamil leadership. The non-violent and democratic protests the Tamils put up were ridiculed and baton-charged and later even shot at. The language of non-violence and non-cooperation led by Mr.S.J.V. Chelvanayagam of the Federal Party was met with mob violence and state terrorism.

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#### **d) Tamils forced to opt for Separate State:**

**Tamils ! Rule yourselves! Tamils! Defend yourselves!**

Finally, we democratically passed a unanimous resolution in Vaddukoddai in 1976 and affirmed it at the parliamentary election 1977, demanding ultimately a separate state for our survival in our homeland. And that too met with greater state terror and the Tamil Members of Parliament were thrown even out of that one democratic institution, the Parliament. That was the end of Sinhala democracy for the Tamils.

Even after all these, some Tamil politicians were getting elected fraudulently with the help of the armed forces and falling head over heels before the Sinhala powers begging them not to beat and kill. These attempts were turned away with promises that were never to be fulfilled.

#### **e) A conniving silence of the International community**

When all these were happening in Sri Lanka under cover of democracy, no democratic nation in the world lifted its finger to question the government nor to help the Tamils out of the slow genocide we were going through.

We can see clearly how the goody goody people and international bystanders and even NGOs, are quick to preach to the victims of terror and injustice on how to respect the laws of the oppressor but do not dare to understand the plight of the oppressed victim and help him. The good goody people and nations must have the courage to call a halt to the oppression and distance the oppressor from their society. Very unfortunately, „the club of nations“, as I called them once during the Human Rights sessions in the UN Headquarters in Geneva, kept silent for a long time and did nothing to help us. For them their mutual interest in trade and international relations were more important than tens of thousands of us dying at the hands of an oppressive government.

#### **f) The Tamil Youth took up arms for self-defense against State Terrorism**

In the mean time the Youth of the time, most of them born after Independence and witnessing the series of mob and state terror and realizing that they

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themselves have no future with regard to education and employment decided to face State terrorism head on.

It is at this point that it became clear to us Tamils to defend ourselves. Defending ourselves against those very forces which were meant to be our protectors was no easy task. Against an oppressor how do we react? Not by the rules laid down by the oppressor and the international bystanders who will do nothing to arrest the oppressor. We were forced to do all within our means to stop the oppressor and make him retreat. This response of a last resort is shouted down by nations and NGOs as „terrorism“ and „violation of Human Rights“. But what was it in comparison to the systematic genocide of a people and violation of basic human rights of a people executed by the state forces for 50 years? They easily and quickly label us as rebels and terrorists, but how can we allow ourselves to be killed and destroyed for fear of these labels?

### **g) International Community preaches to the oppressed but not to the oppressor**

If I am unjustly oppressed and knocked to the ground by an oppressor, I have the right to fight and hit the oppressor with all my might, with any available tool. The world and its organizations preach and dictate rules very often to the victims of oppression, but do not have the courage to accuse or arrest the oppressor at the appropriate time. They even play partnership with evil doers for their selfish motives and when that fails turn their „guns“ against the innocent. Recent power struggle between the US and the UN with respect to Palestinian and Iraqi wars amply illustrate my point.

The outside world rushed into help Sri Lanka when it raised an alarm about terrorism and threats to its so-called unity sovereignty and integrity resulting from its own misgovernance and unleashing of state-terror. But the world was nowhere there to bring 20 years of real state terrorism and genocide under control. It was not there when Tamils were killed raped and burnt alive. Neither was there any official condemnation.

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## **h) The LTTE becomes the ideal politico-military leadership for our need**

The LTTE did not launch a political campaign for a political party and then start their military struggle. They were born and bred in the struggle. They were the victims and witnesses of the struggle. They were the sons and daughters of murdered parents, brothers of raped sisters and sisters of many tortured and murdered brothers. Their understanding of the struggle did not come out of an academic interest evoked in any university, nor out of any hatred of the Sinhala people and their intransigence. They were urged by the hard realities of Tamil life suffered as victims and witnesses. They were driven against a wall and they had to act resolutely.

Hence when the elected political leaders opted to place their new demand for a separate state, again within Parliament and face the consequences within the „majoritarian-race democracy“ of the Sinhalese, the youth opted to face the Armed forces of the State engaged in State terrorism. That was the only way to respond to state terrorism. They took up arms not for cow-boy adventure, not for selfish motives, but for the sake of protecting their people and for their future. They sacrificed their future and future of their own families for the greater good of the larger community. They have offered themselves in the battle and left a greater responsibility to all of us. You and I have been spared the challenges they faced, the sacrifices and heroism they showed. But now you and I are called to a greater understanding and solidarity with them.

They did not want to claim an inch of the Sinhalese land or fight against the Sinhala people. They defended their own land and their own people against terror attacks and atrocities of the Sinhala armed forces. Though this leadership, may not be born from among the educated, the intellectuals and the elites, it has grown from grass-roots and formed itself as a mature politico-military leadership of the victimized people. In the modern states in which we are today, the politicians govern and the armed forces protect the land and people. In the case of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, we are neither governed nor protected, but discriminated and destroyed, both by politicians and the forces. Hence a politico-military leadership, born out of the victimized population is the ideal one suited for the current situation.

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#### **4. Maturing of the Struggle in various aspects**

The last 50 years of Struggle and 20 years of war, has meant for the Tamil people a Struggle from below, from their feelings as discriminated second class citizens to becoming a people with due dignity. They have gone through a long struggle in which they have been misunderstood, baton charged, manhandled, shelled and bombed. Tens of thousands have perished and their lands and properties destroyed. Many more thousands are displaced and as a whole reduced to the ground and dispersed into being non-people in their own land. They have endured and persevered and with determination fought their way to this point of time. Their aspirations have not been invented or given by some intellectual reasoning but written in their hearts and flesh with blood of their own sons and daughters. The maturation of the people who suffered loss of lives in each and every family, people who were chased away from their homes and their lands, have hardened and become enduring. Hence these values and marks of maturing as a people cannot be washed away any more by any powers, not even by any super power. There is nothing more to destroy anyway unless they want to create more killing-fields.

#### **5. Expatriate Support is encouraging**

As a consequence of being beaten up at home, the Tamils started fleeing their country as refugees. With whatever means they had, they fled. Many hundreds drowned and died in their attempts on the high seas, many ended up in prison and others reached a safe haven in some foreign land- but had to labour hard or continue running for survival. They bore the scars of war and still supported the victims of the struggle from their little savings. They kept up the spirit and intensified the Tamil aspiration to be a people with a clear ideology and determination towards a destination.

Thanks to the services rendered by world wide expatriate Tamil organizations like yours and their media, the political awareness of our people in suffering and of the people in solidarity with them have grown towards a converging consensus in our vision, orientation, ideals and conviction. We have become conscious of our oneness as a people and a nation with a history.

The leadership - which sacrificed thousands of lives, who stood by and served the people day and night with deep dedication, winning the confidence of the

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people, have become stronger, not merely in the use of their limbs and weapons, but above all in their character, conviction and determination.

## **6. Struggle unprovoked by destabilising efforts**

Even today this cease-fire signed in Feb. 2002, and peace process have made long strides compared to other cease-fires and peace-talks elsewhere in the world because of the sensitive and determined way things have been handled by our leadership.

Look at Ireland and Middle East. While Talks were under way, there were other groups within the struggling people resorting to military action and destabilizing the process. While the IRA continued the Talks, the real IRA (RIRA) continued their armed struggle. In Palestine the Hamas were destabilizing the efforts of Arafat. But here in Sri Lanka, it is to the credit of the LTTE as unified politico-military organization, exercising patience and prudence in the face of monumental provocations by the forces of Chandrika both within the island and in the high seas, that destabilization on the Tamil side has been prevented. Just for a moment see Chandrika and her PA trying to shed crocodile tears for the Muslims and encouraging them to become a militant organization to counter the LTTE.

## **7. Leadership showing political wisdom**

Even in the matter of submitting proposals for the Interim Administration, how the LTTE forged a unity and consensus opinion is remarkable. The UNF did not consult or seek unity with the PA before it submitted its proposals for the Interim Administration.

Hence the ability of the Tamil people to present a unified face and speak with one voice is an achievement and maturation that should be respected and taken seriously by all of us - by expatriate Tamils, by the Sinhala people and their government and also by the international community. Had the Sinhalese and their government taken serious note of the Tamil consensus showed at the parliamentary elections of 1977, things would have been much different

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## 8. Forging ahead in the face of adversities

For the majority Sinhalese and their government, the ethnic conflict has meant only a long history of putting down protests, rebellion, and terrorism from the Tamil side. They used their people and the forces of the State, not to understand why these Tamils are paying such a high price for their aspirations; they did not question for a moment why these Tamils are rebelling with so much endurance; they did not question whether their high handed methods of baton charging and bombing of protests will not escalate protest to rebellion; they did not act with reason nor good will. Instead they channeled all their resources to label our protest as mere Tamil „terrorism“ and went all out to kill the protesters. Minister Kadiragama supported by Sinhala chauvinist forces led his international campaign to demonize the Tamils and their cause and succeeded in getting the Tamil organizations banned in some countries as front organizations of a terrorist outfit. Chauvinistic politicians and self-centred religious leaders made politics out of our lives. But our determination to forge ahead has been strengthened in the face of these adversities.

We cannot forget that the Tamils still have their share of weak and selfish political betrayers, who continue to be used by Sinhala governments. But realizing that we ourselves have not been innocent angels, we too have made mistakes forced by the hard realities and challenges, but we are forging ahead with a willingness to accommodate politicians and interests of various colours.

## 9. A turning point of internationalisation

On the Tamil side there has emerged, at least a general consensus of our blood-written aspirations and the unity of leadership. These two have forged their way to the international stage. In spite of the SL effort to ban the LTTE and demonize the Tamils and the leadership, in spite of waging the war behind closed doors and using not merely weapons of war, but also weapons of food-denials, we have emerged on to the front stage as the true liberators of our people.

In this forging ahead to internationalization of our aspirations and our leadership, we have at present reached a turning point in an upward-curve. When driving one knows the care and caution with which we use the brakes and the accelerator. We know it is an important phase of the long journey to freedom.



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And the leadership is doing its utmost to concentrate the efforts of all in the best way possible. It is in this contextual need, that the Tamils at home and abroad look to you Tamil Americans to do your best in this hour of need.

While managing the risky curve in our journey to freedom, it is important to be fully awake to the dangers and threats around this curve. We must realize first of all what forced the present government to opt for cease-fire and talks, what are the avowed intentions of the present government and what is the hidden agenda of the Sinhala extremists.

## **10. Factors which helped us to internationalise the struggle**

It is the financial cost of the war more than the human cost, that moved Sri Lanka to its knees. With the attack on the international airport and the economic growth sinking below zero coupled with heavy indebtedness, the government came to its senses and responded to our unilateral call from a position of military strength for cease fire and talks. They were brought to this position not because of any compassion for the Tamil lives lost nor the properties and homeland destroyed, but for the gradual yet deep impact felt in the South too through loss of Sinhala youth in the war. Many more deserted the Army ranks.

Sinhalese want successful economy, foreign aid, and peace but with a success in war. We Tamils on the contrary, want survival, successful rebuilding of normal life and peace with human dignity. A hard hearted Sri Lanka is interested even today only in fulfilling a condition laid down by the international community for prosperity linked to peace. That is why we are able to challenge the Sinhalese to admit and declare openly that they want the Tamils to survive, they want the Tamils to lead a normal life, to live with them in dignity and equality. We Tamils are repeating loud and clear: Let the Sinhala nation thrive and grow, let Buddhism flourish in all its glory, but not at the cost of Tamil lives, Tamil property, and above all, Tamil dignity, any more.

Today visitors going into the war zones of the Northeast will only see the remains of prolonged destruction but not what people went through for decades before they perished. The agony, the anxiety, the starvation and humiliation the Tamils went through are little known to them. Hence the Sinhala inability even today to understand why the Tamils rebelled, so violently and reacted

even to the point of self-destruction. Because of their entrenched racist position they fail to see what it is like to deny other people their basic freedoms and rights.

## **11. The avowed Position of the majority Singhalese and their Government:**

**a) At last the present UNP government has realized that there cannot be a military victory nor a militarily solution for the Tamil problem.**

*Regaining Sri Lanka* - that was the Position Paper presented by the present Prime Minister in Tokyo to over 40 nations willing to help rebuild Sri Lanka. On the surface it looks a genuine attempt to re build Sri Lanka as a new multi ethnic multi religious country where the Tamils could live with the Singhalese with dignity and honour. But unfortunately, here too there lies a hidden agenda

**b) They want Economic Growth** - They have the urgency to regain their economic stability and move towards further prosperity. Hence their strategy to regain it without loosing military power and without giving „too much“ to the Tamils - too much meaning, anything that will jeopardize their hegemony in Sri Lanka.

**c) They want the International Safety Net** to guard their integrity and sovereignty. What about the integrity and sovereignty of the Tamils?- They hold the Tamil claims as contrary to their unity, sovereignty and integrity of the country and at the same time they try to build up an „international security net“ with foreign nations to keep the Tamils down. This race supramacy and conspiracy contradicts the proclaimed intentions of the Sri Lankan Government.

With President Bush's call - . Either you are with us in our fight against terrorism or you are against us and with terrorists, Sri Lanka jumped into the US coalition bandwagon. The call to be in the club of nations against terrorism has given place to culprits of state terror and crimes within their country to take shelter in this new international alignment. Their labeling our liberation struggle as Tamil terrorism and their claim to be fighting terrorism at home gives them an assumed measure of legitimacy and respectability among nations, and enables them to get financial and military support from the major military powers.

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Earlier Kadirgamar went around campaigning for the banning of the LTTE and tarnishing the image of Tamils and demonizing their leadership. But now Ranil too is secretly shuttling between major powers talking about his International Safety Net that he has attained by winning the support of countries like the USA and India in the event of the Tigers going back to war. We hope Ranil does not make the mistake of Lakshman Kadiragama going round begging for international help without doing his basic homework to solve the problem. We hope even the visit to White House on Monday will carry a realistic and sincere wish to solve the problem at home on justice and peace without getting the support of a hammer to deal with mosquitoes.

**d) They want a peace** in which the Tamils will live not side by side with the Sinhalese, but under the terms of the Sinhala majority.

Peace, as understood by the majority Sinhalese, is very much different from what we aspire as peace. They want peace which means a return to the pre-war situation, say before 1983. There are others who want Tamils to be given a little more to develop their land and culture, but always ruled by the Sinhala majority from the centre. Still others imagine as wiping away the threat to peace, namely the LTTE, so that the Tamils will be meek and humble servants, a toothless people submissive to the Sinhalese.

Even among those Sinhalese actively involved in fighting those opposed to the peace-efforts of government, there are well meaning activists who cannot fully understand the revolutionary change required of the constitution, of the southern leadership and among the masses in order to find a true lasting solution. The false and anti-Tamil propaganda sown among the Sinhala masses for decades by self-seeking politicians cannot be rooted out overnight.

## **12. The hidden position of the old guard among the Sinhalese**

### **a) a new form of Racism,**

The Sinhala Racism of the 50s and 60s is not dead. It was a crude and blatant racism motivated by jealousy and hatred against the Tamils. After decades of military and political efforts to demonize and label our struggle as „terrorism“

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and Tamils as „terrorists“, the recent internationalization of the conflict and the LTTE gaining int. recognition in some way and realising that the Tamil leadership means business, the Sinhala majority is adopting a new and devious form of racism by roping the foreign powers to do their bidding.

The majority apart from the Sinhala Urumaya and the JVP, have felt that the old form of racism will not work any more. In their own interest and hatred, they would like to keep up the Sinhala hegemony in other ways, with better faces. The Sinhala Urumaya, the JVP and media concerns like the Upali group of newspapers are clear examples of this new face of racism.

The Sinhala intellectuals without bridling the extremists and chauvinists within their own ranks are trying to demonise more and more the Tamils and their leadership. They are calling the government to give up the Peace Process, to send away the Norwegian Mediators who are being increasingly and unfairly criticised, to control and tie down the Tigers from moving about locally and internationally. The JVP, while accepting on the one hand more and more Norwegian aid for Ministries under them, is on the other hand leading a shameful campaign of unfair criticism against Norwegian presence. It was behind the mob burning down the Norwegian national flag in front of their embassy in Colombo.

## **b) Getting eminent Sinhala intellectuals to twist the Truth**

To make things worse, the Mahanayaka of the Malwatte Chapter recently appointed a group of eminent Sinhala Buddhist retired supreme court judges and attorneys to study and report on the joint proposal by the Government and the LTTE in Oslo for seeking a federal solution. To what depth can eminent Sinhala men turn and twist historical facts, how the Mahanayakas are misled by their Buddhist intellectuals could be seen in their report. If these men who sat on the highest seats of justice for decades could come out with such a travesty of truth, what can you expect from the Sinhala people. Truth is emerging like a rising sun and the hidden agenda of Sinhala injustice is on the verge of exposure to the world, the old and cranky Sinhala intellectuals and so called eminent men are giving a „new look“ to ancient Mahavamsa myths.

### **c) They abhor the Truth**

It was easier earlier to close the door to the Northeast, forbid journalists and diplomats from going to the war zone, keep bombing and starving and hold press briefing in Colombo to journalists and diplomats about the good things the army boys were doing in the name of democracy, law and order. The truth was completely distorted. But now when journalists are invited by the LTTE to see their camps, the government is unable to hide the truth.

### **d) Targetting the Messenger but not the Message**

The Sinhala extremists are beginning to see that the Tamil Cause begins to be better understood, that we and our cause for freedom and justice gaining more recognition and respectability and when they see a democratic and just solution is possible with the help of the international community, the extremists of the South are unashamedly raising their heads and warning the Sinhala masses, not to look at the solution of the problem, but to further „hunt down Tigers and destroy them“. Such is the love of the Sinhala pundits and patriots for the Tamil people!

### **e) Using the Muslims to oppose the Tamils**

In desperation, some eminent persons among the Sinhala Buddhists are trying to establish Muslims as the best partners for the Sinhala nation. In the latest report submitted by these eminent persons, they are at pains, even citing some Tamil historians, to prove that the Muslims have been here from 500 AD. But these same people conclude that the Tamils were here only after the 12<sup>th</sup> century! A drowning man clutches even at straw! These eminent persons to study the effects of federal governance for Sri Lanka, go out of their competence to twist the history of the Tamils in this country by their ridiculous statements.

## **13. The historical evolution of the Tamil Leadership needs our understanding**

At this hour and in our own context, how can we strengthen the hand of the present Tamil leadership in taking the decisive turn in our journey to freedom?

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As I explained earlier, it is a new form of leadership from below, very different from those of the recognized states of the United Nations. With increasing oppressions of people within these so called democratic states, new types of leadership born out of a militant opposition to State-terrorism have become necessary. Bosnia, Kerzegovina, Eritrea and East Timor are some of the examples.

Similarly the present Tamil Leadership has emerged out of a people oppressed by the Sinhala majority race and their state terror and has eventually matured to be a politico-military leadership of the victimized people. The uniqueness of this leadership, in contrast to the parliamentary elected leaderships, has to be well understood in the context of long struggles within corrupt democracies and unbridled terror of the armed forces.

In Sri Lanka the Tamil leadership has gone through a long history of changes. There were great statesmen like Ponnambalam Arunachalam and Ponnambalam Ramanathan who worked very closely with and for the Sinhala people. In 1921 they left the National Congress they helped to form because the Sinhala leaders did not honour their promises. Then there were the democratically elected elite leaders like G.G.Ponnambalam and C.Suntheralingam who resolutely protested and fought with all that was available within democratic institutions. Then came Gandhian leaders like S.J.V. Chelvanayagam and C.Vanniasingham, who resorted to the noblest forms of Satyagraha and non-cooperation. They were all mishandled and thrown into prison. It was only as a result of all these, the young leadership led by V. Prabaharan, though initiated as a military leadership, has evolved during the long struggle into a politico-military leadership. Our opponents still misunderstand this final development as mere terrorism and no effort is made to understand the genesis of evolution in leadership and the maturity of this leadership arising from the follies and misdeeds of the Sinhala leaders.

Recent events have proved that it was a de facto leadership of a different form that has evolved from below, representing the genuine interests of the people. They are acknowledged as the true representatives of the people by the democratically elected leaders of the TNA.

We, who are in the western world having accepted values and structures that guarantee our security, dignity and rights, tend to demonise or devalue all

other alternative forms of governance and values. The label of terrorism has been put on so many and so quickly after the events of Sept.11<sup>th</sup>. The war in Iraq and Palestine and the helplessness of the UN in preventing the war, have focused on the question as to who exactly is a terrorist. They have turned the searchlights on to the state of democracy and human rights within the powerful nations of the world. The struggles of peoples within the so called democratic nations against oppressive states have come to light. The world is beginning to take a more realistic view of situations and move away from absolutist positions regarding democracy and human rights, regarding their role as guardians of democracy and human rights.

It is in these times that foreign Diplomats and Ministers have visited our leadership and made it clear that they are interested in our option for peace talks and a political solution. They understand the deficiencies of democracies as practiced by Sri Lanka and many other nations of the world.

For our part, we have maintained always that we have been pushed to this form of non-parliamentary leadership by the attitude and activities of governments. After many decades of sacrifice and heroism, the election of the TNA to parliament and their acknowledging the LTTE as the true representatives of the people have proved to the



world that there is a new leadership which is not directly part of parliament, but which has the acknowledgement and approval of the majority of Tamil parliamentarians. It is a peoples' leadership from below. It is new to the traditional world, to the capitalist and oppressive world. But it is an effective form of alternative leadership for those struggling against oppressive democracies based on majority race rule.

Hence the LTTE leadership is a de facto true leadership of the Tamil people fully backed by all the elected members of parliament. The new leadership of the Tamils, as a leadership from below, from among the people needs the services of Tamil expatriate intellectuals and professionals.

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## 14. How can the American Tamils help this leadership?

They can help by their study and writing in making the world understand better the Tamil leadership as a de facto alternative leadership to a democratically elected yet oppressive government. The Tamil leadership is on its way to a fuller democracy, but the process will be long and has to be done without endangering the cause and the goal for which they took up arms.

Recent events like the war in Iraq have helped the world to question the various forms of democracy and human rights operative in many powerful nations. We have seen how under the cover of democracy, they can resort to greater violations of human rights and worse forms of invasion. Some powerful nations proclaim theirs as the one and only form of democracy and human rights system and try either to export or impose them on unwilling states militarily.

Instead if we seriously study the long struggle of an oppressed people - how they tried democratic forms that failed then it becomes clear about the corruptive character of these democracies.

In my engagements in Europe both in the field of theology and in the field of politics, I try to present alternative ways to the traditional and often absolute ways of thinking and acting. In professions like medicine, there is an increasing recognition of alternative medicines like homeopathy, ayurveda and acupuncture. Similarly, we need to revisit and question the absolutist value and the available forms of western democracy, understanding of human rights and social order that super powers are attempting to export to other countries.

Among Tamils, most expatriate second generation do not speak Tamil but only English. But for the Tamil cause reaching the international stage, you living in America could do a lot. Help the world to understand the genesis of the Tamil Struggle; the unavoidable circumstances in which the militant leadership emerged; how it has assumed a political role with the support of the people and their elected Members of Parliament.

For a long time we intellectuals and professionals of the first world have thought too highly about our educational qualifications and caste background.



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We have been critics standing behind the fences, blaming everything on the youth who were forced to take up arms in defence of our people and land and doing very little to defend their actions. We may have given up the old casteism but we have still built another barrier standing on our status as educated wealthy people. Let us come away from behind our fences into the open and strengthen the hand of this unique leadership for the survival and liberation of our people. The younger generation who migrated to European countries have been handicapped by their poor education at home. In a foreign European environment they cannot lobby much in the upper rungs of society or government in any way. But, you here, having so many professionals and intellectuals, can do much more.

### **15. Remind your countrymen - the good Americans - of their liberation struggle**

Remind your countrymen about their own history, about their journey to freedom - how their forefathers were labelled by the British as rebels and terrorists when they stood up for their human rights and against oppression. We Tamils want to survive and live on the land we have been living for over 2000 years; we want a respectable and human living with our basic human rights; we want to enjoy the human rights of food clothing and shelter; we want our political right of determining our future for ourselves; we want to foster our culture, our heritage, our music and our dance on the soil we were born, on the land God gave us; we are not eying an inch of any foreign land nor of the Sinhalese. We wish our Sinhala and Buddhist brethren all the best, but not at our cost, not by denying and trampling upon our bodies and our rights and freedom.

### **16. Collaborative Contribution to the Tamil Struggle**

Expatriate effort at this stage must be at the international level and at the local level. Your contribution has to be consonant with the needs of the ground realities and in collaboration with other expatriate Tamils all over the world. I am reminded here of a Tamil film *Saraswati Sabatham* where the argument arises among goddesses as to who is the greatest:- *Knowledge, Wealth or Courage?* (*Kalviya Selvama Veerama?*) We have to collaborate among all of those wonderful traits.

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All fronts have to work in cooperation. We have had a long walk to freedom. We have gone through different phases and we have different faces. Each one can contribute to all three aspects of the Struggle. We cannot compartmentalize our contribution to the Cause. Each one of us has all three virtues but in different amounts. We must contribute to the Veeram, by our staunch support of the Tamil leadership in keeping the SL Forces under control. We must contribute a little of our wealth, because the number of victims of war is on the increase. Above all, we have the fortune to be better enlightened and better placed to contribute much to the phase now - International evaluation of our Struggle and international recognition of the new leadership from below. This leadership has to be well understood and appreciated.

The lawyer politicians have led us for a time, the Tamil militant youth have led us so far. It is time for the intellectuals and professionals, who have earlier been passive, to throw themselves now into the Struggle and do much more than what they have been doing so far.

### **17. Stay united with the leadership in ideology and services**

We want an army of talented and gifted intellectuals and professionals from this land of freedom to put their service, their talents and gifts into the Tamil struggle. The Tamil struggle has reached an important phase of internationalization. It needs your services, it needs your talents and gifts at this hour for their survival and self-respect. Can you stay behind closed doors or keep back your talents for yourselves and allow the Tamils to perish. The Tamils who still survive in the war zones of the North east are staying there to become the roots of a future generation of free Tamils. They have paid the price for our liberation. They deserve our support. Their „veeram“ is praiseworthy.

If Tamil politicians and political parties after decades of deception and rivalry, realizing the heavy price paid with lives, could come under one leadership and one ideology, why should you be otherwise? Let your Sangam be an organ that can bring all the Tamil Americans young and old, professionals and private persons together under one umbrella for the good of all Tamils of America and of the world. A reason for our success so far has been that we had one unwavering leadership that could not be bought over by any Sinhala leadership

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and one clear and convinced ideology of our nationalism strengthened by the sacrifices of so many traumatised civilians, combatants and heroes.

Realizing the critical situation round the corner, realizing the decisive nature of the hour, the encircling forces and the sinister moves of the enemy, I exhort you the old and the young of Tamil Sangam: Stay united here in direction, aspiration and efforts, be united with other Tamils across the globe, strengthen the mind, heart and hand of the Tamil leadership and our people by your services, solidarity and contribution.

## Sri Lanka's Golden Jubilee of Independence???

### 1. Independence from British Colonialism & Imposition of Sinhala Imperialism

What was intended 50 years ago as Independence for the Sinhalese and Tamils of Sri Lanka, has unfortunately turned out to be Independence and Sovereignty for the majority Sinhalese only. The country's minority Tamils have been subjected to almost 50 years of discrimination, death, destruction and displacement. They are still fighting for their Independence for survival from Sinhala Imperialism and neo colonialism.

While the majority Sinhalese will be celebrating 50 years of Independence from British Colonialism and development of the Sinhala areas with millions of pounds of western aid, their countrymen, the Tamils who have been living in the North and East of the Island for more than 2000 years cannot do either of these. They are neither free nor in any way developed. They can only mourn the genocidal destruction going on against them for the last fifty years. Besides 18000 Sinhala soldiers and an equal number of Tamil combatants have been killed in the prolonged war by the Government against the Tamils. Over 65,000 Tamil civilians have been killed, billions worth of Tamil property including churches, temples, schools and houses have been destroyed and over a million Tamils displaced from their homes both inside and outside Sri Lanka. What was the past responsibility and the present response of the British?

### 2. Tamils' Anger and Disappointment over Britain's behaviour

The Tamils have reason to be disappointed, or even angry, with the British of today for doing more for war than for Peace in their old colony Ceylon. The British Colonials, when they first came to Ceylon, found the Tamils in possession of their own historic Kingdom. They merged the whole country as a single unit with a centralised administration in Colombo. And when they left Ceylon, they left the Tamils at the mercy of the majority Sinhala Rule, without making adequate provisions to protect the minority Tamils in spite of their repeated requests for such a protection. Even the only constitutional safeguard provided

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by Article 29 of the then Constitution, was done away with in 1972 by the new „Sinhala Sri Lanka Constitution“.

As a consequence of British centralised administration passing into the hands of the imperialistic majority Sinhalese, the minority Tamils are suffering death, destruction and displacement for the last fifty years. This is what happened when the Sinhalese who claim to have been oppressed under the British themselves became the new oppressor against the Tamils. From a white oppression to a coloured one! The scale of destruction killings over 450 years of colonial rule pales into insignificance when compared to 50 years of Sinhala Rule.

When all the democratic ways available within a permanently established majority Sinhala government have miserably failed, the Tamil youth were pushed to fighting for their Independence from Sinhala Imperialism. The call for a separate State called Thamil Ealam is only a last resort and a survival strategy in self defence.

And what does Britain do? Knowing well the origin of the ethnic problem and their role in creating the problem, what extra effort has it made to restore justice and peace on that island? It has pumped in millions of pounds of aid in developing Sinhala areas (Victoria Dam of the Mahaweli Project) and also has helped the Government with finance and weapons in its war against the Tamils, but what has it done to help the Tamils enjoy basic human rights, democracy and peace. And to crown it all, it is sending Prince Charles to take part in that Jubilee to mark Sinhala Imperialism.

### **3. Audacity to celebrate Sinhala Imperialism or Neo-Colonialism as Independence**

50 years ago, on the 4th. of Feb. 1948, Mr. Hudson, the Government Agent of Jaffna and the then Representative of the Governor General of Sri Lanka, (who in turn was a representative of the King George VI of Great Britain), brought down the British Union Jack on the Jaffna Esplanade. In spite of some Tamil fears whether the Sinhalese will treat them as free and equal citizens, as done by the British, the Tamils and their leaders as a whole put their trust in the goodness and promises of the Sinhalese and the meagre constitutional safeguard. The Tamils dreamt about an independent country

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blossoming forth as a model of unity, of development and of democracy for the whole of Asia, as did many countries of the region. They co-operated too much with the Sinhalese in the take- over of power from the British.

But alas, within a year, the majority Sinhalese turned round and started repressing the minority Tamils. The oppressed of the colonial era had turned out to be the new oppressor of the Tamils and that spelt doom for the country. The first three steps of the Sinhala oppression were executed in quick succession.

Step I: With only a stroke of the pen in the Sinhala-race dominated Parliament, took away the voting rights of a million Tamil citizens of recent Indian origin, made them a voiceless people without adequate representation in Parliament and deprived them of all normal facilities of land, houses and schools for their upliftment.

Step II: The Government started state-aided colonisation of traditionally Tamil areas in the Northeast with 100% Sinhala settlements. The Sinhala Government under the pretext of Land development in the Gal Oya regions, openly discriminated against the Tamils and their homelands, by providing development only in Sinhala areas to the exclusion of Tamil areas.

Step III: With the Sinhala Only Act of 1956, they let loose another series of discriminations in education, employment and career promotions.

At every stage, the peaceful Tamil democratic protests were responded by Sinhala mob-violence that escalated to culminate in a pogrom conducted by the Sinhalese in 1983 consuming over a thousand Tamil lives and forcing several thousands into refugee camps. From that time onwards it has turned into a spiral of violence and war - with the LTTE responding to defend their land and people against State Forces. The last 18 years have seen the Tamils and their homeland sacrifice thousands of Tamil lives and valuable properties and to flee from their homeland as refugees to all parts of the world.

As a climax of all anti-Tamil atrocities, the Sinhala Army occupied the Jaffna Peninsula in December 1995, hoisted its Lion Flag at the same spot in Jaffna where the Union Jack was lowered 50 years ago. This can be only to openly humiliate and outwardly show disrespect to the Tamils and to their historic

capital. The President's Uncle Ratwatte, now Minister of Defence, handed over the victory scrolls to his niece Chandrika with fire-works celebrations in Colombo. It was a ceremony to celebrate the conquest of Jaffna, the Tamil Kingdom, and to humiliate the Tamils.

It is a shame that the Sri Lankan Government, while keeping the Jaffna Peninsula still under a „cruel army of occupation“ of daily curfews, frequent raping of women, disappearances of young men, is „stageing“ local elections with the help of quislings as part of its „international deception programme“ to pose to the world as a „democratic state“. It is done not in the interest of the people in Jaffna, but to boost up its international image and win finance and weapons to fight a war against the Tamils, conveniently labeled as „terrorists“.

#### **4. Prince Charles, an unwelcome Guest for an uninvited Anniversary!**

„Anniversaries come uninvited“ so said the German President Gustav Heinemann on the 17th. of Jan. 1971 in his Radio Message for the Centenary Anniversary of the German Reich. The 50th anniversary of the Independence of Sri Lanka from British Colonial Rule is also, for many reasons, an uninvited anniversary causing distress to the Tamil people and many dilemma with regard to its meaning, memory and celebrations.

The Chief Guest chosen for this anniversary is Prince Charles. Tamils have nothing against good Prince Charles or the British people. For many Sinhalese he is welcome only as guest who can honour their country and their government. But for many others including the highest Buddhist Prelate of the country, he is a reminder of British oppression of Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism and hence an unwelcome guest. For the Tamils, it is a reminder of the „british-blunder“ in handing a unitary state to a Sinhala majoritarian power without due safeguard for the Tamils.

This anniversary ought to be an event to commemorate the end of a colonial era of subjugation, suffering and loss of the land's resources and the beginning of a new era of independence and growth. Although post-colonial Britain had taken interest in the growth of Sri Lanka and had helped her in various ways, yet the presence of Prince Charles, the Successor to the Throne, is more a reminder of the old British Empire and their „political blunder“ than of present day Britain. Hence Prince Charles, though born long after the colonial rule of

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Ceylon and had nothing to do with British colonial era, his presence can only wake up anger against earlier colonial subjugation and not evoke any gratitude for the benevolence of present day Britain.

## **5. Jubilee celebrations to cover up the unrest and boost up the International prestige**

In spite of its dire economic and societal straits, the Government of President Chandrika, which is facing the worst of all crises in the post-colonial history of Sri Lanka, is hell bent on celebrating Independence. It is not because the people are in any festive mood convinced that the country is in good shape. But it is a big cover-up of local problems and an attempt at boosting the country's image at international level, primarily to save her in power, and also to attract foreign aid to pull the country out of an economic disaster.

Unlike the 50th Anniversary of Indian Independence which was nationally celebrated, hardly a year ago, with broad-based support from the people and their leaders, the Sri Lankan Anniversary is provoking serious questions, mixed feelings, escalating violence and mounting problems of security in the Capital City of Colombo and in the Holy City of Kandy where celebrations are to be held.

In normal circumstances, and if peaceful situations had prevailed, then even without any distinct record of achievements, the celebrations would have been welcome and everyone in that country would have gladly celebrated it, at least as an impulse to move forward. But the country is faced with a national crisis of escalating death, destruction and displacements, an economic crisis which forces the country to beg on its knees for more international aid and a population increasingly unemployed and poorer. These factors effectively negate even the little progress made in some sectors. The population, on the whole, and the Tamils in particular, are in no mood for celebrations.

Sinhala Leaders who were opposing the visit of Prince Charles have said that during the British period not only were resources of the country plundered but also more than 30,000 Ceylonese were put to death by the Colonial powers. But pitifully the same leaders fail to realise, that the Sinhala Forces in the North and East of the country have bombed and killed more than 65,000



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innocent Tamil civilians, double the number killed by the British. What compensation is Sri Lanka going to pay the Tamils?

## **6. Sri Lankans have made a mockery of their independence**

For all that happened during the last fifty years we cannot surely hold the British responsible. Obviously the leaders of the country, both the Sinhala and Tamil political and religious leaders have to take their share of blame for the present plight that we are in. Self-seeking and power hungry politicians, mostly from among the political parties of the majority Sinhalese, entertaining a narrow historical vision of the Mahavamsa chronicle put forward by the Buddhist leadership, went all out to make political capital of that vision. And followers of other non-Buddhist religions - Hinduism, Islam and Christianity - suffering from a minority complex did not have the courage to exercise a prophetic, critical and ethical leadership on their part. As a consequence of such timorous attitudes and fear, the country has lost enormous amount in terms of lives and property.

While people and leaders may question these celebrations as to their veracity and form, politicians in governments have always their hidden agenda for their own ulterior benefits.

## **7. Government aims at boosting its international image.**

Although the Sri Lankan Government of President Chandrika is going all out to celebrate this spurious event in the midst of a national crisis that has hit its worst, there are already many dissenting voices even from the highest ranks of the majority Sinhalese. The Government, having an image-making agenda, wanted to invite world-figures and boost its heavily damaged international image for the purpose of winning more international support for its economy, tourism, and not the least for its war. Not all those invited were happy about going to such a celebration amidst island wide funerals, arrests, torture and disappearances.

During these few days of the count down, the government is busy doing somersaults to portray to the world outside a more pleasing picture of the country as a whole and, of the War Zone in the North and East, in particular.

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Parents know all too well how to keep unruly children calm during decision making visits from VIPs. During President Premadasa's time, it was well known how public servants in government departments were unscrupulously used to prepare for opening of new villages as part of his village reawakening programme - Gam udawa. One can imagine how much more vigour will be applied during these months and days when all government efforts are funnelled into one project - a successful celebration to feast the eyes of the world and of the masses into thinking that everything is fine and rosy in Sri Lanka.

Massive efforts are being made by the Government and its propaganda machinery to cover up the islandwide funerals of soldiers dying daily in the war, the millions of Tamils mourning in almost every home over their dead children and alleged torture, rape and disappearances; the mounting violations of human rights, the starvation of a whole people by economic blockade and the displacement of over a million Tamil people inside and outside the country.

Whether the mantle of madam's government and propaganda will succeed in covering the festering nudity of the situation is a big question.

## **8. But we are thankful for the good things from the British**

The participation of Prince Charles in the celebrations will help the British to reflect back on the achievements and failures of their colonial venture. Looking back one could count a number of good things the British introduced into the country, may be some for their own advantage, but in the long run have benefited the country. The English language, then a language of the colonial master, has become a world language to the benefit of a large number of Sri Lankans. The good educational system, an established law and order and effective public administrative system, road and rail transport and the tea plantations are some of the good things for which we are thankful to the British

## **.9. The Tamils and the British**

As a result of the British handing over the Tamil minorities as an unprotected minority under a permanently Sinhala majority democracy, the Tamils have suffered immensely for the last 50 years. Under the Portuguese and the Dutch,

the Sinhalese and the Tamils were ruled as separate entities for administration in their traditional areas of habitation. It was the British, after the fall of the last Kandyan Kingdom, who for their own economic and administrative advantages brought the Sinhalese and the Tamils as one centrally administered State and left it in the hands of a Sinhala majority which presumed it to be a single Sinhala Nation where the Tamils were to be tolerated as a second class minority. It has taken 50 years of post-colonial misery, death and destruction to try and overcome this evil. Tamils today are, except for the well qualified and skilled serving the British government, refugees in most parts of the world and even in their own country. Many Tamils feel that they have been thrown from the British frying pan into the Sinhala fire.

## **10. Tamils more angered by the British help given to the war**

For the Tamils of Sri Lanka, the government's celebrations will be a feasting based on decadence! For many of them these last fifty years have meant denial of many things from rightly claimed promotions and benefits to basic human rights to be protected inside a prison; from admission to educational institutions to having correspondence with the government in their own language! from a bomb-free secure life in their own homeland and having food, clothing and shelter and other basic necessities of life. They are gradually reduced to the status of islandwide subordinates of a majority race and islandwide suspects as „terrorists“, frequently subjected to arbitrary arrests, detention without inquiries, disappearances and displaced all over Sri Lanka and all over the world! What celebrations? They are not at all in a mood for celebrations! For the last fifty years, except for the first few anniversaries, all the other anniversaries have been boycotted and mourned. And this 50th Anniversary finds the Tamils in their worst situation: Can the Sinhala masses with any sense of feeling celebrate this anniversary as an achievement of justice and peace?

When the Tamils by their sweat and blood, by their industrious efforts excelled in education and showed their excellence to be in the front ranks of the then British Civil Service and other professional fields, the Sinhalese could not stand the hardwork and intelligence of the Tamils. Later, when the British had left, they turned the story round to accuse the British of favouring Tamils! And that was told as justification for the Sinhalese discriminating against Tamils in matters of education and employment.

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When Tamils, who have all along been denied their basic human rights and kicked around by the Sinhalese from pillar to post, finally took up arms in defence of their rights and against State Terrorism, they find to their dismay that the British are supplying pilots, arms and funds to the Sinhalese to fight the so called „war for peace“ which goes against its own professed ethical foreign policy.

Can Britain pretend to be a neutral party to this prolonged conflict? Can Britain wash its hands off and be without any feeling of guilt about the root causes of Sinhala domination. Did not the Tamils on the eve of Independence ask the British to give protection to the minorities? What did Britain do then? What is it doing now? We can understand a country like France or Germany or Italy who did not have anything to do with our country taking a distant view. But Britain has a historic obligation to make good on their historic blunder.

## 15.

### LET THE BRITISH NOT CONNIVE WITH GENOCIDAL ACTS

*(Speech delivered at the Trafalgar Square, London, on 01.02.1998  
On the occasion of Sri Lanka celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of  
Independence)*

**Sisters and Brothers, Friends and Countrymen,**

While His Royal Highness Prince Charles of this land is going from London to Colombo to preside over the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Independence of Sri Lanka, we Tamils from all over Britain have gathered here at Trafalgar Square, a historic and meaningful venue for all Britons. It is here they commemorate the memory of Lord Admiral Nelson, who led Britain to Victory against the French, in the Battle of Waterloo.



#### **1. We will not rest until we get back our dignity and rights**

We are here braving this shivering cold to express our respect to all those fallen victims in the struggle for our freedom, to express our solidarity with all the brave people of Tamil Eelam, who have not and who will not succumb to an unjust Sinhala Rule over our homeland, to express our solidarity with those who will not give in to any Sinhala attempts to buy them over as false-leaders in order to aid and abet the subjugation of a whole Tamil nation.

We are here in our thousands to express our deepest concerns at this hour to the people of Britain and of the world and to vow before the world that we Tamil expatriates all over the world will not rest until and unless the Sri Lankan Government gives up its Sinhala Imperialism of the last 50 years, until and unless we Tamils enjoy in our own homeland of Tamil Eelam equal rights and opportunities as a nation and as a people to determine our own future.

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## 2. What right has Sri Lanka to celebrate?

As one bearing the scars of walking with my people for the last fifty years, especially during the last fifteen years in facing an inhuman war let loose on the Tamils of Thamil Eelam by the Sri Lankan Government, as a direct victim and a witness of the enormous amount of suffering, death and destruction and displacement inflicted on tens of thousands of my sisters and brothers by the present Sri Lankan Government, in not only bombing and shelling 65,000 Tamil civilians out of life, not only looting and destroying their property, not only destroying over two thousand Hindu Temples, Christian Churches, Schools and Hospitals - genocidal crimes committed under cover of a media-blockade, but also daring to occupy our Tamil homelands, watered and built up by our blood and sweat, to rule and rape the land under an alien Lion Flag; Let me ask in the name of God, in the name of humanity, in the name of all democratic institutions of the world, with what right and in what conscience is the Sri Lankan Government, after all these years of genocidal acts against our people, after shamefully occupying our land militarily and keeping our people virtually as prisoners and victims of their oppression, rape and murder daring to celebrate an Independence? How can a Government that practices slavery and oppression of a people in their own land celebrate Independence?

## 3. Our message to the world

Let our gathering here be a message to the world and to Britain in particular. As Tamils citizens of Britain, as expatriates from Thamil Eelam, and above all - as brothers and sisters of the 800,000 Tamils displaced all over the world as refugees and expatriates fleeing Sri Lanka's violence - we have rallied here at the heart of London, to give a message to the world and to Britain in particular.

Hear you free people of the United Kingdom! Hear you free nations of the world! Hear all of you, who have human dignity, freedom, justice and welfare of nations at heart!

We Tamils, we too were once a free people! with a Kingdom of our own in the Northeast of Ceylon! We too, as a people, cherished a long history and culture not second to any. As from the 16th. century, our kingdom was taken away by successive colonial rules. The first two colonial powers, the s and

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Portuguese and the Dutch, administered the country giving equality of rights and status to all the peoples of the country - the Sinhalese and the Tamils, who have inhabited the country for over two thousand years

But your ancestors - the Britons - went a step further beyond the Portuguese and the Dutch to bring all the peoples of the country - all under one centralised administration, and introduced a unitary state with all the powers vested in the Governor and in his State Council.

On the eve of their departure from our shores, your people constituted a Parliament for this unitary state of Ceylon. Enlightened by the quarrels of our past history and moved by reasonable fears, we Tamils demanded constitutional and jurisdictional protection for the minorities. But your ancestors left us in a hurry without adequate provisions for the protection of minorities. They left the whole power to rule in the hands of a permanent majority Sinhala Buddhists. And now we see and experience the consequences of such a transfer of power.

Once the British left our shores, there began the mockery of democracy by a permanent majority Sinhala, turning and twisting noble institutions to suit their hunger for power and wealth. Making use of the One-Nation-State system introduced by the British, as a cloak or a Trojan Horse, hiding the historical truths concerning the Tamil nation, the power hungry Sinhala Buddhists with a hidden agenda for imperial power, proclaimed themselves as the one new Nation and State, with Ceylon as Sinhala Land of Buddhism and Ceylonese to mean only Sinhalese. This Trojan-horse play of Sinhala Buddhist Chauvinism strengthened or encouraged even the non-chauvinistic Sinhalese to believe in the myth propagated by a Buddhist monk of the 6th. century A.D. According to this Mahavamsa-myth and its consequent mind-set that holds sway over the present Sinhala Buddhists, Ceylon is deemed by them to be a Sinhala Buddhist country owned and administered only by Sinhala Buddhists. Others are considered as mere tenants or occupants allowed to live on the generosity of the Sinhala Buddhist Landlord! This Sinhala „overlordism“ cannot be tolerated today!

Today when the Sinhalese majority talk of peace, they mean a peace between the landlord and the tenant, between the Master and servant. But neither we

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Tamils, nor can any respectable human being of this century, accept this archaic attitude and mindset.

With a „stolen power” in their hands, and with this mythical-mindset to encourage them, the Sinhala Buddhist majority and their Governments have tried and are trying systematically to overrun the Tamils and establish Sinhala Buddhist Imperialism throughout the length and breadth of the island. In spite of repeated requests by the Tamils, based on established fears that the Sinhala majority will overrun us and decimate us, we then demanded the British to make constitutional protection for us. But unfortunately it was not done.

It is now 50 years since your ancestors left us in that „pseudo-democracy” which actually had become an undemocratic state of Tamil-submission to Sinhalese-rule. The Sinhala Buddhists, today in protesting against the visit of Prince Philip for the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, accuse you British of having killed 30,000 Ceylonese during those 150 years of British rule. Well, I like to point out here how the Sinhalese have totally outdone you. Within a short period of 50 years, they have killed over 65,000 Tamil civilians, destroyed all their properties and dispersed more than a million of these Tamils as refugee displaced people in all parts of the world! Yet it has evoked no tangible response from Britain. Tamil silence is being taken to mean tacit agreement to unfair and unacceptable racist policies.

And today 50 years after your Government Agent in Jaffna, lowered the Union Jack in Jaffna Esplanade, exactly on that spot a Lion Flag is flying to signify the ruling and raping of the Tamil areas under a Sinhala Siege! Is that the freedom and the democracy, the British bequeathed to Ceylon?

#### **4. We were part of one another's history. Can the British be unconcerned about our plight?**

What do we expect from the British Nation and its Government? Unlike the French or the Germans or the Americans, You were a part of our history and we were a part of your history - for well over 150 years. Can you and your Government distance yourself in any way from the atrocities of the present Sri Lankan Government which is still a member of the Commonwealth and a friend of Britain? Knowing fully well the conflict, the roots of the conflict, the gradual unfolding of Sinhala Chauvinistic power, the stages of State-terrorism



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provoking Tamil resistance, the inhuman and massive violations of human rights of a whole people, can Britain remain so neutral and distance itself from the Sri Lankan conflict in the manner countries like Japan, France or Germany do?

How come that Britain does more to help the war of President Chandrika aimed at the extermination of Tamils and much less to mediate peace and justice among the Sinhalese and the Tamils?

You know the history of this conflict more than any other country in the world. How come that you swallow or pretend to believe, that this so called „war for peace“ of Chandrika and her uncle Ratwatte is only against Terrorism? Were you not a witness of the anti-Tamil riots and the Holocaust of 1983 and the 30 years of State-terrorism against the Tamils?

Your Foreign Minister, soon after the New Labour victory, promised that the concern for human rights and the illegitimate use of British arms in the internal conflict of other countries will be his priorities. What is happening during the last one year?

Between 1948 and 1998, the hidden agenda of Sinhala Imperialism unfolded itself through a series of legal and administrative perversions that have taken place in the name of democracy in Sri Lanka. Have you in anyway showed your disapproval or displeasure?

We are standing not very far from the Mother of Parliaments, the House of Commons, the bastion of democracy and justice. 50 years ago, the post-war British Government led by Labour Government of Clement Attlee sat over the transfer of power from London to Colombo. We humbly urge the present Government to recognise the historical obligation it owes us today.

Let the world and the powers that be, which have known these massive violations of human rights and genocidal massacres against our people, yet not lifted a finger to help us out of these massacres, look into the sanctuaries conscience and ask why they are still maintaining a conniving silence, if not a conniving friendship, to witnessing massive violations of human rights today by the Sri Lankan Government.

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## 5. What do you British expect us to do?

In the context of the present situation, when a so called “War for Peace“ is bleeding the country to death and disaster, when a political package, that does not address itself to any of the Tamil aspirations is put forward to the Sinhalese for their approval in order to be imposed on an oppressed population of Tamils against their will, when repeated pleas of Tamils for peace-talks between the Government and the LTTE, have been thrown away by the Government, and now when the Government has unmasked its hidden agenda of banning the LTTE and going for an all out military solution to the Tamil problem, what do you expect us to do?

In this situation, we want to be saved from destruction still continued by Sri Lanka against the Tamil people. We want all democratic nations of the world not to collaborate in this genocide, not to aid a war against us, not to aid a country that is starving, oppressing and raping us.

We want all of you nations to bring Sri Lanka to its senses, to tell them of the sacredness and inviolability of basic human rights they must respect, to stop immediately the war and violence against the Tamils, to lift all the inhuman ban on food, medicine and the media blockade on the Northeast, to withdraw its army from occupied territories, to stop destroying temples and churches, to stop all their persistent efforts at Sinhalisation of our homeland.

Leave us alone as a people and a nation, to determine our future. We have been a people for many centuries, and during the last five decades, we have suffered as a people. Hence we have every right to be a people.

**Long Live Tamil Eelam! Long Live Sri Lanka!**

## LET THE BRITISH NOT BAN THE LTTE

*(Address to British Parliamentarians and British Ceylon Tamils  
at a Campaign Meeting held at Atlee Suite, Portcullis House, Westminster  
on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.Jan2001 )*

### 1. War-path of Sri Lanka- is genocidal for Tamils and suicidal for the country.



We are assembled here, seriously concerned about the suffering our sisters and brothers have gone through during this half century following Independence, and still more concerned about the escalating war against us and the increased suffering our brethren have to face in the future merely to survive as Tamils in Sri Lanka. As expatriate Tamils we are very much perturbed and saddened by the arrogance and intransigence of the Sri Lankan government in ridiculing and rejecting the unilateral cease-fire declaration of the LTTE and by their escalation of military offensives.

To welcome and facilitate the efforts of countries like Britain and Norway in seeking a just and peaceful solution through mediated peace-talks, the LTTE unilaterally declared the present cease-fire as a gesture of goodwill for talks. The world expected the



Sri Lankan Government, to be a responsible one to reciprocate this good offer either with a cease fire or at least with some alternative gestures for peace. But true to its avowed policy of subjugation and annihilation of the Tamils, and contrary to all pious verbosity on peace, it is tightening its racist grip on the



Tamils, and concentrating its efforts only on a military conquest of our homeland. Simultaneously, the Sri Lankan Government is intensifying its propaganda war against innocent expatriate Tamils to curtail their humanitarian activities undertaken in

solidarity with their suffering brethren.

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Thus the Sri Lankan government, while wearing the cap of a free and sovereign state, enjoying the friendship and benevolence of many of the western countries including Britain, is actually on a war-path that is genocidal for the Tamils and suicidal for the whole island.

## **2. The connivance and cooperation of the international community.**

One of the main reasons why we have come to this critical situation, is because many western nations, including Britain, have unquestioningly accepted the false propaganda of the Sri Lankan government about fighting terrorism and given more and more financial aid and weapons for its war against the Tamils. Sri Lanka will go on its knees to beg for finance and weapons to kill Tamils, who are portrayed by government propaganda as rebels and terrorists. But the same government gloating with new weapons of war is arrogantly rejecting any advice at mediation for peace and even rebuking such friendly nations as interfering in their sovereignty.

In the face of escalating war and rejection of foreign advice, the international community in general, and Britain in particular, have a serious moral obligation to intervene at this hour, within the limits of mutual respect for governments but for greater respect for life and human rights of people. They have to accelerate whatever efforts they have made in the past, to bring the Sri Lankan government to its senses and to give up its war-path. They can no longer be subject to prolonged deception by the Lankan government that the Tamil struggle for self-determination and identity within the country to be labeled as pure terrorism. It is much more serious and devastating than mere violence.

If the international community does not pressurise the Sri Lankan government today to do what any democratic and responsible government should do, that is, to accept the whole truth about the ethnic conflict and to enter into peace-talks with the Tamils and their leadership with the help of the international community, then all chances for peace on that island are lost and the country is doomed to national suicide. Britain, more than any other country, having a serious historical obligation with respect to the birth of the ethnic problem, must lead the international community in this urgent action to save the country.

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### 3. The Mistake of the colonial British in entrusting the future of the Tamils into the hands of Sinhala Buddhist Nationalists.

In spite of the deep suspicion and fears expressed by the Tamil leadership to ensure their future safety and dignity as a people, the British entrusted us Tamils to the pious assurances of the Sinhala leadership. But Post colonial Sinhala governments have betrayed the trust the British imposed on the post/independence governments of Sri Lanka and threw to the wind all the assurances they gave to us Tamils.

A proposal of “balanced representation“ to prevent domination of one community over another ably argued before the Soulbury Commission by the then Tamil leader G.G.Ponnambalam, was however rejected on the ground that it would amount to communal representation. Instead D.S. Senanayake, the first Prime Minister gave his solemn assurance before the British, urging the minorities to accept the Soulbury constitution. He solemnly declared „On behalf of the congress (Ceylon National congress) and on my own behalf, I give the minority communities the sincere assurance that no harm need they fear at our hands in a free Lanka“!

But what ruled Sri Lanka thereafter was not a genuine democracy respecting the rights of the minorities, but a permanently Sinhala Buddhist parliament, motored by a brand of *Mahavamsa* mind-set and extreme Buddhist Nationalism which went all out to subjugate and annihilate the Tamils.

Following on the heels of the British departing from our shores, we Tamils were tortured and massacred, but no one, not even the British, came to help the Tamil victims. The democratic pleas of the non-violent Tamils fell on deaf ears of the two Sinhala major parties. We were reduced to ashes. And no democracy in the world not even our former masters, the British, came to our help when we were being subjected to the beginnings of a genocide.

It was in this context of being reduced to a helpless and dwindling minority, of being pushed into a corner for survival, that the Tamils, after almost 30 years raised a unanimous cry for survival: leave us alone in our ancestral homeland. We want to be a free people, in our own home, enjoying human dignity, determining our future destiny. Leave us alone and do not strangle us to death.

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Hence a unanimous political decision backed up with counter-state-terrorism for survival and self-dignity was launched by a new militant leadership with a political ideology. It was a new phase in the national struggle.

An anti-democratic *Sixth Amendment* to throw out the elected Tamil Members out of Parliament and a notorious Act called the *Prevention of Terrorism Act* to kill and bury Tamils without an inquiry - are the democratic acts of the SL government during that decade. The powerful nations and the British held their silence for 30 long years as successive oppressive Governments of Sri Lanka were stripping Tamils of their birth rights and strangling them to death. But once the oppressed victim started hitting back at the oppressor in self-defence, then these powers become eloquent in preaching to the down trodden, the rules and contentions about war-games. Is this not a fundamental anachronism?

#### **4. An Appeal to the Conscience and Fairness of the British**

What went on during the last quarter of the last century will be written in blood and tears. Violence and counter violence, war, death, destruction, displacements, violation of all types, army occupation, starvation, economic embargoes, blockades all added to a genocide of the Tamils, reducing us to ashes, mass graves, flattened cities, and to broken homes of widows and orphans. In the name of God, I can only weep and cry out „halt this war and violence“. I am not overlooking nor do I devalue for a moment the loss suffered by our Sinhala brethren. The relevant question here is: who is to be blamed for all these? In the first place, the people of Sri Lanka, true. But the entire blame cannot be passed on to the peoples and the government. There were others who connived, aided and abetted these massacres.

When all these happened for years and decades, the international community, including Britain, passively stood by and did nothing politically at the international level or at the U.N. It offered only humanitarian aid for the victims war and violence. The British silence amounting to connivance plus the financial aid and weapons passed on to the Sri Lankan government on the basis of „close and long relationship“ as claimed often by Mr. Kadiragama, have brought us to this critical stage. No country in the world, not even India, would have known better than Britain as to what was happening in Sri Lanka during these last 50 years.

Hence you British are at present a unique and a key witness before the international community and before the international court of justice to all that has happened during the last fifty years and are now happening in Sri Lanka. In this situation, we want to be saved from the destruction still continued by Sri Lankan government against the Tamil people. We want you British not to collaborate in this path to genocide, not to aid a war against us, not to aid this government that uses food and medicine to starve, subjugate and kill us, but to do something very positive and concrete responding to the gravity of the situation as well as in keeping with your historical obligation from the past.

In the theology of marriage, we speak of a *sanatio in radice*, a healing at the roots. We consider that there was a British-mistake made in the marriage arrangement between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. A contract made on false promises by one partner can be healed with retrospective effect. This marriage has not worked for 50 years. It is soon more murder and genocide. At this last hour, Britain can do something strong and positive to match its historical obligation of *sanatio in radice*.

We want you as a good friend to bring the Sri Lankan government to its senses and to not ride on a racist horse of false nationalism. If you cannot find a just solution within a united Sri Lanka, leave us alone as a people and a nation, to determine our future. We have been a people for many centuries, and during the last forty years, we have suffered as a people, we have every right to be a people.

Speaking at the British Council in Colombo (Sri Lankan capital) on November 22, 2000, British Foreign Office Minister Mr. Peter Hain said, "The LTTE need to acknowledge that, whilst a Tamil Kingdom constitutionally split from the rest of the island will not receive recognition by Europe, the USA (United States of America) or indeed India, the principle of self-determination and control over most, if not all, the key policies affecting daily life would be supported by the international community". Even such a sane statement from the British Minister evoked adverse reactions from the Sinhala Buddhist extremists.

As commented logically by someone, if Sri Lanka does „not welcome statements from people outside the country“ about how to resolve its war with the LTTE peacefully, what right does it have to inside that outside countries help to win the war by banning the LTTE on their soil.? If friendly

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with the LTTE peacefully, what right does it have to insist that outside countries help it win the war by banning the LTTE on their soil? If friendly countries cannot suggest „remedies for its problems (the war)“, what right has Sri Lanka to ask these friendly countries to arm and train its army to win the war? This is the duplicity of Sri Lankan foreign policy. It wants Britain's help in winning the war but it does not want Britain to make constructive suggestions on how to end the war through a negotiated settlement.

Mr. Kadiragama says that if UK does not give in to Sri Lankan request and ban the LTTE, UK's act will be considered unfriendly and their relationship will be strained. Yes Mr. Kadirgamer, your dealings in respect of the Tamil problem with foreign governments have been filled with false propaganda, back-door flirtations and you are now trying to press the UK, telling it how to interpret it in favour of your friendship.

The Tamil community, while regretting that not enough has been done by Britain with its unique and strategic relation to this problem, waits anxiously to see whether Britain will stand up at this critical hour for convictions of truth and justice for a people, irrespective of the cost to long-term relationship and friendliness. The Britain that we know of, must stand up for truth and justice involved in this problem. It should give a lead to other nations in this respect, not follow the superficial definitions of terrorism while ignoring the causes of ethnic conflict and the just struggle of a people. Here is a second chance for Britain to stand up not so much for long and close friendships, but for truth, justice and freedom of a people.

## **5. The chance of a Unique Tamil leadership to resolve the conflict**

During the last fifty years we have had Tamil political leadership, that trusted too much the promises of the Sinhala leaders. They were bought over by the government in power by the offer of privileges and portfolios. They reached agreements with the government and they were all torn up following the slightest protest from extremists Buddhists. There were Tamil leaders who betrayed the aspirations of the Tamils in exchange for power and money. And shame on us, there are even today two ministers with Tamil names, who are hired and paid to serve the interests of the Sinhala government.



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But after a long struggle we have come up with a unique Tamil leadership that has taken over the historical Tamil consensus of 1976 at Vaddukoddai and their verdict at the 1977 elections as their manifesto. They have proved their firm fidelity to the just aspirations of the Tamils even by the sacrifice of thousands of brave lives. It is a unique politico-military leadership facing up to the military threats of the Sri Lankan government against the Tamils. It is a leadership that cannot be bought over by the government in its traditional manner by offering privileges and finance as it now does with the EPDP. It is increasingly acknowledged by all the Tamil parties as the one body truly and steadfastly representing the aspirations of the Tamils in today's critical situation. The recent moves of this leadership for a peaceful settlement has been backed by all Tamil parties, by all Tamil people - even by those kept under military oppression in Jaffna. Naturally, the Sri Lankan government, stands exposed before the international community about its claims of being supported by the Tamils in its fight against this unique Tamil leadership

We know that blood is on the hands of the LTTE. But this is the result of much more blood on the hands of the government and its military that had pursued violence and State-terrorism for almost four decades. Even if all that is counted as part and parcel of the Tamil national struggle with the State for freedom and dignity of a people, we should take account of the fact that the LTTE has come a long way from such acts and has won the confidence and acceptance of all Tamil political parties and the majority people, to be their one leadership vis a vis the Sri Lankan government.

This has been clearly indicated by the massive demonstration of the Jaffna University and nearly 50 organisations and all categories of leaders in the Jaffna Peninsula. Just a few days after the President claimed in her speech that more than 80 % of the Jaffna people support the army, and in spite of the armed forces not allowing any non-violent demonstration, the youth of Jaffna and all the civic leaders showed the world where they stand with respect to their rights of self-determination, homeland and nationhood. Answering a question by the Ambassador of the European Union, „Do you all accept the Liberation Tigers? What is your opinion about the government's devolution package?“ the Tamil political party representatives responded: „The Tigers are the only ones who can represent the Tamil people today and can face their problems. We have accepted this. No solution (to the ethnic conflict) that leaves the LTTE out will work. Tamil parties that joined democratic politics

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face many problems today and have not realised any of their political expectations“.

And on another occasion meeting the ambassadors of Norway and the European Union (EU) in Colombo they confessed „We doubt that the Sri Lankan government really wants to bring about peace. We have sought the good offices of the international community because we have lost faith in the Sri Lankan government and because we suspect its motives“. What further evidence do we require to prove the unanimous acceptance of the LTTE as the one Tamil leadership at this hour?

Such a Tamil leadership that has emerged from below, from among the people, to face up to an honest and sincere settlement of the ethnic conflict in both political and military dimensions, is the best chance for an honest and realistic solution. A very large majority of Tamils living within Sri Lanka and the expatriates firmly believe in this leadership and will always stand by it.

In this context, it will be a big blow to and a betrayal of all of us Tamils, if Britain, believing the false propaganda of the Sri Lankan government, does something at this hour, to weaken this unique Tamil leadership.

## **6. Conclusion:-**

We Tamils stand at a critical junction in our history - We need positive action from Britain in a direction towards a just and honourable peace, not any short-sighted action that will worsen more than cure the situation. It has been a history partly shared with and shaped by you British- a history of half a century of deaths, discrimination, destruction and displacement, caused mostly by the very government and the forces which were expected to govern, guide and protect our lives. The government has miserably failed in its duties and responsibilities towards the Tamils.

It has been a history of thirty long years of democratic non-violent appeals and protests against state-aided army and mob-violence, mass-scale occupation, looting and raping of Tamil homeland, heritage and of women and children, in which no one, including the British did anything political at the international level, to bring the Sri Lankan government to its senses.

For twenty long years following the 1983 Holocaust we Tamils struggled militarily against the forces of Oppression of the State and incurred a heavy loss of human life and property. The inhuman offensives of the State - bombings, artillery shelling and economic embargoes, all these amounted to genocide, by the Sinhala government. We acknowledge the counter-violence generated from the Tamil side and we are sorry for it. But that was an effort of the man on the ground to hit back at the oppressor in exercising the right of self-defence.

The international community and many of the western nations have either turned away or looked on helplessly or worse still, believing the false and malicious propaganda of the Sri Lankan Government that there was no Tamil problem but only a terrorist problem poured in finance and weapons to further help the government „fight against alleged Tamil terrorism“. Not even a fraction of such efforts was aimed by these countries at forcing the conflicting parties to cease war and enter into talks. They were least interested in an internal conflict labeled as pure terrorism and happening in a country that is devoid of any worthy resource like oil. They were looking only to their economic trading interests, as well as nursing mutual support of the Sri Lankan government with a 'club mentality'.

We have reached a critical and decisive point at which it is clear more than ever before, that the Sri Lankan government does not possess the basic attitude and good will and sincerity to find a just and reasonable solution before the eyes of the world. Its repeated rejection of cease fires by the LTTE make it increasingly clear who are the enemies of peace and promoters of war. The President's „war for peace“ encapsulates the government policy.

It is at this hour ,we turn to you honoured members of the British parliament. The actions and decisions of your government in relation to Sri Lanka is very decisive for the survival of a people, for the survival of democracy, justice and peace in SL. The Tamils in Sri Lanka were not second to anyone in their loyalty to the British Empire then. Thousands are settled here in UK living and working here. Although you had adopted them as citizens and they have made your country as their home, still the cries of their brethren for survival and self-respect will continue to evoke deep feelings and whatever you do at this critical hour to help the Tamils will influence their thinking and determine their attitude to your government.

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I bear the scars of walking with my people for the last fifty years, especially during the last fifteen years in facing an inhuman war let loose on the Tamils of Thamil Eelam by the Sri Lankan Government, as a direct victim and a witness of the enormous amount of suffering, death and destruction and displacement, the destruction of over two thousand Hindu temples, Christian churches, schools and hospitals, robbing us of all the basic structures for life.

Let me assure you tonight, that we Tamil expatriates all over the world, in spite of restrictions which may be imposed on us against truth and justice, in order to please Sri Lankan government, will not rest until and unless, the Government gives up its Sinhala Imperialism of the last 50 years, until and unless we Tamils enjoy in our homeland of Thamil Eelam equal rights as a nation and a people to determine our own future.

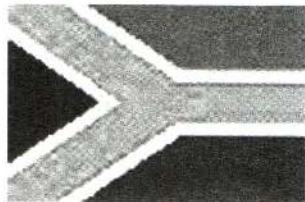
In conclusion let me ask, in the name of God, in the name of humanity, in the name of all democratic institutions of the world, with what right and in what conscience is the Sri Lankan Government carrying on this genocidal war against our people? Shame on you, Sri Lanka.

## LOOKING UP TO SOUTH AFRICA FOR EXAMPLE AND ENCOURAGEMENT

*(An appeal To the Peoples and Leaders of South Africa)*

**Greetings of Peace and Happiness to you all!**

As a Tamil Catholic Priest of Sri Lanka, I come to you on a Mission for Peace on behalf of the Tamils, who are dying by their thousands in an 18 year-old war waged by the Sri Lankan Government against us Tamils - a minority nation demanding recognition of their birth-right to be a people with the right of self-determination in the country which has been their homeland for over 2000 years.



After being with my suffering people for many years as a victim, I am now bearing witness at the international level, to the truth of human tragedies and violations of human rights committed by the State Forces in the Northeast of Sri Lanka. An undemocratic media-blockade is imposed by the Government for the last three years to hide the atrocities of the State Forces occupying our homeland. The so called „War for Peace“ by the State against the Tamils, is fought with aerial bombings, artillery shelling, economic-blockade and a vast-scale rape and murder against the Tamils by the State Forces to break the will of the Tamil People struggling for their rights and to bring them to their knees in order to keep them still as a second class minority under the Sinhala Buddhist nation. With the false propaganda that there is no Tamil problem but only Tamil terrorism, the Government is hiding its own shameful history of prolonged State-terrorism and trying to pass off as a democracy within the Commonwealth and in the United Nations. In order to get foreign aid and weapons for the war, a false propaganda is maliciously made about the Tamil problem.

From 1949 untill 1977 we Tamils asked, even begged, for our rights to be equal citizens. The government responded with its military might killing and burning Tamils for three decades. Pushed into a corner with prolonged state-terrorism, the Tamils voted in 1977 for a separate state of Thamil Eelam for their survival as a people and resorted to counter-state-militancy from 1983. The 18 year old war has consumed over 70,000 innocent civilians killed, 36,000 combatants from both sides and 800,000 Tamils are expatriates and and asylum-seekers

in all parts of the world - some kept in foreign jails for deportation - some resorting even to suicides to avoid deportation to Sri Lanka!

Hence any relationship with the Sri Lankan Government, diplomatic or economic or sportive or otherwise needs to be preceded by a South African Fact Finding Mission going to Sri Lanka, even to the Northeast which is kept closed to all media, to find out for themselves the advisability of future relationships. As a member of the Commonwealth, South Africa should be urged to raise the issue of the Tamils, who were left in the hands of the Sinhala Buddhist Majority by the British Government. The question should be addressed both to the British as well as to the Sri Lankan governments meeting in Brisbane in October 2001.

### **1. Historical Development of the Tamil Struggle**

Until the 16<sup>th</sup> Century there were two Singhalese Kingdoms in Kandy and Kotte and one Tamil Kingdom in Jaffna. This was followed by three successive colonial regimes the Portugese, the Dutch and the British – each over a period of 150 years. It was under the British, that the Singhalese and Tamils were brought under one-state centralised administration in Colombo.

Soon after Independence in 1948, there was the rise of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism led mostly by the Buddhist clergy who were making fanatical claims based on a mythical „Mahavamsa-mindset“ that the whole country must be a Sinhala Buddhist country. The Tamils(24%) who were largely Hindus (18%) were seen as a „pagan threat“ to their race and religion. Hence based on a mythical mind-set, they treat the Tamils as invaders, second-class citizens and deny their rights to be a people with self-dignity, self-determination and their own homeland. From 1948 a series of discriminations, disenfranchisement, legalised by a permanently Sinhala-majority Government and executed with military oppression and mob-violence was executed against the Tamils. All democratic and non-violent Tamil protests both within and without the Parliament were thrown out and militarily oppressed by the Sinhala Governments for over thirty years.

### **2. Cry for Separation is a cry for Survival**

In 1977 the Tamils voted in the Parliamentary elections by more than 75% majority demanding a separate Tamil state called Ealam as their only way for survival. But this too was crushed and outlawed by a 6<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution.

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### 3. Tamil Militancy is in Defence of the Tamil People and their Homeland

Disillusioned and disappointed by the arrogant and undemocratic response of the Government and by the repeated anti-Tamil violence by Sinhalese-mobs for over 30 years against the just and democratic demands of the Tamils, the Tamil youth took up arms to counter the prolonged State-terrorism and to further the Tamil Cause endorsed by the Tamils in the 1977 Parliamentary elections. It resulted in a holocaust against the Tamils in 1983, and since then the spiral of violence has escalated into a war.

The Military offensives against the Tamils have resulted in over 70,000 civilian deaths, mostly Tamils and over 8000 Sinhala soldiers and Tamil militants dying in the fighting. The present „war for Peace“ is composed of aerial bombing, artillery shelling even at nights, an inhuman economic blockade of the Tamil region called the Wannu and a strict media blockade of the war-zone. The Govt. propaganda at the international level is to portray what is going on behind closed doors as purely „an internal war against Tamil terrorists“. The death, destruction and displacements are all hidden.

Already more than 800,000 Tamils have fled the country and over 700,000 are internally displaced and living under trees without food, medicine, clothing and shelter.

### 4. The Efforts for a just and peaceful solution?

Being a queer democracy of a permanently majority Sinhala race, their efforts have been either „to buy“ over some Tamil leaders to support their discriminatory policies or to bring the Tamils to their knees by military oppression and the denial of the basic needs for life; to accept what the Sinhala people and their Government decide to give. A series of pacts between the Sinhala governments and the Tamil leaders were unilaterally broken by the governments (See Broken Promises by M.Thirunavakarasu). The Peace-Talks of 1995 was a government effort to talk down to the LTTE without any will to implement even the basic agreements reached about food and cease-fire. The latest effort by the Norwegian government, though largely welcomed by the world and strongly supported by the Tamils with long unilateral cease-fire etc, was disrupted and hindered by the government.

The Tamils have lost all their confidence in the Sri Lankan Government doing justice to the Tamil people. Hence our appeal to the International community

and to you South Africans to be in solidarity with us the victims, and to do all that you can to bring a just peace to Sri Lanka..

### **5. South African Tamils lobby support for the Tamil Struggle at the UN World Conference Against Racism**

The third UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance took place in the South African city of Durban from the 31st. August to the 7th. of September 2000. The venue was chosen for many good reasons, the chief being that this present Rainbow Nation of South Africa is the outcome of a struggle against the worst form of racism called Apartheid in the whole history of humanity. The multi ethnic city of Durban offered a conducive home for this historic conference. It was a unique conference „from below“ of all peoples who have been in some way or other victims of various forms of racism, xenophobia and intolerance caused by worst political, social and economic injustices of history.



More than 12,000 delegates from over 150 nations, representing governments as well as non-governmental organisations, converged to this newly built city not only to cry out and burst in anger against the injustices they have suffered as a result of slavery, colonialism, discriminations etc, but also to listen, repent and say „no, never again“ to the worst forms of racism. It is in this sense it was a unique conference of solidarity of the victims, crying for reparation, compensation and rectification as well as charting a break-through vision for the future of emergent peoples and nations.

The organisers of the conference had done much work under the able leadership of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mrs. Mary Robinson of Ireland as the General Secretary of the Conference. And the conference itself was ably steered through stormy weather by South African Foreign Minister Zuma playing a just and compromising role as President.

Though tension escalated over issues concerning Israel and the US and Israel governments pulled out their representatives at the Conference, and many other western nations threatened to withdraw or tried to hijack the Conference, yet the will of the majority nations prevailed to bring the conference to a successful conclusion.



As to the successful conclusion of the Conference, the Convenor of the Conference and UN Secretary General Dr.Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the Conference and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mrs. Mary Robinson, the host-President of the Conference and South African Foreign Minister Dr.Zuma - all were of the opinion that history has been created at the beginning of this millennium, that the Conference will make a significant change to the millions of ordinary people who are still victims of racism and racial discriminations across the globe.

This is the first time in the history of the world, a solidarity-conference of delegates representing the worst forms of racism, came in such large numbers - over twelve thousand government and non-governmental delegates - as the voice of the millions who have in the past suffered and died ignominious deaths at the hands of white-masters, slave-traders, colonial invaders and faced institutional racism like Nazism and Apartheid. They came also as the voice of the millions still suffering new forms of racism, namely, veiled apartheid, caste system, extreme and oppressive nationalism etc. Being the loudest cry in history of all victims of racism against the perpetrators past and present, the conference had a unique character of being “ „a challenge from below to the mighty and the powerful of today“

## **6. Tamil Struggle against Sinhala Racism**

It is in this context that the Tamils of Thamil Eelam who have been victims and continue to be victims since the advent of colonialism at the beginning of the 16th century, joined the rest of humanity not merely as victims of colonialism but as victims of the worst forms of post-colonial racism in the guise of a Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism. As victims of this 50 years long racial discriminations bordering on complete genocide they want the world to know of this hidden or veiled racism, institutionalised and covered by a Sinhala majority government posing before the world as a democratic nation-state unmindful of the mounting skeletons in its cupboard. The Tamils want the world to stop the genocidal and racial discriminations let loose by the majority Singhalese, bring the government to its senses and enforce a just and peaceful solution of the conflict.

## **7. The South African Tamil Potential**

1. The Tamils of South Africa are of Indian origin. But today they are full-fledged citizens of South Africa who have taken part in a long struggle and

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have contributed their share to the present success of South Africa. They have suffered for their liberation, including imprisonment and are the builders of the new South African rainbow nation. They have suffered at the hands of the white apartheid racists what the Tamils in Sri Lanka are suffering during the last two decades. Hence they understand best the Tamil struggle of recent times.

2. The platform on which they stand to fight for the just cause of the Tamils of *Thamil Eelam* is not like that of the *Eelam* Tamils in UK, USA or Australia - just to speak of the English-speaking countries. While there is a hidden fear and an inferiority complex caused by colonialism among the expatriate Tamils in these English-speaking countries, the South African Tamils of Indian origin have no such fear or inferiority complex vis a vis the other South Africans.

3. A further advantage the South African Tamils enjoy in comparison to the expatriate *Eelam* Tamils in other English speaking countries, is the key positions the former enjoy in influencing the government and people of South Africa. There are many good English speaking South African Tamils in the Government and still more working in all the media. Being in charge of English media is a potential that should be used to the maximum for internationalising our struggle. (Unfortunately we have many and competing TVs, radios and newspapers in Tamil to be consumed by the enthusiastic expatriate Tamils but very little information in English and other languages for internationalising the just cause of the Tamils.)

4. The South African Tamils, basing themselves on their sensitivity for justice and freedom, react naturally without fear to the inhuman treatment of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. They do not feel themselves as second class citizens because they fought hand in hand with their fellow Africans for their liberation and achieved it. Hence in giving their voice on behalf of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, they are not supporting any particular political party or group, they are supporting truth justice freedom and peace, which are the values for which the African leaders stand for.

#### **8. My first visit to South Africa (1997)**

During my first visit in November 1997, with the help of many supporters from Johannesburg, Lenasia, Pietermaritz and Cape Town, I was able to enlighten some sections of the South African Tamils as well as meet Foreign



Ministry Personnel in Pretoria. During this visit I attached much importance to the meeting with Archbishop Desmond Tutu of Cape Town, and to the Government of South Africa, because I saw in South Africa a suitable mediator for our conflict. I also met other church dignitaries from the Catholic side - Bishop George Daniel (a former colleague of mine in Rome) of Pretoria and Papal Nuncio Bishop Ambrosio de Pauli who were both well known to me. The contact with Archbishop Tutu has remained

alive and growing. He had repeatedly assured his support for our cause. Unfortunately his poor health limits his contribution.

### **9. My second visit to South Africa. (2001)**

Attending this Conference as a delegate of the Interfaith International, I was able to build on past contacts as well as establish new ones, especially with church leaders like Cardinal Napier of Durban and Bishop Lawrence Henry (a former colleague in Rome) of Cape Town. The Vatican was represented by Bishop Martin and four other priests, who shared the document Church and Racism as revised and enlarged for this conference.

### **10. Exhibitions, Workshops and Media**

The venue of the Conference was large well protected and controlled arena with conference halls, workshop rooms, exhibition pavilions, NGOs-centres etc. There was a pre-conference Exhibition participated by many NGOs on the theme of the Conference. The Tamil Centre for Human Rights under the leadership of its Secretary Mr. Victor Kirubaharan and its International Secretary Ms Macdonnel Deidre ran an attractive Stall filled with large photographs depicting the consequences of aerial bombing and economic blockade. They distributed printed material and shared more information with the many hundreds of visitors during those three days. A second stall was run by the South African Tamil Coordinating Committee under the leadership of Mrs. Padma Govendar and others giving information about the Tamil struggle for justice and freedom waged by the Liberation Tigers of Thamil Eelam. Many of those of this stall were proudly wearing emblems of the LTTE and the picture of Mr. V.Pirabaharan.

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The visits to the Stalls gave us Tamils a chance to expose Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist Racism and its genocidal acts to the world. Our participation in the many workshops as well as the many interviews to the TV, Radio and the Press in the English language gave us again a chance to bring the Sri Lankan horrors to the public of South Africa and to the participants of the Conference.

## Why Chandrika-Praba Talks Failed?

### 1. Introduction:



The Chandrika - Prabaharan Talks will go down in history as one which evoked the greatest hope for Peace among all sections of the people in the country and at the same time as one which failed most miserably and



gave rise to the most destructive war in the land's history. This fall from a hopeful to a hopeless situation has undoubtedly many lessons for the future.

### 2. Whose Interest guided the peace talks?

All wanted peace and many of them cried out loud for a lasting peace. But not all meant the same peace nor cried out for the same peace. Depending on their varied interests in Sri Lanka, foreign governments showed their concern for peace in the country. For them Sri Lanka was either a holiday paradise or a profitable zone for their market economy or investment on cheap labour. They wished themselves a peace that would protect and prosper their interests. For many Sri Lankans in the South peace was a necessary condition for their own life and work - so that they could continue undisturbed with their good and comfortable life. There was nothing wrong in such aspirations for peace. In fact it was natural to be so. But such aspirations for peace were surely insufficient to be a motive force for peace-makers. Hence the majority outside the war zone were surely lovers of peace, but were not the most ardent peace-makers.

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Within the war-zone on the other hand, the thirst for peace and the motive of the peace-talks were of a different nature. Because the large majority of Tamils, were under constant threat of death, starvation, sickness and homelessness, they wished peace as the only hope for survival. For those who sat in darkness and displacement for years, Chandrika's promise of „no more war, but peace“ was the brightest silver lining for survival. It was another chance for the already suffering and wailing population to be free of threats to their lives from bombs and economic strangulation, to return to their broken homes, to get the basic necessities of life, to enjoy human dignity in their land of birth, in short, to breathe normally once again, and to begin a trek towards a lasting peace. It meant only a question of time and few means to get back to normal human life. Their hopes spurred them to kiss even the helicopter that brought the government delegates for the peace-talks. But all hopes disappeared like a dream.

Hence as far as the Tamils were concerned, the brief period of the talks was like the brief respite between the frying pan and the fire. They hoped for peace and jumped in joy at the promise of peace made by Chandrika, but fell miserably into the depths of a more destructive war. They are bound to think a thousand times before they are take for a ride with another promise of peace.

The government failed to recognise the sincere thirst for peace on the part of the Tamils. It was seriously concerned about the desire for peace expressed by the prospective investors from foreign countries and by the southern constituency in order to win still more political support, but not from the Tamils directly affected by the prolonged war. At best the government's approach to the peace-talks appeared to be more from a self-centred interest and less from the interest of those suffering the war. Thus it under-valued or even suspected the peace-aspirations of the Tamils. The worst that a powerful partner could do is to underestimate the partner's dire need for survival and play politics with it. Hence the question:

Were the talks intended to bring peace more for those outside the war zone for selfish interests or for those inside the war zone?

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### 3. To Which LTTE was the government talking? Military or Political?

The war was going on between the State Forces and the LTTE. The talks were held between the government delegation and the LTTE. Forgetting the fact that the same LTTE was involved in the fighting as well as in the talking, the government failed to recognise the political face of the LTTE and talked to them only as a militant, if not a 'terrorist', group. This is a misapprehension<sup>1</sup>. The government will do well, even concurrent to their understanding of a militant leadership, to clearly recognise not only the peace-aspirations of the Tamil people but also that of their de facto leadership - the LTTE. Here arises the important question for the government:

Were they having peace-talks with the LTTE, taking them only as a terrorist group divorced from the people, and hell bent on destroying the country? Or were they talking to a de facto militant leadership that carried forward the basic aspirations of a people for peace with justice? Does the government naively usurp the idea that only those outside the war zone, namely the South and the foreigners, are genuinely interested in peace while those dying in war want more war?

As long as the government remains deeply rooted in the idea that the LTTE is only a terrorist group and not capable of any political talks or peace-talks or not capable of representing the aspirations of the Tamil people, no meaningful talks are possible.

### 4. Except for the Euphoria, Expectations and Gestures was there any serious Preparation for the Talks?

There was understandably a massive euphoria in the country aroused by the election of a new Prime Minister and then a new President whose promises of peace and a new political solution to the long-standing Tamil problem raised expectations from all sides. There were gestures too of good will from both sides.

„When Mrs.Chandrika Kumaratunga became Prime Minister the LTTE made an unprecedented gesture in welcoming a Sri Lankan leader's election for the first time. On her assumption of office as President the LTTE declared a unilateral cease-fire and called for peace-talks"<sup>2</sup>

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The government too made a meaningful, though insufficient, gesture with regard to the economic embargo on the Tamil people. Except for the euphoria, mounting of expectations and the limited gesture, there was very little attention given to more serious matters like the composition of the team to lead the talks, the creating of a condition among the Tamil people free of threat and conducive to the talks, the setting up of priorities etc. Many things were left open. As correspondence shows<sup>3</sup>, talks on issues considered serious by the Tamils really didn't take off the ground!

### **5. Was there a mutual recognition and respect of leadership maintained during the talks?**

Although the partners have emerged to power in different ways, it is important not to push this difference to give an air of superiority to one of the partners. No partner is to threaten the other or talk down to the other. During the talks there should be an equality across the table.

There were instances when the government reacted in a supercilious manner<sup>4</sup>. When the implementation of even the partial lifting of the economic embargo was very poor in spite of repeated reminders, Mr. Prabahran wrote to Mrs. Kumaratunga, expressing fears about the futility of continuing unproductive talks and set a period for implementation. To this the government retorted saying how can the LTTE give ultimatum or set deadline during the talks and disregarded the deadline.

Secondly the Tamils are not pleased in the way the parliamentary democracy of the Sinhala majority handles the fundamental human rights of the Tamils<sup>5</sup>. Because in history they have suffered so much by the blunders and corrupt practices and oppressive arms of a Sri Lankan brand of parliamentary democracy, that they have temporarily sought refuge, survival and self-respect through a militant leadership.

Hence the government in talking to the LTTE must recognise it as another leadership, born as a necessary response to the blunders and discriminations of "a Sri Lankan brand of democracy". Hence the government has a responsibility to talk to the LTTE as a de facto leadership and pave the way back to a democracy free of any majority-threat or military-threat.



## **6. The government's attitude to the LTTE - a fundamental block!**

The government did not understand the LTTE as the representatives of an aggrieved and oppressed people. Nor did they recognise the LTTE demands as the demands of the people

Consequently they saw any agreement with the LTTE as concessions or privileges given to a group that does not deserve or merit their considerations. The Government was blind to the fact that what they were agreeing to implement were rights due to the citizens of the country. The government overlooked the fact that in talking to the LTTE, they were actually talking to the people they represent.

“..to describe the granting of basic human rights of life and livelihood to a section of the country's own citizens as „concessions“ and „privileges“ is surely to hark back to the same attitude adopted by the Sinhalese governments in the past. In going further to say that „enough concessions and privileges have already been given to the Tamils and that further giving of anything will endanger the national security“, as President Kumaratunge did in her letter to LTTE leader Prabaaharan clearly shows that she equates even such „concessions“ with military interests.”<sup>6</sup>

## **7. Gestures and promises not sufficiently conducive to real talks**

Creating a conducive atmosphere of mutual trust and good-will is the duty of both sides. At the election of Chandrika to power, Mr. Prabakaran released many prisoners of war and shown signs of hope at her assumption to power. Chandrika coming to power on a crest of good will from all sections of the people including the vast majority of the Tamils in the south, did act well in calling for talks. She lifted partially the economic embargo on twenty of the fifty items. But gestures alone are not enough.

For a people who have suffered long under this ban, it was some relief. but it does not make the rest of the ban justified nor sufficient to return to normal human life. The continuation of the ban amounted to holding the economic embargo and even the implementation of things agreed as threats to pressurise the Tamils into talking.

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Hence a more generous lifting of the embargo and a closer supervision of the implementation could have created a better atmosphere for the talks.

## **8. Five major hurdles of the Talks.**

From the correspondence it is evident that the Talks did not make any substantial progress even in overcoming the initial five hurdles. They are 1) Reluctance to move from a Cessation of Hostilities to a Cease Fire 2) Delay in the functioning of the Monitoring Committees 3) Reluctance to further lifting of the economic embargo and the ban on fishing 4) Reluctance in opening a military-free passage at Pooneryn and 5) Reluctance of the Military in implementing the agreements reached even by their government.

### **8.1 Reluctance to move from Cessation of hostilities to Cease-fire?**

“When Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga became Prime Minister the LTTE made an unprecedented gesture in welcoming a Sri Lankan leader’s election for the first time. On her assumption of office as President the LTTE declared a unilateral cease-fire and called for peace talks”.

“The LTTE had from the very inception, called for a mutual declaration of a cease-fire. This is on record. To prolong the cessation of hostilities without moving into the next step of a permanent cease-fire, is obviously a way of keeping the military threat alive. Since the cessation of hostilities does not denote the end of a state of war, the LTTE cannot afford to drop its guard at any given time.”<sup>47</sup>

Even though a cessation of hostilities was declared unilaterally by the LTTE for one week from the 12th. of November - the day Chandrika took oaths as President, the Government overlooked it as unofficial and still raised the question a month later, on the 7th. of December, „Whether the LTTE agreed in principle to a cessation of hostilities“<sup>48</sup> and went on to explain at length the cessation of hostilities as „less formal and binding“ and only a prelude to a cease fire.

But the reluctance of the government to move further from a mere cessation of hostilities ( a freezing of the positions, as explained by Ratwatte<sup>9</sup>) to a stronger and stable cease-fire, as demanded by the LTTE, evoked suspicions in the minds of the latter about a hidden agenda of the former

## 8.2 Delay in the functioning of the Monitoring Committees

Although six monitoring committees were agreed, the government unilaterally arranged only for four.

“You are aware that the declaration of cessation of hostilities allows for six monitoring committees to function ....But the government has opted for four committees without consulting us. We insist that there should be six monitoring committees”<sup>10</sup>

## 8.3 Reluctance in further lifting the economic embargo and ban on fishing

The government undertook its peace-mission to the North on the basis that a partial lifting or relaxation of the economic blockade was all that was required to ease the day to day life of the Tamil people. Although a relaxation of that nature was a welcome relief, it was not sufficient to help the people to return a normalcy in respect of the basic needs for life. Nor did the partial lifting help justify or reduce the unjust nature of the still remaining embargo.

The correspondence clearly shows that from the very start, there has been a basic misunderstanding as to whether giving to the Tamil people their basic necessities and livelihood should be a pre-condition for talks or form part of the talks. The government took the position that by their partial lifting of the economic embargo they have done their best to ease the sufferings of the people and that talks could straight away deal with reconstruction of Jaffna and with plans for a political settlement. But the LTTE, while globally accepting the offer of reconstruction of Jaffna and political discussion towards a political solution, kept on insisting that the partial lifting of the economic embargo further unilaterally reduced by the military, are not sufficient. They were not ready to talk further without making sure that the unjust burden on the life of the people were lifted.

Count One: “While a propaganda blitz was launched from Colombo and by the international media, and directed at donor countries, that the economic embargo was fully lifted, not even a fraction of what was agreed and gazetted, had been reaching the Tamil people in the North. The military authorities at the Vavuniya check points have been seeing to that!

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Count Two: The government has been using the relaxing of the embargo and fishing ban as a bargaining chip; as was proved even by the recent acts of the government in re-imposing the economic embargo and the ban on fishing, soon after the LTTE withdrew from the peace process.”<sup>11</sup>

The government delegation presumed too much in thinking that they could rehabilitate the Tamil population by a quick reconstruction of the war-zone and a comprehensive political solution for the conflict. Both of these are unquestionably real needs of the Tamil people and the international community will support and help these efforts of the government. But for the LTTE the immediate and urgent problems faced by the people they represent have to be met before they proceeded to reconstruction and political settlement. The Tamils needed both - survival as human beings and survival as a people, but food was evidently more urgent than political solution

#### **8.4 Reluctance in opening a military-free passage at Pooneryn**

In addition to the check-point at Vavuniya which controls Tamils proceeding to the south, there were five military bases surrounding the Jaffna peninsula. The LTTE requested that the people be free to move at least between the peninsula and the Wannu without a military check and that Pooneryn camp be dismantled. The government was not willing to dismantle the camp, but willing to move the sentries at check-point by 500 meters.

#### **8.5 Reluctance of the Military in implementing decisions taken**

The assumption about the partial lifting was a serious error and it became more serious when the military showed reluctance in implementing even that relaxation.

Even at the last stage of the Talks when diesel and petrol that was so essential for farmers, fishermen and public transport was allowed by a Government's Gazette notification, the military was unwilling to allow these items except in very small quantities. The Sri Lankan armed forces, which has grown for many decades as an anti-Tamil institution, was not co-operating even with its own government.

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“...the armed forces at Vavuniya check point prevent even those items on which the embargo has been lifted from reaching the people in any appreciable quantity. This then is the reality on the ground and the people are surely aware of this.”<sup>12</sup>

“We are pleased to note that you have arrived at positive decisions with regard to lifting of the economic embargo including fuel and the removal of restrictions on fishing. While we welcome your positive decisions on the above stated issues we should insist that urgent and immediate action should be taken to implement these decisions without delay. I need not emphasise that decisions, pledges and promises are of little or no relevance until and unless they are put into concrete practical implementation. It is to ensure that the implementation process should proceed without delay, we have set a deadline. I hope you will understand our apprehensions on this matter. In this context we wish to point out that one of your earlier decisions i.e. relaxation on the embargo on certain items has not been properly implemented because of the obstructions caused by the military”<sup>13</sup>

### **9. A Cold-War situation within Peace-talks:- Food or Political-Talks**

The cold war situation on whether to provide the Tamil people first food, clothing and shelter for their immediate survival (as demanded by their prolonged suffering in war) or to give the Tamils a reconstruction and a political system for their future survival was present throughout the talks..

“You will appreciate that from the outset the LTTE has been insisting that the initial stages of the negotiations should give primacy to the immediate and urgent problems faced by our people”<sup>14</sup>

There was a lot of delays caused in the talks because of a lack of commitment to an agreed agenda and format for the talks. The government was intent on a quick success to prove to the south and to the world that it has achieved the near impossible and needed political support in the South as well as financial support from the international community. But the ground realities were that the Tamil population and its de facto leadership, which had suffered massive death, destruction and displacement for years needed urgently the basic needs for survival.

The LTTE leadership had rightly insisted that the talks cannot be held on comprehensive political solution while the people for whom the talks were intended were unjustly held to ransom by deprivation of basic necessities for such a long time. The limited relaxing of the embargo, the reluctance of the Colombo bureaucracy and the Vavuniya military in implementing even that, the deprivation of the livelihood for thousands of farmers and fisherfolk and other hand-workers,<sup>15</sup> the undue delays caused in functioning the monitoring committees, and the grumbling of a misinformed South that the Tamils were demanding too much of bread - all these left the Tamils wondering how can a government so reluctant to give sufficient food and medicine and other basic requirements for life could give us political rights and freedom.

### **10. Growth of mutual suspicion paves the way for the break-down**

Even though the aerial bombing and artillery shelling ceased, the Tamils were still suspicious about the economic embargo and denial of a military-free passage being used by the government as weapons to force the Tamils to their knees.

Not realising the importance of food over politics, the southern constituency led by an unhelpful media went ahead with its anti-LTTE lobby to accuse the latter that they were not prepared for political talks and that they were making new demands etc. Asking food before political talks was misunderstood as asking too much and a refusal to talk politics. This attitude of the south strengthened the Tamil suspicion about imposing political solution or making political gains under the threat of the embargo.

There has been an accusation made against the LTTE that they were not prepared for talks on a political settlement. This is not true. What was constantly emphasised was that while talks towards a political settlement could take a long period of time, the immediate day to day problems of the people had to be resolved here and now, as was agreed to on the agenda.

### **11. How did the talks actually break down?**

Though an uninformed public expressed shock and anger at the break down of talks, it was not so for those who closely followed events in Jaffna. Nor

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was it a complete surprise to the government who knew the dangerous but true developments as a consequence of their ignoring the letters of the LTTE.

LTTE realising that it was an unproductive exercise to prolong the talks without promoting the interests of the people had written a letter giving a deadline for the implementation of agreements already reached

“Therefore we urge you once again to reconsider your decision for the cause of peace. If a favourable reply is not received from you before the 28th.March 1995 we will be compelled to make a painful decision as to whether to continue with the peace process or not.”<sup>16</sup>

This unfortunately was misunderstood by the government as a high-handed ultimatum of a guerrilla group to a ‘democratically’ elected government. Hence the LTTE explained that they as partners in dialogue reserve the right to terminate talks if they were unproductive in serving the interests of the people. “In your letter you have raised objections to the fixing of deadlines which you call ultimatum. This is unavoidable since we have our own compulsions to ensure that the peace process should be a productive exercise that promotes the interests of our people. Furthermore as a party in conflict involved in the negotiating process we reserve the right to set a deadline to terminate the peace talks if we are of the opinion that the negotiations have reached a stalemate without producing a constructive result. We were compelled to set a deadline since the negotiating process reached an impasse without achieving any substantial result, on certain urgent issues that seriously affected the conditions of our people”<sup>17</sup>

Even after that ultimatum, on a promise made by the President to lift the ban on fuel and the restriction on fishing, the LTTE extended the deadline by another three weeks to ensure implementation.

“Since you have made conciliatory gestures on certain issues, we have extended the deadline to 19th, April with the anticipation that you will take immediate steps to implement your decisions and resolve other outstanding issues without delay.”<sup>18</sup>

The LTTE announcement of its withdrawal from the Peace process was not unexpected as is being made out. As early as March 16th in releasing 14

prisoners of war, LTTE leader Prabaaharan sent a letter to President Kumaratunga specifically stating that if the outstanding issues between the two parties were not resolved before March 28, they would be compelled to take a decision to withdraw from the peace process. The government chose to ignore the deadline. Realising that the time frame might be too short, and particularly because of what the LTTE noted to be „a positive response“ from the President indicating the lifting on the ban on fuel and fishing rights, the LTTE put off the deadline by three weeks for April 19.

On April 10, when the fourth round of talks ended without any positive results, head of the LTTE delegation Thamilchelvan reiterated the LTTE position that under the circumstances, they would be compelled to withdraw from the peace process.<sup>19</sup>

## **12. The Composition of the Team for the talks left much desired.**

It was clear that Chandrika, coming to power on the wave of a promise she made to the people for „peace and no more war“, selected people in whom she has maximum confidence and, at the same time, people of no-controversy to the Tigers. But when these people turn out to be strangers to the political scene, strangers to the Tamil side and mere messengers without any decisive power, then talks become difficult, decisions are delayed and more room for misunderstanding.

“Mrs.Kumaratunga’s hesitation in sending officially accredited representatives of the government for these talks, and instead in sending personal emissaries who have neither political authority nor government status, has itself made the peace process spurious. Apart from revealing lack of serious intent, it frees the Sri Lankan government, in the print or in the future, of a committal towards whatever political settlement that is reached. By comparison was the Thimpu talks in 1985 when the then President J.R.Jayawardene sent his brother H.W.Jayawardene, a lawyer who held no position in the government.”<sup>20</sup>

The need was for senior politicians who enjoyed the confidence of Chandrika as well as of the Tamil side - people well versed with the political developments of the country as well as with the Tamil problem. Such people were available and well within her own party - just to think of two people - the Speaker of the House Mr.K.B Ratnayake who is fluent in all three languages and has had his



education in Jaffna winning the confidence of the Tamils as well as of the southern parties as the senior politician unanimously elected Speaker. A second person is Mr. Mangala Munasinghe who was a senior SLFP member, who pioneered the inter-parliamentary group for the ethnic crisis and served as its chairman.

The members for the first round of talks included a respected and appreciated one in the person of the former GA, but unfortunately he backed out of the group for difficulties created by the government.

Though the team was claimed to comprise close confidantes of the President, there were signs of disregard and lack of seriousness on the part of the Secretary heading the government delegation.

“It is regrettable that in his very brief letter, Mr. Balapatabendi failed to respond to any of the vital matters we raised. His letter was silent on issues such as the modalities in implementing the agreement, on the cessation of hostilities; the functioning of the monitoring committees and the continuation of the talks.”

He appears to have marginalised the many issues we raised by merely saying that the government had taken various steps to solve the living problem of the Tamil people.”<sup>21</sup>

### **13. Sri Lanka wanted International support only for war but not for peace!**

The war as conducted by the Chandrika regime added a new horror element to the ethnic war - internationalising her efforts of war through powerful propagandist machinery to make it appear as a justified “war for peace”, as a war against terrorism, and at the same time conducting it on the ground as a “war behind closed-doors” closed to all local or international media, amounts to nothing less than a “genocide with international licence”!

While retaining her old international credential and accolade which she received as she came to power with promises to end the war and create peace, she has turned 180 degrees to conduct the mother of all wars in the name of peace!

After calling the LTTE to the Table, more importance was given to the international propaganda that the new government was negotiating peace and that it needed international support on a large scale for reconstruction and rehabilitation of the war zone etc. but little was done towards ameliorating the critical conditions within the war zone or resolving delays in having meetings, effecting monitoring committees, checking about military and bureaucratic go-slow implementation of decisions taken.

#### **14. Prospects and Possibilities regarding Future Talks**

Even after the resumption of hostilities, the LTTE has reiterated its stance by declaring through the press and through international conferences that the doors are open for future peace-talks. Going by its experience of Talks both with President Premadasa and with President Chandrika, they are insisting on a Third Party Mediation. Tamils have experienced as the aggrieved partner long decades of deception death and destruction. Pacts have been unilaterally torn and promises repeatedly unfulfilled by governments. With President Chandrika, they hoped for a better future. But that hope has proved to be the worst of all deceptions!

Tamils cannot understand how a government of Sri Lanka, with a long history of unjust aggressions and deceptions, even if angered by the de facto Tamil leadership walking away in disgust from the Talks, can resort to such a criminal war against its own citizens - the Tamils. Is not this war against the Tamils "behind closed doors", though proclaimed to be a "war for peace and against terrorism" not a deception of the whole world and a travesty of truth?

Only a sincere search for the truth of what has happened during the last five decades, especially in the North East of the country, with the help of a fact-finding mission as well as with some Facilitators or Mediators can help pull us all out of this falsehood and deception and lead us to a peace based on truth and justice.

#### **(Endnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> As the Talks were in progress, the President went on a visit to India. This visit raised much speculation and suspicion in the minds of the Tamils. Later in an interview, in which she referred to her predecessors with degrading names, she referred to Mr. Prabakaran as a megalomaniac. This pointed to a lack of political seriousness in holding talks with the LTTE.

<sup>2</sup> Press Release of a Statement made by the Political Section of the LTTE in Jaffna on 23rd. April 1995 (PS-LTTE/23.4.95)

<sup>3</sup> Much time was spent after the first round of talks in correspondence and in the subsequent meetings about priorities, cessation of hostilities, implementation of views agreed etc. The military representative in the government team overplayed his role.

<sup>4</sup> The militant group emerged to contain the military excesses of the Armed Forces, defended the people and their land against the onslaughts of the Sri Lankan Forces and has consistently carried forward the Tamil consensus of 1976-7 for a separate state with determination and military might. The Sri Lankan government that caused such a leadership to emerge has to deal with this de facto leadership of the Tamils.

<sup>6</sup> PS-LTTE/23.4.95

<sup>7</sup> PS-LTTE/23.4.95

<sup>8</sup> Letter of Minister Ratwatte to Leader Prabakaran on 7.12.1994(RP/7.12.94)

<sup>9</sup> RP/7.12.94

<sup>10</sup> Letter of Tamilselvan to Balapatabendi on 13.2.1995(TB/13.2.95)

<sup>11</sup> PS-LTTE/23.4.95

<sup>12</sup> Letter of Prabakaran to Chandrika on 28.02.1995 (PC/28.2.95)

<sup>13</sup> Letter of Prabakaran to Chandrika on 28.3.1995 (PC/28.3.95)

<sup>14</sup> Reply of Prabakaran to Ratwatte on 8.12.1994 (PR/8.12.94)

<sup>15</sup> One cannot imagine the amount of unemployment and consequently loss of livelihood to farmers( without fuel for water pumps), fishermen( ban on fishing around the North and East coast), masons(without cement and building materials) etc.

<sup>16</sup> PC/16.3.95

<sup>17</sup> PC/28.3.95

<sup>18</sup> PC/6.4.95

<sup>19</sup> PS-LTTE/23.4.95

<sup>20</sup> PS-LTTE/23.4.95

<sup>21</sup> PC/28.2.95

## Chandrika's Dance with Carrot and Stick Retrospecting on the Chandrika-Period on a lighter vein

### 1. Tamils greet Chandrika as an Angel of Peace

The large wall-posters in the South were still displaying the pre-election posters of Chandrika as the Lady with the Dove of Peace in her hand. As she swept to power after 17 years of UNP regime, she was the Angel of Hope for millions of Tamils.



The UNP regime which came to power earlier with a two thirds majority, had the power to change even the constitution, rectify the injustices done to the Tamils as promised in their election manifesto and restore justice to the long series of discriminations under Mr. and Mrs. SWRD. Bandaranaike. But it turned out to be a case of Tamils thrown from the frying pan into the fire. The Bandaranaiques discriminated the Tamils as second class citizens and stripped them of their rights with regard to language, education, employment and development. But Jayawardene went further and set the Sinhala mobs and their armed forces with impunity to burn and butcher Tamils all over Sri Lanka. The Holocaust of 1983 and the horror events around it is a criminal injustice, done by the Sinhala Nation and its government against the Tamil Nation and will never be erased from the collective memory of Tamil history

Sweeping to power after 17 years of UNP rule during which the country experienced three major crisis – the 1983 Holocaust against the Tamils, the Intervention of the IPKF in 1987 against the Tamils and the second uprising of the JVP mayhem in the South, Chandrika was given a long rope to bring the national situation under control. The Tamils of the Northeast with a deep and genuine thirst for Peace have overwhelmingly given their votes to Chandrika. The LTTE leader had greeted her assumption to power with words and gestures. The Jaffna hawkers cried out „chandrika bangles” for sale.

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The aerial bombings and artillery shelling stopped for a while and the people of Jaffna gathered in their thousands to greet the Helicopter carrying the government team for Peace Talks. They gave a hearty welcome forgetting all the bombs and bullets which killed their sons and daughters. They even kissed the helicopter that brought these emissaries of peace from the great Lady Angel of Peace. The composition of the government team shocked them all and the LTTE leadership was disappointed about the emissaries chosen. Still to give a chance for the much needed peace, they began the Talks. The family architect and the Banker, her private secretary and a loyal government servant and a military officer, clearly showed the level of interest and importance Chandrika was giving to negotiation with the Tamils

Tamils needed the very basics for life before they could open their mouth for a political discussion. And those basics are to be denied by Chandrika to maintain the threat and to keep throttling the Tamils to force a political settlement. The Tigers after repeated warnings as stipulated in the Agreement for Cessation of Hostilities, left the Peace Talks of Chandrika.

## 2. From “Talks for Peace“ to “War for Peace“

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 1995, at the break-down of talks with the LTTE<sup>1</sup>, President Chandrika had clamped down with lightening speed all the possible blockades against the life of Tamils in the North and East of Sri Lanka. She had declared her so called “War for Peace“ - the first ever to be so named in human history- with the double purpose of crushing the LTTE militarily and forcing the Tamil people by blockades and bombs to withdraw their support to the LTTE. This military dictatorial approach of a “War for Peace“ proceeded with full ferocity. Under the pretext of targeting LTTE hide-outs and military bases, Chinese and Israeli jets were releasing bombs from over 5000 feet height causing havoc and destruction only to civilian population and property. Everyone who was killed – mothers, children and the invalid – were labelled and counted as LTTE cadres, or those who harboured them. Unless the claimant of the dead body signed a statement to the effect that the person shot dead or killed was at the least a LTTE sympathiser, there was no hope of the family members getting the dead body and giving it a decent burial. That was the high-handed way in which the Sri Lankan forces justified and counted all the Tamil victims of State Terror.

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Artillery shells and bombs rained over temples, churches, schools and even hospitals – the very places where helpless refugees panicked and rushed in for safety. This resulted in waves of displacements from the northern most part of the Peninsula – Mathagal, Sillalai, Pandaterruppu – to the southern part – Manipay, Kopay and Jaffna. Months May, June and July of 1995 were months in which attacks from air and land terror, bombs and artillery shells, even at nights, were escalated. This caused a continuous displacement of the population. The tightening of the economic strangulation brought to a slow standstill the normal life in and around the city of Jaffna.

Even when half a million Tamils were forced out of their homeland by the Sri Lankan Army of occupation, the international community still enamoured by Chandrika's peace-platform, did not condemn the military occupation of Jaffna. As death, destruction and displacements, caused by these offensives increased, and news of the Tamil suffering reached the ears of the western countries which were already supporting her maiden moves, she had to cover, justify and defend her militaristic agenda before the moderate sections of the Southern constituency as well as before the nations which fed her finance and weapons for her nefarious "war for peace"

### **3. Reluctant Return of Refugees**

After the historic capture of the ghost-town of Jaffna, it took another six months of military manoeuvres to "entice and force" the displaced-inhabitants back into their homeland. Devoid of shelter, food and other necessities of life in their displaced-situations, and prevented from going into Wannai by military-shelling of the southern end of Thenmarachchi, people reluctantly preferred to seek shelter in their own homes. The cunning and captivating welcome of the Sinhala soldiers, who were ordered now to 'win' the hearts and minds of the people, did not last long. An army "foreign to the Tamils" taught only to suspect, torture and shoot anything that is not in line with a Sinhala-Buddhist nation, cannot overnight win the hearts and minds of a people. Nor do a people chased away from their homes by aliens, intruders, murderers and rapists can turn round and embrace them as loved masters. This forced co-existence of mutually suspicious partners continue even today under the might of the military gun and of pseudo-political groups. But for how long?

This dalliance was fast becoming a costly adventure for the government coffers as well as pinching away too much comforts from the southern-

audience. But anyhow the war-taxes squeezed from all around the country, including the Northeast war zone, plus foreign aid, all pooled into the war-chest kept the dance going. Many donor countries, taken up only by her charming proposals about peace, democracy and prospects of foreign investments, were deaf and blind to the destruction going on in the Northeast during this 'dance of deception'.

#### **4. Package of Proposals as a Carrot before the horse**

War alone, even with that contradictory façade of Peace, cannot be justifiably supported by the "peace-loving" western nations. How peace-loving these nations really were is another question. But to justify their action at least on the surface, they will expect Chandrika to have at least a political face for her agenda of war. Hence her wielding of the „genocidal Stick on the Tamils“ from April 1995 had to be matched or balanced, though late, by a political „Carrot-dangling“ before the southern constituency, as well as before the donor-countries. Such a political-carrot was hurriedly conceived and hatched by her, along with ministers hired for their services. This "political package" that was to be waved as a carrot and before the western donors as a justification for her appeal for money and weapons, was put out on 3<sup>rd</sup>.August 1995 as proposals from HER for a political solution of the problems of the Tamils. Though one sided, they appeared to be bold and attractive<sup>2</sup>.

#### **5. Package kept away from the Tamils and their leaders**

Paradoxically the so called Package was meant to be shown exclusively to the southern constituency for winning their votes and to the international community for getting financial and military support for the war, but not to the Tamils who were the primary targets of all discriminations and destructions. As the package was made public to the world, the Tamils, for whom it was meant to be a solution, were already on their run into the jungles for survival from her military offensives. Nor was the Package to be sent to the LTTE, who since 1976 have stood by and fought for the aspirations of the Tamils and now waiting for any alternatives to their demand for a separate state. The fact that the Tamil people and the leadership fighting on their behalf were wilfully excluded<sup>3</sup> bared the hidden agenda of the government to keep the political package merely as a propaganda-tool and a Pandora-package, to be used from time to time as a political-carrot. It was not in any way contributory to a future solution.

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As a former student of politics from the Sorbonne University, she ought to have known well that her Buddhist and imperialistic aspirations will never reach out to meet even half way the basic and reasonable aspirations of the Tamils. These had been so overwhelmingly espoused and articulated by the Tamils in the Parliamentary Elections of 1977 and by all the Tamil politicians since then, the armed and the unarmed - at Thimpu Conference in 1985. None so blind as those who refuse to see!

## **6. A Dance of Destruction of the North and Deception of the South**

Stimulated by the beating of war-drums and chanting in the Temples and enthused by their past victories over a southern JVP insurgency ( and cricketing at world level), and not to forget, relying on the Tha-thei-thaalam from some Tamil-hirelings in Colombo, the dance of “destruction of the North and deception of the South“ came to full swing following the declaration of the notorious “War for Peace“. The bombing of St.Peter’s Church on 9.7.1995, where 120 refugees died and that of Nagerkovil School on 22.9.1995 where 29 school children in their uniforms were reduced to bits of human flesh, were two of the many destructive actions and achievements of this devil-dance. With a heavy censure on the media, the horrors of these killings were hidden from the South as well as from the international community<sup>4</sup>.

## **7. Carrot started rotting and the Stick started breaking**

The initial set of political proposals with a few attractive clauses, fondly referred to as „The Package“ or as „the Devolution Package“ quickly went into storage and subjected itself to radical changes in order to accommodate critics within her ranks as well as to attract support from the opposition benches of the UNP. After all, it was only meant to be a facade and a propaganda tool. The cover and name remaining the same, the contents were open for any change that will win clients and supporters for her throne of power.

Too many cooks spoil the soup. Trying to accommodate a wide spectrum of Sinhala views made the carrot-package less attractive and more hollow, loosing weight and unable to swing. Its dangling was not very helpful in winning support for the war. In the face of stunning defeats suffered by the Army who were running away from the so-called baby-brigades of the LTTE, the southern



audience shouted more and more for the wielding of the Stick. No more politics or political solution, it was only war, and more war, they wanted to crush the LTTE and its supporters. The stick-wielding was subjected to little criticism from the South. It was meant as a sob for the many military debacles the Army suffered as well as to substantiate millions swindled by army high-ups in the foreign purchase of sophisticated weapons. On the whole the southern constituency of Sri Lanka with the connivance of the international community still justified and supported the war, as a war against terrorism“ - irrespective of its genocidal effects on the Tamil people and their just cause. .

Though the Carrot was understood early enough by the majority of the Tamil people as merely a Sinhala propaganda to continue the war, the Tamil moderates and quislings, who bent backwards to support Chandrika, failed to effect any change in that Package. Repeated pleas and suggestions made by the moderates failed miserably to effect any change to that package.

#### **8. UNP forces a Unitary State out of a Devolution Package**

Even the little benefits of the package was increasingly opposed by Sinhala chauvinists and the Buddhist clergy for other reasons. They interpreted PA's efforts with its package, as concessions or even a sell-out of the country to the Tamils. These developments of discontent on both sides - Tamils disillusioned at an empty package and the Sinhalese paranoia of the package as conceding too much to the Tamils - coupled with time-ticking by for her next parliamentary election, made the dancer increasingly nervous. By hook or by crook, she wanted to retain her presidency and the PA back in government with a parliamentary majority.



#### **9. Chandrika spurns away the Tamil Appeals**

The woes and cries of the Tamils continuously subject to bombs and blockades, to death and displacements, were hardly audible to a nervous dancer, bent only on her returning to power and on pleasing the western donors who were aiding her hidden agenda. The appeals of the LTTE, in the name of the Tamils, to stop the dance of deception and come into civilised ways of conflict resolution as suggested by the LTTE leader<sup>7</sup>, namely, cease-fire and talks for

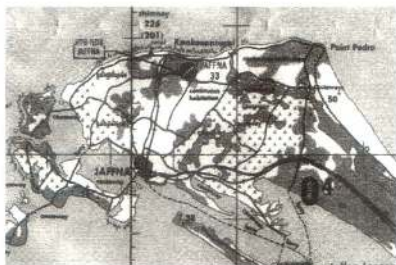
a political solution, were quickly spurned away by her and by her hired but eloquent Foreign Minister. How else could this loyal Servant with a Tamil name, then aspiring to be the first Tamil-Prime Minister of a Sinhala Buddhist Sri Lanka, hope to win the applause of the gallery and survive in power?<sup>8</sup>

The military conquest of Jaffna and her ceremonial acceptance of the scrolls of victory from uncle Anuradha in 1995 were still fresh and sweet in her memories. Her next ambition was to continue this dance of Tamil-destruction to a final victory – a victory in which she would have wiped out all the Tamil aspirations of Nationhood, Homeland and the Right of Self-determination, as well as wipe out all those claiming to lay down their lives for those aspirations. Only in such a scenario could she be the real queen of a Sinhala Buddhist Dhamma Deepa, whose far-northeastern territories which have become mere cemeteries could be thrown as bones to the Tamil hirelings still running around this dance performance.

## 10. Tigers leap forward towards Jaffna

Though the distant donor doubled and trebled his financial and military aid to the dancer, in order to sell out as foreign aid his faulty warplanes and outdated weapons, they were of no avail. The Tiger had got dangerously close to the dancer. The daring attack of the Tigers and the notorious fall of Elephant Pass into the hands of the Tigers, not only signalled imminent danger for the Sri Lankan forces on the Peninsula, but also made the Dancer extremely nervous about her position. The greater powers who were behind the Sri Lankan government supplying finance and weapons for the war, were much disturbed.

The SOS appeals made by the Dancer to help rescue her forces and prevent the Tigers re-taking Jaffna, was responded favourably and hastily as „an act of comradeship in corruption“. When 500,000 innocent Tamils were chased out by bombs and shells out of their 2000 years-old homeland, when thousands were seeking survival inside bunkers and under trees, neighbouring India and the greater nations of the world did not lift their voice nor their finger against the genocidal crimes of the Sri Lankan government. But now to rescue an army of intrusion



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that raped and murdered people in their hundreds, India and the other nations were rushing all possible aid. Tamils have no fear to call it an international hypocrisy and to even suspect an international conspiracy.

India at first wanted to give only a humanitarian assistance to safely pull out the Sri Lankan forces out of a dangerous situation. But quickly changed its help to more and more aid, even ships and finance to strengthen the position of the Dancer. Weapons were rushed from all directions even overlooking longstanding animosities – from Pakistan, Israel, America, China etc. Within a period of a few months, not even counting the heavy blow to economy, Sri Lanka flooded the Jaffna Peninsula with weapons just to protect its army of occupation.

Neighbouring India in trying to play her role as regional super-power and in order to be appreciated as the Saviour of the Sri Lankan situation, was ready with all air, sea and land preparations to draw the curtain off the stage and save the dancer with what was left of her. The SOS appeal of a woman in agony cried out loud to the greater powers of the world to help resist a retake of the Jaffna Peninsula by the LTTE. Powers which were in no more democratic than Sri Lanka and which commit crimes against their own people, Pakistan, China, Russia and Israel rushed in heavy weapons. Western nations having some vested interests in keeping the island as a client and admirer of their neo-colonialistic democracy were very concerned and were all out to help. India was giving a few assurances to the Tamil Nadu partners of the government while fostering its good relationship to Sri Lanka by promising all humanitarian services to its forces short of any military intervention.

## **11. She alone cannot continue the dance of a Sinhala majoritarian Conspiracy against the Tamils**

With parliamentary elections due after August 2000, with a carrot-package beginning to rot and a stick beginning to break, with a slender majority at a great price, she could not go on and on. She needed a break to take a shot of revitalisation, to change her costume of power-structure and to effect some changes in the set-up of the political arena. Time was ticking, with performance weakening. On and off, she had complained to the supporters and the donors that the UNP was the only obstacle to her poor performance. This is nothing new in the Sinhala political arena where the Tamil-problem was merely a

football for their political game. For fifty long years, the two major parties among the Sinhalese have done their politics at the expense of a third party – the Tamils, and now the game is disturbed or the ball seems to be lost. Hence the call for a common search to find that ball! Some Tamil boys initially appeared to be interested too in this common search and continuation of the old game. Only thus they were to have some crumbs continue falling from the tables.

## **12. UNP with a sinister plan joins in the common search**

Responding to the call for a common search or conspiracy, the UNP leader already schooled in the ingenious art of political games, all of a sudden, with a sinister plan up his sleeves, agreed for a common search for Consensus. Craftily and stealthily, he pushed first his unitary-structure that will destabilise or dissolve the devolutionary one. The son of a fox knew how to carry on the racist ambitions of his predecessors like JR and Dingiri Wijetunge<sup>9</sup>. Though she spoke bravely of devolution, she did not mind watering down devolution to become the old unitary state in order to accommodate UNP and assure her victory. She could still hold on to her seat of power and continue the dance. But then came the moment Ranil questioned her hidden agenda about continuing in power. Ranil saw the under-skirts of Chandrika's package. She wanted to assure her uninterrupted continuance as President for six years. The historic meeting, as they both proclaimed to the audience, was aimed not at seeking a consensus on constructive proposals for solving the Tamil problem, but more at seeking a consensus on cutting down still more the offer to the Tamils and continuing their musical chairs for power with or without a presidential chair! As the conspirators became mutually aware of their hidden agenda for undercutting one another – one for a minimum devolving of power and retaining her presidency, the other for smuggling into the PA-package a unitary-state and eliminating the presidency - they quickly adjourned, with a conditional consensus! - apparently to avoid a scandal and appease the audience at home and abroad.

## **13. A PA-UNP common search always tends to be an anti-Tamil conspiracy**

Consequently even for the Tamils who had supported this dance of deception, the PA-UNP efforts at seeking consensus, appeared to be an anti-Tamil conspiracy. For the majority Tamils, it was just another round of the PA-UNP musical chairs for power. The major Sinhala parties were so used to run around the one chair of power for the last fifty years, that they remain slavishly

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engrossed within one paradigm of power structure – the one unitary form of government of dictatorial democracy run by a permanent Buddhist Sinhala majority. They cannot see anything beyond that unitary structure of Sinhala Buddhist domination !! For them Sri Lanka is not at all multi-ethnic but Sinhala Buddhist Sri Lanka tolerating some minorities with less rights!!

#### **14. A Last Performance with a New Carrot: The Constitution From a “Pandora Package” to a “Wonder-working Constitution”**

It becomes more difficult when a jealous and competing UNP overtly agreed to sing for the dance, but covertly pushed too hard their agenda for a unitary-state and an abolition of presidency. Worse still, the very few Tamil hirelings kept in Colombo-bunkers and paid heavily only to play the thaalam of consent were making some noise of fear and dissension about the PA-UNP consensus without them. Talks of pushing that package through parliament according to a tight time-table, evoked severe criticisms from the Buddhist monks and the sinhala extremists. Though the Tamil parties were against the package, rejecting it as too little for the Tamils, the Sinhala extremists were rejecting it as giving too much to the Tamils. But the dancer was pushing things, not for any genuine love of the Tamils, whom she described in her interview in Africa, as late immigrants into Sri Lanka, but for her own power.

The PA-UNP talks dragged on over their mutual suspicions and accusations, and as usual they competed in giving the minimum to the Tamils. Neither of them could liberates themselves from their traditional paradigm of sinhala Buddhist chauvinism. They were not convinced to such an extent as to demand a new paradigm in their thinking. If the Tamil problem could be solved without giving any thing to the tamils, that was the ideal they would agree. Now UNP harping on retaining the unitary system of government and PA harping on a low-key devolution within one Sinhala Buddhist Nation with a minority added to it, were both prisoners of their power and racism. The UNP succeeded in pushing most of its unitary concepts into the PA package. It was devolution in title, but unitary in contnet.

But once the UNP saw the PA had another ulterior motive of keeping presidential power with the PA, UNP backed out its support. The Package was introduced in Parliament and was soon abandoned.

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## 15. Taking the Dance to the International Stage

Ever since the “Donor Countries” hesitated to sanction the Annual Aid Package at the Paris meeting of 2000, the Dancer changed the pattern of her dance. She came early enough to France to prepare the ground for the meeting in Paris. French leaders knew this attractive student of a French university. And she knew how to make her dance more captivating to her male counterparts of the meeting. Still the leaders postponed their final decision about the annual grant. This was a great disappointment to her and she retreated to the back stage only to come again to meet the participants individually in their home town. Going well in time for a meeting to canvass support and visiting members of a meeting individually are well known Sri Lankan lobbying-tactics to buy over by the back door what cannot be rightfully won over during the meeting. And this is what the Dancer did when she undertook a series of meetings to European countries meeting heads of governments, foreign investors and media personnel to whom she could dish out propaganda-lies about terrorists killing her father and her husband. The unscrupulous foreign media did not know that those murderers whom she referred to as „terrorists“ and wished to be understood as „Tamil terrorists“ were neither tamils nor terrorists but a renowned Sinhala Buddhist monk by the name of Budarakita thero and a member of the JVP, left Sinhala extremist organisation. Telling lies and cheating people has been identified as characteristic of the lady by no other than her close confidant and till recently Secretary of her party – Mr.S.B.Dissanaike.

As I write these lines, I have before me the text of her speech she had planned to deliver at the Heads of Commonwealth Meeting scheduled for October 2000 in Brisbane. As America mourns the dead of September 11th and launches an attack on the suspected perpetrators, the Sri Lankan President hastens to profit by the tragedy and to turn the American anger against terrorism into an anti-LTTE action. Noam Chomsky, the courageous American critic who has won credibility by his personality, in trying to remove the splinter in the eyes of America, calls America for a confrontation with its self. Whoever wants to combat terrorism must first struggle with his or her own terrorism. The Sri Lanka Lady and her able Foreign Minister are calling the whole world and trying to form coalition to fight world terrorism without confronting their own brand of terrorism – the State Terrorism against the Tamils for the last 50 years!

## 16. A weak Reappearance but with a vengeance

After her the defeat of her party the SLFP in the 2001 parliamentary elections, Chandrika was forced to take a back-seat in dealing with the LTTE. Mr.Ranil Wickremesinghe and his party the UNP, came to power with the promise of immediate Peace-talks with the LTTE. With the help of the Norwegian government, aa Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Government and the LTTE, a Monitoring Mission was set up to monitor the Cease-Fire Agreement. Talks started off well and Chandrika jealously watching the progress of the Talks, tried several ways of throwing a spanner into the wheels of progressive Talks, but failed.. She could nneither stand the economic recovery brought in by the UNP government nor the little succes in the Talks. She came down with her presidential powers to scuttle the talks, call for new elections and made strange alliances with the extremist Marxists the JVP in order to win back power from the UNP. This she did but it was a minority government unable to do anything worthwhile. She is still struggling to establish her power in parliament as well as make efforts to carve out a niche for her future. By duplicitous speaking she is holding on to the JVP for her seat of power and wooing the LTTE again into unproductive Talks in order to get the international financial aid. Both the UNP and the LTTE have learnt their lessons and a further deception will be nigh impossible.

### (Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> As to why and how the Talks broke down see Anton Balasingam, *The Politics of Duplicity- Revisiting the Jaffna Talks*, (Fairmax Pub. London, 2000) and S.J.Emmanuel, art. *Kumaratunge-Prabaharan Talks – A Northern View in Negotiating Peace in Sri Lanka*, ed. Dr.Kumar Rupesinghe, pp.271-285;

<sup>2</sup> The bold proposals like making Sri Lanka a union of Regions encouraged the author to welcome, though cautiously, that initial proposal of the package, in the above mentioned article in Pravida.

<sup>3</sup> President Kumaratunge and Prof.Peiris openly declared that the political proposals will not be sent to the LTTE.

<sup>4</sup> Foreign Minister Kadirgamer charged that the ICRC chief in Colombo was wrong in reporting to Geneva the bombing of St.Peter

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's Church, Navaly.

<sup>5</sup> S.J.Emmanuel, *Historic Exodus of the Tamils from Jaffna*

<sup>6</sup> Tamils living in Sri Lanka were forced to pay increased taxes to support the war against the Tamils!

<sup>7</sup> LTTE-Leaders Statement on 27.11.1999

<sup>8</sup> To win the support of the local Buddhist constituency for his ambition, he is said to have pleaded with the UN to declare Wesak as a universal feast.

<sup>9</sup> President Dingiri Wijetunge had openly proclaimed the Sinhalese as the Tree and the others as creepers! JR had said, if I starve out the Tamils my Sinhala brethren will be happy.



## ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

*(The Keynote Address at the International Conference for Peace in Sri Lanka held at the University of Ottawa )*

### 1. With Hope in the ultimate Triumph of Truth

The involvement of the international community in relation to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka has varied from country to country depending on the interest they have in common with Sri Lanka as well as on the limited understanding of the conflict. There are some among them who continue to help the victims of this prolonged war by their humanitarian services. They do it with the hope that the war will sooner rather than later come to a peaceful end. Our appreciation and gratitude go to them for their services under trying conditions. There are others who have understood some aspects of the problems of the conflict. Though they will condemn promptly any counter-violence on the part of the oppressed as terrorism and preach human rights to the victims, yet they are unable to go beyond the etiquette of international relationship to condemn the violence and war of the State. They justify their action by the excuse that they are undertaken by the elected Government of the land as „security measures against terrorism”. There are still others, a third group, who continue to disappoint and even scandalise us, by their inconsistent policies, double standards and questionable principles in their relation to Sri Lanka. They are wishing peace but in fact aiding war. They give unfortunately greater financial and militaristic support for the war but do very little, if not nothing, towards a peaceful solution. We are sorry about this type of their involvement.



Notwithstanding all these discouraging responses of indifferentism and double-standards, but still believing in the collective good-will and ethical responsibility of the international community, and hoping in the ultimate triumph of Truth and Justice, we want to make a passionately human appeal for

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international help towards a just and peaceful solution of the ethnic crisis for the good of all in the country.

We want to do this by first mentioning the unfortunate factors which hinder the international community from giving a just hearing and a relevant help to solving the ethnic conflict. Secondly, we will state briefly here the main steps and change of direction we have gone through during the last 50 years of our struggle for freedom. Thirdly we place before the Conscience of the international community in terms of Truth, Justice and Freedom, the present aspirations of the Tamil people for Peace . Finally, on the basis of our past experience and present convictions, we will try to spell out an appeal to the international community.

## **2.Factors which can hinder the international community from understanding and from helping to resolve the conflict.**

### **2.1 Tragedies happening within a distant island**

The conflict and the consequent tragedies are happening not in the midst of a crowded neighbourhood of nations in the West, as in the Balkans or in Turkey, but on a distant island without any land-boundaries with other countries. It is happening on an island so distant from the power centres of the world. As a result the prolonged inhuman tragedies of this conflict do not evoke due publicity and response. The situation is similar to tragedies happening within a lonely hut in the open space without immediate neighbours. Conflicts can turn into tragedies of death and destruction without coming to light and without anyone intervening to help.

### **2.2 In a land of no resources or of interest for foreigners**

There is no valuable natural resource for the foreign powers to get interested in Sri Lanka. The attractions to the West were the holiday resorts and a few investment for cheap labour - all in the South of the island which is cut off from the Northeast of the island by media blockade and travel restrictions. Even if foreigners want to know something of the situation in the war zone, they were not allowed to enter the zone. The handful of foreigners allowed into the war zone for humanitarian services are severely warned and checked by the government for any information leaking to the world outside.

### 2.3 Indian concerns and perceptions can condition international understanding and involvement

The one and only neighbour for Sri Lanka is India. The regional super-power, though 40 times larger than tiny Sri Lanka, is concerned in not making an unnecessary enemy of Sri Lanka in international politics. Further Indian perception and response to the Tamil problem is conditioned by many factors ranging from the alleged killing of its former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the unpredictable and fluid politics of Tamil Nadu, the suspected involvement of India and the unsuccessful military intervention IPKF, and above all by her internal fears and concern about separatism growing within India.



### 2.4 Sri Lankan propaganda more destructive and less constructive.

Already within the country the government stands accused of crimes against the freedom of the press and against journalists. A war is going on for years behind a media blockade, dishing out only reports tailored by the military to the people. Surely such a government using all its foreign embassies as its propaganda centres for winning financial and other support for the war is no surprise.

The international news agencies prohibited from entering the war zone, and drawing only on the limited sources in Colombo, rely heavily on the news bulletins and reports of the Sri Lankan Embassies in their country. One example will prove our point: In almost all the news reports of international media one often meets the phrase „the Tamil rebels or LTTE terrorists are fighting for a separate state in the island and 55,000 are already killed“ For an innocent reader, all Tamils are made out to be rebels and terrorists, and that all the 55000 dead are their victims. Rarely is a word written about the struggle of the Tamil people for their rights nor a word about the real killer being the state forces, nor a mention that most of these 55000 are Tamil victims of state forces and their bombs.

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### 3. We have walked the long road of death and destruction to a New Turning Point in our history.

During the last fifty years we have made all possible attempts to live with dignity and honour in the land of our birth. Though we are convinced that we Tamils have to live with people of other ethnic and religious identities in that country where God has planted us and given us a homeland for more than 2000 years, still the political changes under British colonialism followed by the anti-Tamil politics of a permanently Sinhala majority governments have driven us to raise the cry for other forms of government which can better guarantee our survival and human dignity.

Unfortunately the politics of the Sinhala majority, inspired by a Buddhist and Sinhala ethno-nationalism has bull-dozed through its own reforms without due consideration and respect for the other ethnic and religious communities. The democratic and non-violent protests of the Tamils were met by state-aided and mob terrorism throughout the country leaving thousands of Tamils dead, their property burnt. This state-violence extended even as far as Jaffna to burn the cherished Public Library of the Tamils and to baton charge innocent *Satyagrahis* within the very precincts of the residence of the then Government Agent of Jaffna. Decades before any Tamil youth rebelled, the State had rebelled against the peaceful and non-violent Tamils in the exercise of their democratic rights!

Deprivation of the voting rights of a million Tamils of Indian origin by the stroke of a pen in 1949, making Sinhalese the only official language of Ceylon in 1956, planned state-aided colonisation of Tamil areas with Sinhalese from 1949, open discrimination against Tamil students in the admissions to Universities and employment from 1972 onwards, were the measures that pushed the Tamils from pillar to post. Their leaders who did non-violent protests were imprisoned, beaten up and heckled in Parliament.

After a series of failures to rectify serious discriminations and to implement the minimum use of Tamil and after tearing up even the pacts agreed by two prime ministers with the Tamil leaders, the Constitution was drafted twice (1972 and 1978) taking away even the one Article 29 S2 left by the British for protecting the minorities. Ceylon became Sri Lanka, the Sinhala Buddhist State.

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Many decades of democratic protests demanding a federal solution within a unitary government to peacefully solve the Tamil problem was only responded by state sponsored terrorism, increasing death, destruction and displacement of peoples and political deceptions and hardening the Constitution towards a Sinhala Buddhist State. Now it became absolutely necessary for the Tamils to defend themselves and their land against State-terrorism, cease begging for a federal constitution, but opt for a separate Tamil state as the only way for survival of the people and protection of their land. This change almost after 25 years from a federal demand to a demand for a separate state won more than 70% of Tamil approval in the parliamentary election of 1977, the last in which the Tamils have participated up to date. (What the Americans did on the 4<sup>th</sup>. of July 1776, the Proclamation of Independence against the British, we Tamils could not do even after 25 years of waiting. We only changed the demand from a federal to a separate state forced on us by our immense suffering.)

The 1983 Holocaust against the Tamils marked another turning point in our struggle. Thousands of Tamils started running out of the country for survival. It is the faithfulness to this demand and the sacrifice of lives they make for the cause, that makes the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam the de facto leaders of the Tamil people. And during the last 15 years of a spiralling violence and war between the conflicting parties, the country as a whole and innocent civilian victims -mostly Tamils - and combatants from both sides of the divide have been sacrificed.

Today it has become crystal clear that the successive governments of the Sinhala majority and their self-centred politicians who have failed to find a solution, have led the country to its present suicidal state which spells disaster for all on that island.

This New Turning Point is characterised by clear conclusions, namely,

a) The major political parties among the Sinhalese come nowhere near a rational consensus. The only consensus they have shown towards us is to subjugate us within a unitary and Sinhala dominated government with hired support from some Tamil quislings. They have no consensus on any single point of the 4 Tamil aspirations as unanimously articulated by all Tamil parties

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at Thimpu Talks. As such they do not have the minimum consensus towards finding a solution.

b) The much talked of Devolution Package that the present President held out to the world had undergone radical changes already three times over. It is now held out to the world as propaganda for their democracy and good will. But it has neither the support of the Sinhala opposition nor even of the Tamil parties presently supporting the government.

c) The voices for truth, justice and peace, still courageously raised by a few among the majority Sinhalese, have unfortunately been drowned and weakened in recent years by the extremist-cries for war against the Tamils and for the establishment of a Sinhala Buddhist State.

**It is in this situation of dwindling hopes of a peaceful solution that we turn to the International community for help.**

#### **4.0 The Anchor of our Appeal :The Tamil Quest for Truth, Justice and Freedom**

##### **4.1 Truth: The Foundation for Peace.**

We believe that true and lasting Peace can never be achieved on the foundations of half truths, twisted truths and self-centred truths. We abhor the danger of trying to create „new truths“ by malicious repetition of lies. Peace cannot be built on myths, twisting of history, rewriting text-books on histories, labelling opposition to state-terrorism and racism as Tamil-terrorism and going on a witch-hunt for the Tamils suspected as Terrorists or as scapegoats for all failures. It can only be built on the ability to face the Truth, however bloody and challenging that it might be. Both sides of the conflict must face the truth - the truth of history concerning the land and peoples, the truth of political events which have driven us to this war, the truths of inhuman situations faced both within and without Sri Lanka. In this respect we like to ask:

##### **4.1.1. Why is the Sri Lankan government fighting shy of Truth?**

We stand by the truth. We are calling for the world to be our judge and our mediator because we stand by the truth. We are calling for mediation of a third party, because we want, not just us, but the truth to triumph. We are

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neither hiding behind media blockade nor do we fight shy of any international organisation getting into the war zone.

Why is the SL government fighting shy of truth, fighting shy of a third party mediation, fighting shy of the whole world. Why are they spending large sums of money for media-agencies to block the truth and twist the truth. Why are they converting their embassies into anti-Tamil propaganda agencies? All these point to the stark reality that the Sri Lankan Government and its supporters are fighting shy of the heap of skeletons hidden in their cupboards and in their mass-graves like the pol pot regime.

#### **4.1.2 Why hide the Truth at home and spread falsehoods abroad?**

The responses, reactions and help so far given by the international community have been conditioned mainly by two factors, namely - the media-blockade and travel-restrictions imposed at home on foreign diplomats and journalists wishing to travel to the Northeast, and at the same time intensifying the propaganda machine of the Sri Lankan embassies abroad. The cumulative effect of these two actions - media blockade and travel restrictions at home and intense propaganda is to conceal the truth of the horrific events at home and win more finance and weapons for winning a war that is only suicidal for the whole country.

#### **4.1.3 The two wings of the Sri Lankan anti-Tamil propaganda**

These are

- a) presenting the Tamil problem merely as a terrorist problem needing a military response from the government and
- b) accusing the expatriate Tails as front organisations and fund-raisers for terrorism.

How can the SL government, which stands already accused by the majority of the Sinhalese for not telling the whole truth about the war for purposes of electoral victory, be expected to tell the whole truth about the Tamil problem to the world.

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Thus in the sad context of Truth becoming the most tortured victim in the hands of the SL government, the expatriates are forced to step up their campaign of exposing the whole truth as an indispensable service to Peace in Sri Lanka. We are only sorry that the expatriate Tamils are not doing enough and not effectively in this campaign for Truth. We would like the educated and the enlightened among the expatriates to do much more in a better co-ordinated manner to expose the truth to their host-governments and organisations.

When truth is on our side why should we Tamils be frightened by the propaganda of hired ministers and their loyal servants of the Sri Lankan embassies.

The role of the media in relation to the ethnic conflict has been very vital and decisive. It was partly instrumental in causing the conflict. It has not always served the truth. It has served its own interests – political and commercial. All the same it has a facilitating role to play towards a peaceful solution of the conflict.

The local media, divided into three language streams Sinhala, Tamil and English have already played a divisive role in the past, contributing hardly anything for building up unity and understanding. They find themselves in the sad situation of being further conditioned by their ethnicity as well as by the government restriction on their travel to the war zone to know the truth. The international media prevented from taking a journey into the war zones of the Northeast of Sri Lanka, depend to a very great extent on the available sources in Colombo.

While appreciating the difficulties or restrictions on the sources in Colombo, we ask them as to why they go on speculating on half-truths and lies. Influenced by the government propaganda that Tamils are all terrorists, they have a tendency to dismiss all Tamil sources as LTTE. Hence we appeal to the international Media, not to give into weakness for profit and propaganda but to serve truth and justice.



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## 4.2 Justice : The Pillars of Peace

We position ourselves willingly before the international community and its Court of Justice. We are willingly presenting our case before the conscience of the international community. because we have no hidden agenda of domination, occupation or of subjugation of any land or people.

Tamil Demands, which are open for international scrutiny and recognition, are not based on myths and theories about the origin of the Tamils nor do we claim any fictitious superiority. We do not claim privileges. We want to be human beings in the land of our birth. Although we have lived there for more than 2000 years and have ruled ourselves for many centuries before colonialism, in these last 50 years, we have proved beyond any doubt that the Sinhala dominated government following the British administrative centralization of the country will never accept us as equal people with dignity and honour. They have burnt and killed great many of our people, destroyed our properties and even the graves of victims and temples without any respect for history and scattered a great part of the population. The remaining few thousands struggle for survival against bombs, economic blockade, media blockade, rape, murder mass-grave etc. in the land of their birth.

## 4.3 Freedom: The Right to live as Human Beings with Dignity on our own Land as we ourselves determine (Self-determination)

Because our rights have been denied, our dignity trampled upon, our land occupied and we are forced into subjugation, we want Freedom! This reasonable quest for freedom should not provoke anger and opposition from our neighbours, not in the least mob-terror and state-terrorism against us. We have these rights and we want the others to recognise and respect these rights. We do not wish anything more or special for us Tamils. We wish the same for the Sinhalese and we respect their rights. Is it not possible for different ethnic groups to live together within the borders of a single country as friends and neighbours without any wish to subjugate the other?

While the nation-state members of the UN sing aloud their chorus of Jubilee, the poorer nations within the boundaries and domination of those members are groaning in agony and pain. Let us hope that they are birth-pains for the new nation-states.

## 5.0 What do we expect of the International Community?

Surely we expect the international community not to use the military might of the major powers, not to give in to their instinct for power and domination, not to take revenge on any government or people, however oppressive they may have been. Instead we appeal to the conscience of all human leaders of governments, international institutions, religions and humanitarian organizations to be conscious of their responsibilities towards smaller and weaker nations and peoples

### 5.1 We do not plead for any military intervention, not even on our own behalf.

We are the victims already of two direct military interventions - one by the Sri Lankan forces with the aid given directly and indirectly by major powers, and the other the military intervention of the IPKF- and we are not for another military intervention. The Indian Peace Keeping Force that came to protect us from the aerial bombings and economic blockades of the Sri Lankan government soon turned out to be a failure with unnecessary loss of lives both of Tamils and of Indian soldiers. We soon realised that their intervention was neither a humanitarian exercise nor a selfless concern for the rights of an oppressed people but part of a political strategy in their own interest.

Recent events in the Balkan have also brought to light many aspects of international intervention and the hidden motives therein. On the one side we see the similarities between the ethnic atrocities done by the Serbian forces recently in Kosovo and by the Sri Lankan forces for many decades in the Northeast of Sri Lanka. On the other side we see the dissimilarities of international concern and intervention. The inconsistencies and duplicity of foreign policies point to hidden agenda of the major powers. Setting aside the claims of sovereignty by Yugoslavia and presumably to prevent a genocide and a humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo, the NATO military intervention was launched and this has only aggravated the situation to cause a greater and wider catastrophe where the „operation is successful but the patient is dying“. Those possessing military might may attempt to kill even a mosquito with a hammer. The man with a hammer in hand sees all over nails to be hammered!



Having had direct experience and a clear lesson about military interventions of foreign powers with their own agenda and selective arguments to justify their actions, we will never wish for a military intervention, because we do not believe in a „war for peace“ as proclaimed by the Sri Lankan government, nor do we believe in solving our problem by military might. The Tamil youth were forced into military action only in the face of a prolonged and mounting state-terrorism and the initiative to end this spiral of violence and war must come from those who started the oppression and terror.



Not wishing a foreign military intervention does not mean allowing the war to continue or the international community to do nothing to help resolve the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. No. The international community in general and the foreign powers who have a closer contact with Sri Lanka in particular, can undertake a lot of morally justifiable and praiseworthy steps to help Sri Lanka and the LTTE to resolve this conflict amicably for all sides. Surely this demands a certain abnegation of self-interests and a courage of statesmanship. We have still not lost faith in politics with a sensibility for Truth and Justice.

## **5.2 We appeal to the International Community to exert non-military political and moral pressure for peace-making.**

The NATO intervention with all its might has shown that the unity, integrity and sovereignty of a nation cannot be held up by Serbia in imposing a Serbian nationalism on the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. Further the support given by some major powers to the KLA in recent years and NATO's use of KLA intelligence to



fight the Serbian forces show to what extent the world abhors and fights against the ethnic atrocities of the Serbian state. It is in this context we pose a question of conscience to the world in general and to some major powers in particular: What does the world expect of the Tamils when they are faced with long decades of anti-Tamil discrimination, death and destruction carried out by the Sri Lankan state as part of its Sinhala nationalism?

As for the Tamils, we did not freely opt for anti-State rebellion and violence. It is the State that by its prolonged violence and terror forced the victims into counter violence. The State which is the proclaimed guardian of law and order, turning to state-violence and still continuing it, has a greater responsibility to stop it. The victim of state violence resorting to counter violence after much patience cannot be expected to give up the very measure he or she resorted to in his or her defence. Convinced that violence breeds violence and that violence cannot take us anywhere near a solution, we want this violence and war to stop immediately. But those who fuel it are playing with fire.



Hence we appeal to the international community not to support in any way



the violence and war in our country, under the false pretext of fighting terrorism. For the man with the hammer in hand almost everything appears as a nail. Can we justify using a hammer to kill mosquitoes? For the Sri Lankan Army and the Indian Peace

Keeping force, we Tamils were all terrorists. Hence any military operation will be suicidal for the country.

### 5.3 We plead for a more active international contribution for mediation, conflict-resolution and peace-making

As far as moves for peace-making are concerned, it must be noted how the Tamils who pleaded for a peaceful solution for many decades were treated with state and mob-terror and finally forced to opt for separation and taking up of arms. Even as late as last year the Tamils were repeating their readiness for talks with the help of international mediation. And the very government that carries this war on a begging economy is bluntly refusing peace-talks and third party mediation. Even the good offers of some countries volunteering to facilitate peace-talks have been arrogantly turned down. The government is almost saying „give us money, weapons and personnel to fight the war, but keep out of the war zone, and keep to yourself your expertise or facilitation

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for peace-talks“. At least this attitude must open the eyes of those who aid the war in any way.

It is hard to believe that powerful donors cannot make „some powerful help for peace“. What is the amount of good will and resources available for active politics of peace? Enormous sums of money are invested in the destructive weapons of war. If these were to be invested in works related to peace and development of good will and relations between peoples, peace would have had a better chance

#### **5.4 We appeal to the International Community to question, rethink and change the ethical basis of their co-operation with Sri Lanka**

It is just and understandable that foreign policies shaping international relationship, mutual friendship, co-operation and assistance are increasingly determined by socio-cultural and economic interests between sovereign states. We appreciate the good will and assistance of many western powers having such relationship with Sri Lanka and help it in its socio-economic growth. But we are saddened, if not scandalised, by the duplicity of approach and the immorality with which they aid and abet a prolonged oppression, if not extermination, of a people within the county.

In a sector of the country where state-forces cannot be relied on for protection of the people but feared as perpetrators of violence and rape and murder, in a situation where after decades of democratic and non-violent struggle for survival, people turn to weapons in their liberation struggle, is it right to aid the oppressor and preach non-violence and human right codex to the oppressed victims?

Can the truthfulness and worthiness of a Sri Lankan appeal for military aid be determined merely on the one-sided propaganda of the government? While closing its doors to foreign journalists and diplomats and conducting a war behind closed doors, the government is making its own propaganda in order to win finance and weapons from the major powers for an unjustified and costly war. Are these foreign powers, who do not have access to the whole truth, whose diplomats are prevented from going into war-zones or from contacting those engaged in the war, and who evaluate events happening behind closed-doors in a foreign country through their own categories, such as „state-security“ and „terrorism as happening in their home ground“, be

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justified in giving financial aid, weapons and personnel to fuel a war to crush the liberation struggles of peoples, while labelling them conveniently as „terrorists“.

We are only appealing to the international community to question, find the whole truth of the situation, understand the problem in its context and then make moral judgement about its assistance for peace or for war. Surely the question must be faced by the foreign powers why Sri Lanka continues to impose a media blockade, why it prevents foreign missions from visiting war zones or talking to the LTTE, why it drags its feet on questions of mass-disappearances and mass-graves, why foreign finance and weapons are needed but not foreign assistance for peace-making.

### **5.5 We appeal to the international community to question the type of democracy and freedom of the Sri Lankan Government.**

Where are the guardians of democracy when an elected government is bombing and shelling a whole population and starving them to bend their political will and to force them to their knees, to make them accept only what they decree?

Where are the guardians of democracy and freedom when the so called democratic nation-state like Sri Lanka tramples under foot all values of free and fair elections, transparency and media-blockade and talk of sovereignty of a people!.

Why are nations and states which fuel this war and violence with their weapons and funds, hypocritically condemning individual acts of human right violations which are often reactions of a helpless victim and turn a blind eye to years of political imperialism and military oppression?

International community and individual countries justify their passiveness, inaction, neutrality and even assistance to Sri Lanka by considering Sri Lanka as a free and democratic state where the values of freedom, state, justice are upheld. But in reality the situation is very different.

Attack is the best form of defense and Sri Lanka, conscious of the skeletons of democracy and human rights in its cupboard, takes up to vacuous eloquence in international assemblies about establishing democracy and fighting world

terrorism. The belated reaction of the Sri Lankan government to NATO's intervention in Kosovo is very revealing of Sri Lankan President's closeness and similarity to President Milosovic. The Foreign Ministry said „Sri Lanka, as a member of the non-aligned movement, believes that the struggle against terrorism would be most effective when carried out in pursuance of the collective will of the international community“. Sri Lanka wants the world to believe and support President Milosovic in his fighting of Kosovo terrorism !

Let the international community, its structures and assemblies come to terms with lies repeated and sustained by a country and demand more order and transparency in its own house. We expect the international community not to betray the confidence and trust the poorer, weaker and the not-yet-internationally recognised nations of the world have on them.

#### **5.6 We do plead for stopping all forms of assistance for the military efforts of the government.**

The 16 year old war is one of the oldest wars in the world today and has already consumed more than 60,000 lives, destroyed enormous amount of property and nature in the Northeast of the country and the signs are there for further destruction. The armed forces have increased tenfold and the military expenditure by billions of rupees. Sri Lanka which leans heavily on foreign aid around 850 million dollars is allocating almost the same amount, which is 30% of the country's economy for this war. This was made possible only with the donor countries drawn into believing government propaganda about the need to fight the „war against terrorism“ which was nearly over and about its „political package“ which, if only supported by a few opposition members, will result in a peaceful solution of the ethnic problem. Thus the powers are directly or indirectly encouraging the government's „war for peace“ conducted behind closed doors, filling the war-chests with finance, weapons and even training. It is on this basis, we plead with the international community to stop all forms of aid and encouragement for the war.

It is already a great question whether the military intervention on the selected conflicts nearer home in Europe has brought us anywhere near a peaceful solution. It is even more questionable, if not more dangerous, militarily aiding an oppressive government to find peace. If the major powers cannot contribute anything to peace building, we will wish that they do nothing to worsen the conflict and leave behind only destruction.

## 5.7 We appeal to the sacred conscience of our leaders

In the name of the Gods we all believe and in the name of the humanity you leaders represent and claim to serve, we make an agonising cry - that you listen to your conscience, hold on to Truth and Justice as the decisive values in your judgements and in your choice of friends, contribute more for peace-building than for escalating war, make no dirty politics over the freedom-struggle of a nation

## 5.8 We appeal for a human handling of the Tamil Refugees in your countries

As a consequence of the army atrocities in Sri Lanka, thousands have fled the country after the holocaust of 1983, leaving behind or selling off all their possessions. They want to survive at any cost. Fleeing from army atrocities they clutch at every straw for survival and use all means to escape. How many thousands have been shot by the Sri Lankan Navy in the seas surrounding Sri Lanka? How many have died in overloaded-boats capsizing in the high-seas? How many have courted imprisonment and death to escape from the grip of the Sri Lankan government? The voices of those who have died in their attempts to flee from Sri Lanka will keep clamouring from the deep seas for justice in SL .



To those who have succeeded in coming to your countries, you gave initial sympathy. Gradually with increasing numbers of foreigners in your land, and with consequent problems, you found them burdensome. You find all possible means of sending them back, even with the active collaboration of the Sri Lankan embassies in your countries.

They are living or struggling to live with lots of hardships and uncertainties about their future. These must touch not only your heart for sympathy but also your conscience for justice and truth and human dignity.

We are thankful to you for having opened your doors to these and offered temporary assistance. We can understand your worries and problems about keeping them permanently. But we expect from you that they, even in the event of being sent back to Sri Lanka, be handled as human beings with respect. In recent times cases of forcible repatriation, imprisonment, suicides in prisons have increased.



As far as the Sri Lankan government is concerned, these expatriates are seen only as a threat to their genocidal programme, and as a fund-raising constituency for the LTTE. They do not see this population as a consequence of their own anti-Tamil politics. They do not want to create conditions that will bring them back to their home. They only want them back as a subjugated and suspected people.

But is it in your conscience to send back these forcibly into the hands of those who are waiting to subjugate and punish them? Is it in your conscience to get the assistance of the SL embassies in your countries in repatriating them?

### **6.0 Appeal to the Conscience of Human Rights Organisations**

We are thankful to the humanitarian services rendered by the international NGOs in spite of many difficulties in their work. In channeling the humanitarian assistance of the international community to the victims of war and violence, very often they suffer undue restrictions placed on them by the Sri Lankan government and contrary to the spirit of their own conventions.. They are even suspected as helping the terrorists. We wish that they continue assisting our people.

Why are the prolonged and gross violations committed by the State and its guardians of the law against the collective rights of a people glossed over in silence while the counter-violations within a state-initiated spiral of violence and war made subject of scrutiny and condemnations by the international community?

But since their services are limited to humanitarian aid to the victims of a conflict and in no way question the conflict that produces them, conflict and war will continue and their services will be done within the limits of compassion, avoiding carefully any closer look at the causes and injustices that produce them.

As far as humanitarian services by NGOs are concerned, they start acting on the end result of the conflict. But those International Organisations which have a healing role or a peace-making role to play should not begin acting merely on the end result or end-action. The organisations must address

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themselves to the whole truth of the conflict and direct their aid not simply to the humanitarian chaos produced by the wars and the countervailing forces (rebels, terrorists) that have come up as a consequence of state-terrorism.

Secondly this assistance should be more for peace-building rather than for fuelling the war- as done by some major powers now. Hastily and irresponsibly calling the Tamil struggle for self determination as Tamil terrorism and devaluing the democratically voted wish of the majority of Tamils for a separate state, autonomy and homeland, the major powers are fuelling the war machines of the Sri Lankan government with more weapons, personnel and funds

Why are the guardians of human rights not effectively pushing the SL government or the donor countries of Sri Lanka not questioning effectively about the mass graves of military victims discovered in Jaffna ? Months and years can pass by and the SL govt. can stage pseudo judicial procedures to deceive the world of democratic and human rights

### **7.0 Appeal to the Conscience of Religions**

Religions which are proclaimed to sow the seeds of noble values and cultivate conscience can degenerate and become slaves to institutionalism, power and fanaticism. In the context of the Sri Lankan crisis we need to take serious stock of the role of religions in building unity peace and understanding among people. We have seen how ethnic emotions and false nationalism overtake religious and even human values. It is one of the clearest signs for the death of religions.

The world Parliament of Religions in its Assembly in Chicago from the 28<sup>th</sup>.August to 4<sup>th</sup>.Sept. 1993, was unanimous in saying that there cannot be a better world-order without a basic consensus among religions on ethical values. Religions are meant to serve the values of Truth, Justice and Peace among humanity. Nations and States are built on virtues and values that are already sown and fostered by religions. Hence a fundamental consensus among religions is a prerequisite to Peace among people. But for religions to feed and foster those values of Truth and justice, they themselves must be liberated from their weaknesses.

Events of this century have increasingly made clear the ethical and moral duplicity of many nation-states as well as of religions. While secular states and political powers are moved by unholy interests and criterion, humanity

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looks to world religions to sound loud and timely warnings to curb violence and war, to bear courageous witness to Truth and stand up for Justice.

It is in this perspective, we view the role of religions for peace-building in Sri Lanka. Even though the island has all the four world-religions, it is unfortunate that political chauvinism and religious fundamentalism have often overtaken religious values such as respect for human life and human rights. In the context of the political forces failing to safeguard human lives, it is increasingly the responsibility of religions and their organisations to be actively engaged in fostering understanding and respect for truth and justice.

It is a grave responsibility of the majority Buddhists of Sri Lanka - followers of a world renowned religion of Peace - to give up their demonstrations and backing for a war that only kills and destroys - to give up their opposition to peace-talks - to give up their opposition to offers of mediation and facilitation for peace-talks, even from countries which have been and still continue to fuel aid for the war. In the name of the Enlightened One, may I appeal to my Buddhist brethren to liberate themselves from their mahavamsa mind-set and its inherent desire for possession of the whole country and support a united and peaceful country of two nations

As a churchman it is my duty and privilege to make an appeal to the world churches - whatever confession they may belong and irrespective of whether they have a constituency in Sri Lanka or not. We all know that the churches and their social and charitable organisations are involved in helping the victims of war. But as long as we take care of the dead and wounded of the war in our hospitals and cemeteries, the war is not going to stop. As Christians I believe, we are called to go beyond these acts of mercy and take up the cause of Truth and Justice as taught by the gospels.

We are also aware that the churches within Sri Lanka, on both sides of the divide, are trying their best to help the victims and make available their services for peace-making. But given their minority situation vis a vis the majority Buddhists ( who in turn are hindered in their peace-mission by an extremist and exclusive nationalism of the mahavamsa mind-set) they are not able to give that Christian witness to Truth and Justice as taught by the churches. Hence it is incumbent on the churches of the world to take a close and unbiased look at the Truth of history and modern events, to give that witness

to Truth before the international community and demand Justice on behalf of a people suffering inhuman discriminations, death and destruction bordering on genocide.

The churches have witnessed two world wars, as if it were from the sides of the battlefield. Their silence and inaction have cost millions of lives. They had time during the last 50 years to study and consider their right role in the midst of an armed conflict. They cannot make the same mistake of silence, neutrality, diplomacy and allow genocide to continue in Sri Lanka.

## 8. Come to Our Aid

It is in such a hopeless context, we say to those of good will in the South: Let us wait no longer, resolve this long conflict in truth and justice as witnessed and guaranteed by international community to redeem all that is left of the country and the peoples.

Instead of allowing the extremists to go ahead with their military efforts of exterminating and conquering a people and a land, of imposing a majority-dominated unity etc. let sanity prevail in uniting the forces for good. Without clinging on to a unitary system of government that does not solve but only aggravates ethnic tensions and problems, we should go for the triumph of truth and justice to build up a united country whereby the aspirations of the communities are acknowledged, respected and made durable provisions for.

Let us sincerely face the Truth of history and of current events, respond courageously to the demands of Justice to all and assure each other a peaceful and co-operative coexistence as good neighbours within one country, without any fear of domination or hatred for one another. Let us wish one another nothing more than what we wish for ourselves. We Tamils are distinct peoples living on that island for long centuries with our distinct linguistic, cultural and religious heritage.

Finally, we pose the challenging question to the international community: You have witnessed the events in our country at least for the last few decades. You have helped in some way the victims of war, but more the aggressors. You have not believed the cries of the oppressed and the dying. You have stood by the mighty, fuelled finance and weapons to escalate the war and done very little to acknowledge the truth of our claims and rectify injustices. Come to our aid, before it is too late!





The author, Dr. S. J. Emmanuel, a former Vicar General of the R.C. Church of Jaffna was a long time professor of dogmatic theology, in Sri Lanka and abroad. Though a keen observer from the beginning of the historic events in the island of Sri Lanka, he wrote mainly on theological issues of the Asian churches. For ten years he was a theological advisor to the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC). From 1986 he became a direct victim and witness of the many agonising and historic events happening in the life of the Tamil people. Since then he has been writing also on issues concerning the struggle of his people.

At first he drew attention of the members of the Christian churches through an English booklet published in Jaffna in 1994 with the Title - *Church, Politics and War in Sri Lanka*. Its Tamil translation appeared later in Madras in 2002 with the title "*Inap Pirachchinayum Ilankai Thiruchchipayum*". These exposed the ethnic problem briefly in a language of contextual theology, encouraging the Sri Lankan Church to go beyond humanitarian services to playing a more prophetic and strategic role of mediation and peace-building between the Sinhalese and the Tamils.

A little later during his self-exile in U.K. and in Germany, he has been addressing wider audiences of the international community including Tamil expatriates. He wrote in many English and German publications about the Tamil struggle for freedom. Some of these addresses were published in Germany in 1997 under the title "*Let My People Go*". A Tamil translation of it with the title "*En Makkalai Vaala Vidunkal*" appeared in the same year in Germany. Translations in German and French were published with the original title later in Switzerland. In July 2004 he brought out the first edition of this book. With the Tamil Struggle entering the international stage a second edition is now the need, especially for the second generation of diaspora Tamils as well as for the Sinhalese and members of the international community.