

Tamil TIMES

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"I do not agree with a word of what you say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it."

— Voltaire

● ASSASSINATED



Ranasinghe Premadasa

● THE NEW PRESIDENT



Dingira Banda Wijetunga

● ASSASSINATED



Lalith Athulathmudali

● The Assassinations

- ★ Picture Changes with Premadasa's Murder
- ★ Political Implications
- ★ In the Aftermath
- ★ The Challenge for the New President

● Sinhalaisation of Trincomalee

● Jaffna Revisited

● Sub-Continental Scene

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THE CHALLENGE FACING THE NEW PRESIDENT

Sri Lanka seemed teetering on the edge of a precipice towards anarchy, turmoil and an outbreak of another round of communal violence following the brutal murder within a week of two of the country's most formidable politicians, the leader of the opposition Democratic United National Front, Lalith Athulathmudali and the country's President, Ranasinghe Premadasa. Both were struck down as they were actively engaged in a busy campaign in the run-up to the Provincial Council elections.

As executive President invested with enormous powers, Mr. Premadasa had developed a style of highly centralised and personalised regime in which he occupied a pivotal and powerful position. Brooking no opposition from within and outside his party, he virtually ran a 'one-man show' in which he was the sole performer. During his rule, he surrounded himself with pliant yes-men as his Ministers of whom no one dared to aspire even to be the pretender to Premadasa's throne. It was not, therefore, surprising that when he was assassinated leaving a perceived vacuum at the top, there was a genuine fear of anarchy and generalised chaos. However, the smooth transfer of power soon after the President's assassination strictly in accordance with constitutional provisions with the swearing-in of Prime Minister D.B. Wijetunga as Acting President saved the country from the instability and anarchy that many had predicted.

In the aftermath of the murders, and particularly that of President Premadasa, there was genuine fear both within the country and outside that a communal conflagration of the type that occurred in July 1983 when Tamils living in the south were set upon in their thousands would be repeated. Particularly after reports began to appear to the effect that the Tigers were responsible for the murder of the President, Tamils went through a period of hellish fear and anxiety as to the prospect of a backlash by angry Sinhalese until Premadasa's funeral was over. To the relief of all, the anticipated backlash did not occur. To give the entire credit to the government for the prompt security measures adopted to prevent violence is to ignore two significant elements – firstly, the widespread violence unleashed against Tamils in July 1983 was the end result of a well organised effort on the part of some sections within the then government, including Cabinet

Ministers like Cyril Mathew, and not a spontaneous response to the death of 13 soldiers; and secondly, the people have come a long way having learnt the bitter lessons from the adverse consequences that directly flowed from the traumatic and tragic events of July 1983.

Although having been a very loyal and obedient Prime Minister under President Premadasa, the new President Mr. D.B. Wijetunga would appear to have decided to jettison some of the authoritarian and controversial legacies of the former President. Though catapulted to the highest office as a direct consequence of a brutal assassination, his unanimous election as President by Parliament would appear to have produced a new political climate in the country. There appears to be a wind of change and the political atmosphere lacks the acute tension and fear that gripped the country in the immediately preceding period. Extreme confrontation characterised government-opposition relations during Premadasa's regime. Parliament became a battleground of raucous behaviour and rowdy scenes among ruling party and opposition MPs. While the ruling party endeavoured to prevent legitimate debates on issues of national importance, opposition MPs often sought to disrupt proceedings and there were frequent walkouts. During the last several months, the main opposition SLFP MPs and the Opposition Leader Mrs. Bandaranaike boycotted all meetings and functions in which Premadasa participated. This state of confrontation seems to have come to end with the new President already having initiated discussions with Mrs. Bandaranaike soon after assuming office.

The new President also has given expression to views that might make the 'one-man-show' of Premadasa a thing of the past. He is likely to move in the direction of more sharing of power with his Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe and other cabinet ministers. Indications are that the hitherto exercised presidential de facto control over senior appointments to government departments and state corporations are likely to be passed on to Ministers in charge of those institutions.

One of the much commented and criticised aspects of the Premadasa presidency was his capacity to turn

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THE ASSASSINATIONS

The assassination of Sri Lanka's two powerful politicians within a week late last month sent shockwaves throughout the country and outside. The first victim was a former Minister and at the time of his untimely death the leader of an opposition party challenging the incumbent President's party's near total hold on power, and the second was the country's President himself.

Reports that speculate on the possibility of an LTTE connection with these murders have been strenuously denied by the Tigers.

Athulathmudali

The leader of the Democratic United National Front and former Minister of National Security, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, aged 58, was shot and killed by a lone gunman on 23 April as he was addressing a Provincial Council election meeting at Kirullopne, some 6 miles from the capital. The gunman who had waited in front of the assembled crowd moved forward three or four yards and at the moment of his choice fired three shots at his victim directly hitting him. One of the bodyguards on stage shot at the assailant who was hit, but escaped into the night running through a shocked and shattered crowd. Athulathmudali was promptly taken to hospital where he soon succumbed to his injuries.

Mr. Athulathmudali was expected to be appointed as Prime Minister when R. Premadasa became President in late 1989, but was given the relatively unimportant portfolio of Education and Agriculture. He had held the powerful portfolio of Minister of National Security under former President J.R. Jayawardene and masterminded the military operations against Tamil rebels in northern Sri Lanka between 1984 to 1987 until the arrival of the Indian Peace Keeping Force following the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987.

He soon fell out with President Premadasa for what he described as 'running a one-man show' ignoring his cabinet ministers. He along with another former Minister Gamini Disanayake, who was also sidelined by Premadasa, and a few others conceived the ill-fated impeachment motion against President Premadasa accusing the latter of a series of misdemeanours of criminal nature. The charges listed in the impeachment motion included treason, abuse of power, intentional violation of the Constitution, moral turpitude and cover-up of murders.

And when the attempt to oust Premadasa failed and he was thrown out of the ruling United National Party, Mr. Athulathmudali formed the DUNF last year becoming its leader.

He and his party gradually became a serious challenge to President Premadasa and the UNP and at the time of Mr. Athulathmudali's assassination, the DUNF along with other opposition parties were expected to achieve substantial gains in the forthcoming Provincial Council elections scheduled for 17 May.

The Alleged Killer

The day after Athulathmudali was shot, around noon, the body of a man alleged by the police to be the assailant was found lying on the nearby Mugal Road with a pistol and a National Identity Card bearing the name 'Appaiah Balakrishnan' in his possession. A post mortem examination carried out later by the Judicial Medical Officer revealed that the man had a gunshot injury, but had died of cyanide poisoning giving credibility to the police allegation that Athulathmudali's killing was carried out by the LTTE.

The police who first identified the body as that of 'Appaiah Balakrishnan' on the basis of the identity card subsequently stated that it did not belong to the dead person, and identified the assassin and the dead body found on Mugal Road as that of Kandiah Ragunathan from Jaffna. According to the police the assailant was found to have been living in a lodge at Sri Gunananda Mawatte, Kotahena for several months prior to the killing. Detectives who found two keys in a trouser pocket of the dead man claimed that the keys fitted the front and rear doors of his Kotahena lodge.

While the government and the police sought to accuse the LTTE of the murder of Athulathmudali, the opposition parties accused President Premadasa and his government of having been responsible for his killing despite the President's denunciation of the killing as a 'cowardly and gruesome act that deserved to be condemned by all'. So severe, vehement and widespread were the accusations, the government first announced a five million rupee reward for information



The severed head and face of the suicide-bomber

leading to the arrest of Athulathmudali's assassin and was later forced to call in detectives from Scotland Yard in London to carry out the investigation into Athulathmudali's murder in an obvious attempt to show its readiness to conduct an independent investigation.

The Paris-based international spokesman for the LTTE, Lawrence Thilaker, denied any Tiger involvement in the murder of Athulathmudali saying that there was nothing for the LTTE to gain by killing an opposition leader in Sri Lanka. 'Of course, we considered him as an enemy when he launched the Vadamarachchi military operation in 1987 when he was Minister of National Security, but we lost interest in him after he lost his position in the Sinhalese government', he added.

Killing of the President

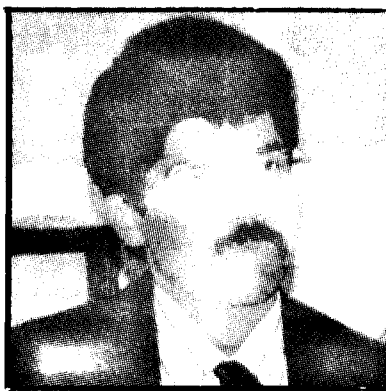
On 1 May, the island's 69-year-old President, Ranasinghe Premadasa, was assassinated by a suicide-bomber around 12.45 pm, the President had alighted from his jeep at a road junction at Armour Road in Colombo to mingle with the crowd and direct a feeder procession approaching from a side road to join the ruling party's main May Day procession. A young man riding a bicycle suddenly appeared on the scene and rode directly towards the President breaking the security ring around him. When he was stopped, he apparently detonated the explosives strapped to his body. The President was blown to pieces, as was the 23 other victims who were also killed in the blast. In fact it took almost an hour to confirm the death of the President. The blown up pieces of bodies that were lying strewn around at the scene of the crime had been gathered and taken to the police morgue at the General Hospital. Among this mass of pieces of human flesh and

bones was one which was identified as that of the President – his wrist watch was still strapped to his hand. Eight of the President's security personnel, including Senior Superintendent of Police, Ronnie Gunasinghe, 3 Assistant Superintendents of Police and Special Task Force Commandos, were among those killed and 38 others were injured.

Tigers blamed

Shortly after Premadasa's killing, the Sri Lankan police formally accused the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) with responsibility for the assassination. The Director of the Colombo Detection Bureau, Lionel Gunatilleke told journalists that the LTTE was the 'prime suspect'. 'According to the investigations so far, His Excellency's assassination was carried out by the LTTE; the modus operandi was theirs.' He recalled the similarity between the murder of Rajiv Gandhi and that of Premadasa.

In an obvious attempt at giving credence to his claim he added that the assassin's mutilated body had the broken part of the cyanide capsule embedded in the flesh of its neck. It is a well known fact that LTTE cadres wear a cyanide capsule around their necks ready to be consumed to prevent being captured alive. He further said that the assailant could be identified by his head and face which had remained intact after the blast. The following day the island's TV network and newspapers (and some foreign



Lawrence Thilakar

(newspapers) carried the photograph of the head and face of the alleged assailant.

The President's killer was later identified as Kulaveerasingham Veerakumar alias Babu, a 23-year-old youth from Gurunagar in Jaffna. He had been living close to the President's private resident, 'Sucharitha' in Kehelwatte in Colombo at a lodge for nearly two years. He was a free spender having the benefit of unlimited funds at his disposal and had also given a large sum of money to his landlord to set up a grocery store. During this period he had become quite friendly with the President's valet named Mohideen through whom, according to some reports, he had not only become a close acquaintance of the President himself, but also had visited Sucharitha and his family estate in Yapahuwa. Detectives were also reported to have traced a safe

house run by the suspect Babu at Wellawatte.

Denial by Tigers

Despite widespread speculation and direct accusations by the Sri Lankan police, LTTE have denied any responsibility for the assassination of President Premadasa. In an interview broadcast over the Tamil service of the BBC On 2 May, the international Tiger spokesman, Lawrence Thilakar, said: 'No one would deny that Premadasa had many enemies. The killing of Premadasa could have been carried out either by those in the opposition who accused him of being responsible for the murder of Athulathmudali or by those within the army who remained loyal to Athulathmudali.'

Mr. Thilakar said that one should not be surprised that it was carried out by even a suicide-bomber. 'One of those among the many thousands of people who were adversely affected by Premadasa's actions could have come forward to sacrifice his life. We must also realise that it was not an ordinary matter that more than sixty thousand young men were brutally killed in south Sri Lanka.'

We must also take note of the fact that people in many areas in the south celebrated Premadasa's death by lighting crackers. Therefore, there is no substance in accusing the Tigers by merely pointing to the aspects of suicide and technique employed in his killing,' he added.

Political Picture Changes With Premadasa's Murder

by Rita Sebastian

The cameras clicked right through the interview. But when the questions were over, the two photographers, both foreign, made a request. Would President, Dingiri Banda Wijetunge step out into the garden for a photograph in the natural light. 'No' he said smiling. 'You have taken enough pictures. That should do. No amount of persuasion made him change his mind.'

A few minutes earlier he had dismissed the popularly accepted assumption that he could be 'easily manipulated'. No that wasn't correct. He interpreted it differently. 'There must be give and take. There must be some flexibility'.

The silver-haired Wijetunge, soft-spoken and gentle has another side to him too. As he says he can 'be stern when the need arises'.

Don't underrate him says a bureaucrat who has watched his style of functioning. Wijetunge may not have the drive and the vigour of a Premadasa. He may not pursue Premadasa's punishing work schedule, but that in no way lessens his capacity for getting a job done.

At 'Temple Trees', two days after he was sworn in as acting President, Wijetunge reiterated the government's commitment to resolving the island's ethnic conflict, and appealed to the Tamil Tigers to return to the negotiating table.

'Our doors are always open. Let them come and let us settle this problem' Wijetunge said, outlining the government position that it was willing to dialogue with the Tigers in the search

for a political solution.

The military option will be pursued only to the extent of maintaining peace and stability in the northeast, Wijetunge says.

He however is quite sure as to how he will deal with violence. 'Meet violence with violence if you want to reduce it. Not with bana preaching or the Bible' he says.

Wijetunge refused to nail the assassination on the Tigers, inspite of press reports that the police had identified him as one.

'While a criminal investigation is on, there should be no speculation about who did it', Wijetunge says.

But Wijetunge is just as embittered as the late President Premadasa was, over the violence that erupted following the breakdown of peace talks with the Tigers, in June 1990.

'We tolerated them on our laps. Any other leader would have destroyed them' he says, referring to what he describes as 'the generosity' of President Premadasa.

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dent Premadasa of dialoguing with them.

Wijetunge does not seem to have any problems with the mantle of leadership that has now fallen on him. It is something that has happened, and which he has accepted. Did he believe in horoscopes. Did he predict that he would one day lead his country? He laughs at my question. 'A horoscope is 50% positive and 50% negative', that was his answer.

'We were friends for over 40 years and struck a first class balance in the exchange of views and thoughts', says Wijetunge of his relationship with the late President.

He shrugs off the charge that President Premadasa centralised all power in himself. 'How can you say that. He was a dynamic administrator who decentralised public administration by taking the government to the people'.

And what of the country's economic policies. Would there be a change in the aggressive industrial policy that President Premadasa set in motion?

'He put the correct stamp on it. It will be difficult for anybody to change that, and there is no reason to change policies for they are best policies in the national interest' says Wijetunge.

He doesn't see a reason why the assassination of the President must affect investor confidence. Violence was not peculiar to Sri Lanka alone. 'It happens in other countries as well'.

Paying tribute to President Premadasa, Wijetunge said: 'What he was trying to do was to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, remove the disparities', and to that end, Wijetunge believes that Premadasa succeeded.

How would he compare himself with his two predecessors, Presidents Jayewardene and Premadasa?

'One doesn't make comparisons. It is unbuddhist'. For him it is like saying you are the better man. And that he will not do. He lists vanity, anger, hatred and jealousy as those 'unbuddhist' feelings which he tries to distance himself from.

He is not all mildness and softness. He can be a man of steel when occasion demands. We talk of media freedom. 'Have your freedom' he says, 'but don't try to destroy governments. Anything to weaken a government is immoral. Your action is against the people's integrity, for it is the people who have chosen their government.'

'My hands are clean' he says, spreading out his palms. I follow the middle path which will save and take the nation forward.'

The New President Speaks

from Rita Sebastian

'Assassinate my body if you want. Don't assassinate my character which I have treasured since childhood'. It was a heart-rending cry by President Ranasinghe Premadasa. And it was directed at his accusers. At those who once again had put him in the dock, charging him with yet another 'murder'.

This time it was the murder of Democratic United Liberation Front (DUNF) leader, Lalith Athulathmudali who had spearheaded the campaign to impeach him in 1991. If another reason had to be found it was because Athulathmudali had become the high profile opponent of the ruling party at the Provincial poll scheduled for May 17.

The DUNF was testing its strength at the electorate for the first time since it broke away to form the DUNF and Athulathmudali was the DUNF candidate for the chief Ministership of the Western Provincial Council.

It was the last public speech President Ranasinghe Premadasa was to make. Two days later he fell victim to a suicide bomber, when he was directing the ruling party's May Day procession.

This was not the first time that the opposition pointed the finger at him. But this time it seemed to have affected him more than other times. Not even his calling in Scotland Yard to help with the investigation seemed to appease the opposition.

And then the picture changed dramatically with President Premadasa's assassination. He was just as vulnerable as other leaders to the forces that were trying to destabilise the country. President Premadasa was different to any of Sri Lanka's post independence leaders. A man of the masses, 'the poor man's President' as he has been aptly described, most of his development strategies were directed towards alleviating rural poverty, which he pursued with almost crusading zeal.

As Prime Minister in the Jayewardene government, he remained in the wings as it were, virtually powerless.

But then when Jayewardene chose him to be his successor, he had all the power the executive Presidency gave him. The same executive Presidency that gave Jayewardene the freedom to sign the controversial Indo-Lanka Accord with former Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv without recourse to parliament, now gave Premadasa the same authority.

It is in the execution of that authority that Premadasa was bitterly criticised. The opposition, as well as dissidents in his own party, described it as an authoritarian 'one-man-show'.

But the Tamil minority saw Premadasa differently. They were sympathetic to him because they believed he was the leader most likely to resolve the island's bitter and bloody communal conflict that, in a decade of unprecedented violence had claimed thousands of lives.

President Premadasa made a very valiant effort to resolve the conflict, when he invited the Tiger leadership for talks, causing problems for himself in the government, the opposition and the security forces.

He once told a Tamil political leader that he felt a certain instinctive empathy for Tiger leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran, in view of his single-minded dedication to his political cause and his fierce independence.

Later however he became quite embittered when the peace talks collapsed, fighting began, and he had to face the political backlash from hard-line Sinhala opinion.

President Premadasa also relied on key Tamil advisors to run the government and showed he was above narrow ethnic prejudice. This was in sharp contrast to most of his predecessors including former President J.R. Jayewardene.

He also encouraged minority business men and traders in an open economic environment. However, he failed to make any significant progress on the political resolution of the national question.

If President Premadasa was increasingly disillusioned with the Tigers, he had only contempt for all other Tamil formations who he believed were either mercenaries or were politically bankrupt.

Contrary to what was expected the UNP showed a remarkable solidarity and affected an orderly transition of power following Premadasa's assassination. The shock of two brutal assassinations in a fortnight, of two formidable men in the island's political arena, Athulathmudali and President Premadasa could well be a turning point, and as Anura Bandaranaike of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party said: 'a halt to political parlour games and confrontational politics.'

Opposition Reactions & Tamil Fears

In the Aftermath of the Assassination

by Our Special Correspondent, Colombo

'Not in the sky, in the mid-ocean, nor in a mountain cave, is found that place on earth where abiding, one will not be overcome by death.'

The State run Daily News had this quotation from the Buddhist scripture, Dhammapada, on its front page on the day of President Premadasa's funeral. It reflected precisely the mood in the corridors of power in Colombo. Although not proved clearly the impression or belief that President Premadasa was assassinated by an LTTE suicide bomber inevitably gained ground as the funeral approached. And hence, this apparent unease among the political and military leaders in the south about the lurking doom of the Tiger suicide squads in the city. On the other hand panic mounted among the thousands of Tamils in Colombo as the police and the media focussed attention on the purported suicide bomber, convincingly describing him as a member of the Liberation Tigers, who had been sent from the north two years ago to meticulously plan and prepare for the assassination.

Very few Tamils in the city were prepared to believe that the Sinhala people were going to view the blowing up of the President with equanimity. Violence against the Tamils had erupted in July 1983 following the funeral of the thirteen soldiers slain by the Tigers. And the violent anger of the mourners had marred the funerals of General Kobbekaduwa some months ago and Lalith Athulathmudali only a week before. Against this background many Tamils could not but note with a terrifying unease the prospect of mass fury originating from the funeral site and spreading elsewhere.

They feared that there might be a repetition of the violence unleashed against the Tamils a decade ago in July '83.

Large numbers of Tamils who had taken up temporary residence in the south started leaving for Vavuniya to stay there till the funeral was over and everything was back to normal. Buses to Batticaloa were also packed as the day of the funeral approached. Joseph Pararajasingham, MP for Batticaloa, met the acting President, D.B. Wijetunge on Tuesday 4th May, to seek an assurance from the government

that it would do its best to prevent a communal backlash following the last rites of President Premadasa, and the Colombo-based Tamil lawyer, Mr. Motilal Nheru, who had jumped on the UNP bandwagon only last month, entrusting his political future to the mercies of President Premadasa, met the acting president on the following day to voice the concern of anxious and almost panic stricken Tamils in Colombo; Sitharthan, the leader of the PLOT, for his part held a discussion with General Hamilton Wanasinghe about the security of Tamils in the city. Many western missions which were obviously worried by the fear that was spreading rapidly among the Tamils in the south contacted Ranil Wickremesinghe - manifestly a key player in the post Premadasa UNP - and the top brass in the security forces and the police with a view to make the government more vigilant in maintaining order until the funeral was over.

The arrest of thirty Tamil boys in the city - fifteen from a hotel at Wellawatte - contributed to the increasing anxiety. However, it was evident that the government was not taking any chances. Troops were deployed at key points and in suburbs where there were concentrations of Tamils. Premadasa's successors had to be concerned about forces in the south itself which could find the funeral an ideal pretext for destabilising the UNP regime and its hold on power. A curfew was declared to take place from 8.00pm after the funeral to 5.00am the next morning as a precautionary measure (later as there was no indication of any violence even on a small scale the curfew was shifted to 10.00pm).

Contrary to Tamil fears, life in the city was back to normal on Friday, 7th May - the day after the funeral. It was clear from the day of the assassination that the government was in control of the situation. This was mainly due to the smooth transition of power in accordance with constitutional provisions despite speculation by sections of the foreign media in the immediate aftermath of the assassination that instability could follow with the stepping in of many power players such as the army into the vacuum created by the sudden death of the incumbent

President. But the prompt adherence to the procedure prescribed in the constitution in the case of such an eventuality within an hour of confirming the death of the President decisively precluded all such possibilities. In fact life had returned back to normal on the day following the assassination. Public and private concerns were open and business was as usual. People were seen setting about their business as though nothing had happened.

The panic among the Tamils arose only after the police and the press began to point the finger at the Tigers. The fear was rooted in the feeling that the assassination of the President, if done by the Tigers, was sure to be the last straw for the Sinhala people; that hence it would be foolish to complacently expect the government to ensure the protection of the Tamils, and that the Tigers had gone too far for the Sinhalese to take the whole thing lying down. Hence, the Tamils in the city were evidently assuming that it was only logical and 'reasonable' for the Sinhalese to react as they did in 1983 at least on a minor scale.

But it was obvious by Thursday (6 May) morning, when the anxiety among the Tamils peaked, that the Sinhalese had come a long way since July 1983. They had other concerns on their minds than bashing up the Tamils. And the chauvinist premises of their attitude towards the Tamil question, propagated and sustained by the Jayewardene, Cyril Mathew, Gamini Dissanayake combine in the eighties, have been gradually but inexorably exploded by the grim march of events since 1987 which did not conform to the logic and expectations of the Mahavamsa mind set in the south.

It was clear from the day of Ranjan Wijeratne's death that the chagrin of the Sinhalese caused by the great setbacks in Eelam War Two was turning inwards - towards its own leaders. The chagrin was building up into mass anger from the time of General Kobbekaduwa's funeral. It reached a climax when Lalith Athulathmudali was killed. The UNP government was compelled to concede the loss of its public credibility when it had to bring down a team of Scotland Yard police to investigate the murder. There were very few who were prepared to buy the story put out by the police that the LTTE was behind Lalith's killing. The opposition firmly held on to the view that the government and certain elements in the police were behind it. The mood was such that the LTTE could kill anyone in the south and the blame surely and inevitably would have been put on President Premadasa. The im-

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petuous chant 'Premadasa Minimar-uwu' (Murderer Premadasa), which erupted first at Kobbekaduwa's funeral, reached an ominous crescendo as Lalith was laid to rest amidst tear gas and mob violence.

One could not help but notice that this seemingly irrational impulse to blame all evils that befell Sinhala society on President Premadasa, also in a way appeared to be rooted in perceptions of social hierarchy among the Sinhalese, which as in many other parts of South Asia were not even cosmetically tempered by modernist political movements which rejected Homo-hierarchicus as the central cultural paradigm of their societies. That the President, as a man who belonged to the lower rungs of the caste order, was inherently given to evil and was therefore not fit to rule, was a belief that one could detect lurking beneath the rhetoric of his more virulent detractors.

A few days before Premadasa's death a senior TULF leader remarked with utter revulsion how an opposition leader had disparagingly referred to President Premadasa as a dhobi's dhobi. The fact that this belief, as an insidious undercurrent in the opposition's portrayal of the man, found some resonance in the public psyche in the south, has to be underscored in examining the political life of Premadasa in the role of Sri Lanka's President. It can be said with certainty that he was the first leader in South Asia who came from an underprivileged background – the first one who did not belong to the South Asian post-colonial elite on whom the reins of power devolved from the British Empire. Yet one came across Sinhalese who were not ready to feel proud of this fact – but on the contrary were ever ready to attribute to him many a lowly deed traditionally associated with his caste (such as the preposterous story of his bathing in the breast milk of abducted virgins!!). Then of course there was the charge that he was working hand in glove with the LTTE against the interests of the Sinhala nation and the heroic efforts of its armed forces. When Lalith the man who was still seen as the hero of Vamamaradchi (a reference to the military operations in northern Jaffna in May 1987), as the one who along with General Kobbekaduwa upheld the Lion flag – was assassinated, it became easy logic for the President to be accused of being responsible for his murder. The white flags and other signs of grief which appeared in the city and in all parts of the country were spontaneous; and the

anger was also spontaneous. Several UNP meetings which were to be addressed by the President had to be cancelled following Lalith's funeral. The unfortunate EPDP (a Tamil militant group) which had brazenly thrown its lot in with Premadasa had to pack up and leave their mansion in a plush suburb of Colombo and its leader Douglas Devananda was reported to have been despatched to Trincomalee. Even the traditional die hard UNPers were shaken in their faith by the calamity caused by Lalith's death.

Athulathmudali was, on the one hand, seen by traditional UNPers as an unblemished and staunch party man, and on the other, he was considered by the Sinhala rural population as one who trod softly and diplomatically on the JVP issue. As a result the UNP's chances at the provincial polls were seen to be rapidly dwindling after Lalith's death. The last meeting addressed by the President was very poorly attended. It was at this meeting at Kirulappone the President, apparently shaken by the poor turnout and mindful of the venomous effect of the opposition's portrayal of him as a diabolic creature and the perverse refusal of Sinhala society to accept him morally despite all that he had done for the poor and for the religion, pleaded, from the depths of his anguished heart, as it were, 'Assassinate me by whatever means, but please do not assassinate my character – an asset I have treasured since childhood'. The next day he was blown to pieces by a suicide-bomber.

As the news of his death spread crackers were lit in the city and many

other parts of the south by those who despised him. It abhorred the civilised sensibility to see people celebrating the assassination of their country's President – the hatred was so deep and vicious that they were not prepared to forgive him even in his death. But if it is definitely proved that he was killed by the LTTE, Premadasa's death would help the UNP resolve the crisis he is accused of creating for it by talking to the Tigers. The UNP in fact has been able to revive its fortunes in the days following his assassination – the wind was taken out of the opposition's sails, when reports of the suicide bomber were put out in the press.

Yet the opposition, confident of securing a victory at the provincial polls, decided not to rock the boat for the UNP by challenging D.B. Wijetunge's election as President when Parliament met the day after the funeral. Stability was uppermost even in the most radical sections of the opposition. And D.B. Wijetunge had always been considered by the opposition as well as the UNP as a 'harmless' deputy to the President. Except for Gamini Dissanayake's undiplomatic statement that he would not 'rule in or rule out' his rejoining the UNP – a statement which was contemptuously dismissed by the government and was resented by the opposition – the transition of power was exceptionally smooth. The Tamils in the city heaved a sigh of utter relief the day after the funeral.

And it was ironic indeed that the funeral of a man who was accused by his people of colluding with the Tamils to the detriment of the Sinhala nation, should have evoked such terror among the Tamils of a communal backlash.

Assassination Condemned

The London-based Standing Committee of Tamil Speaking People (SCOT) has condemned the assassination of President R. Premadasa and Mr. R. Lalith Athulathmudali, the leader of the Democratic United National Front. In a press statement issued by its President, Dr. K. Sivakumar, SCOT said:

The violence that has characterised the Sri Lankan political landscape for many years reached a new high with the recent assassinations of the former Minister for National Security and leader of the Democratic United National Front, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, and President Ranasinghe Premadasa. There is no doubt that these assassinations were politically motivated, and we condemn them unreservedly for what they are – and we do not believe that such acts would serve to solve political problems.

Accusations and counter-accusations, have been made as to the identity of the persons or organisation that have been responsible for these killings. In a country where thousands of killings have gone unaccounted without the culprits ever having been brought to justice, one does not know whether the truth as to the circumstances and the persons responsible for the latest killings will ever come to light. These killings do not constitute the first of their kind, nor do we think that they would be the last. The climate and culture of violence sponsored and nurtured over the years by the state and its agencies as well as by non-state entities has produced in the country a situation in which the language of patient democratic discussion has been replaced by the violent lan-

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guage of the gun and the bomb.

The continued failure to solve the Tamil national question by political means and the resultant conflict as well as the progressive and gradual erosion of democratic rights with little or no tolerance shown to any with a dissenting view have driven Sri Lanka into a situation of political turmoil and instability. The problems of the ethnic question and democracy in Sri Lanka have to be addressed and solved as soon as possible if further tragedies are to be avoided, and peace and tranquility restored in the country.

Muslim Delegation Meets German Ambassador

If the human rights violations and abuses against civilian Muslims as well as Sinhalese and non-compliant Tamils are committed in the Northern and Eastern provinces, it is not by the Sri Lankan government but solely by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which claims to be the champion of the Tamil speaking people, and the international community should take a serious note of these inhuman acts, a delegation of the Muslim Information Centre (MIC), the Sri Lankan Muslim human rights watchdog body, told Mr. Klaus M. Franke, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Colombo.

Engaged in a global disinformation campaign, the LTTE and its sympathisers seek to sideline the Muslim aspect of the ethnic crisis and throw a smokescreen over their killings of Muslim civilians. It is only through international pressure upon and isolation of the LTTE that its onslaughts on the civilians could be brought to a halt, or at least minimised. The opinion-makers, particularly in the West, had a major role to play in this respect. They should compel the LTTE not to turn its guns against unarmed civilians, the delegation stressed.

In response, the German Ambassador said that there did not appear to be sufficient information abroad about the Muslim aspect of the problem and not enough attention for the plight of the many affected Muslims and that he understood the Muslim anxiety over this.

Stating that it was the first time that he was meeting a comprehensive and representative Muslim delegation and hearing views from a broad spectrum of the Muslim community, the Ambassador lauded the Muslim community for its restraint and moderation despite the massacre and sufferings of their brethren.

'No Military Solution to Ethnic Conflict' says BASL President

New President of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka, D.W. Abeykoon has blamed politicians for the delay in finding a just solution to the North-East issue.

At a dinner hosted recently by the Colombo Branch of the Past Pupils' Association of Hartley College (Jaffna) in his honour, Mr. Abeykoon said the delay on the part of the politicians to find a just solution led to corresponding changes in the modes and approaches of the agitation by Tamils who formed the largest minority group of the country.

Mr. Abeykoon who was a student of Hartley College, Jaffna when his father was Magistrate of Point Pedro said: 'I remember the day that the Soulbury Commission visited Point Pedro. We were paraded at the Rest House to receive the Soulbury Commissioners. They came one hour late. The Tamils placed the fifty-fifty demand. But it failed to carry conviction with the Soulbury Commission.'

Mr. Abeykoon said that if the politicians had evolved a just and reasonable solution recognising the rights of the Tamils, then the country would not have come to this sorry pass today. He said the Tamil agitation for their rights originated at the time of the Donoughmore Commission.

Mr. Abeykoon said 'This national question was left uncared for far too long. This led to the revolt of the Tamils. This is a justifiable revolt. But it cannot be contained by military actions. It can only bring untold havoc in its wake. Even a military victory cannot last long because the causes of the revolt have not been removed.'

He further said: 'This necessitates an immediate negotiation - a meaningful negotiation that will not be protracted - a negotiation that will put the heart and soul to a solution which will take into cognizance the sins of war and the ruinous effect it has brought on the national economy, the consequent degradation of the living standards of all the people and above all the future of posterity.'

'No solution will be worthy of its name unless it is acceptable to the aggrieved Tamils of this country. We have known by experience that attempts to force the will of the majority community on the minorities have been counter-productive. Let us not waste the nation's wealth on fruitless exercises and impoverish the people for no fault of theirs. The politicians have faltered by the nation in not having the will to find a just solution.'

The function was chaired by Vice-Chancellor of the University of Jaffna, Prof. A. Thurairajah.

Emergency Regulations to be Relaxed

The Sri Lankan Attorney General, Mr. Tilak Marapana recently told the press that more than 20 of the Emergency Regulations presently in force would be relaxed shortly and this would include the power of Deputy Inspectors General of Police to issue detention orders for 60 days to be restricted to 7 days.

Among the other provisions to be revoked were offenses relating to possession of arms, making death threats, possession of subversive literature and maps, displaying of slogans, fabricating statements, spreading of rumours and causing disaffection, sedition and incitement against the government. Though these provisions would be revoked, persons suspected of committing any of these offenses would be tried under the normal criminal law.

The Attorney General's announcement appears to be in response to severe criticism levelled at the 49th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, held in February-March this year, and also partially in

keeping with assurances he gave on behalf of Sri Lanka.

The Attorney General said that the government's proposal to relax these regulations would apply to areas other than the Northeast, and this would be an initial step to lift the state of emergency in all areas except the Northeast.

Further safeguards like requiring the officer-in-charge of detention centres to submit names of the detenus every fortnight to the Magistrate for the area would also be introduced, and the Magistrate in turn would display the names on the notice board within the precincts of the court.

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Political Implications of the Assassination

by Jayadeva Uyangoda

The sudden demise of President Premadasa in a violent explosion has certainly created a vacuum in Sri Lankan politics; but, as it appears for the moment, no room for lingering political instability.

If the ruling UNP and the Opposition can act wisely and intelligently, new possibilities are already opening up for better political relations in Sri Lanka. Of course, to be wise and intelligent, they should be able to manage the bitter memories of the killings of Lalith Athulathmudali and President Premadasa and to control the volatile passions generated by the departure from politics of the two leaders. But, this will require, first of all, sobriety in the post-Premadasa UNP administration and maturity in the post-Athulathmudali opposition.

When Mr. Premadasa was killed on May 1, the political implications of Mr. Athulathmudali's assassination just a week before had not even begun to surface with any clarity. With accusations and counter-accusations exchanged by the government and the opposition about the culpability of the killing of Mr. Athulathmudali, the politics in Sri Lanka was in extreme chaos. Probably, nobody but Mr. Premadasa's killer and his superiors knew that was the best conjuncture of events to kill the head of state as well.

Unwittingly, all politicians in Sri Lanka, in their supremely acrimonious and utterly irresponsible behaviour during the last week of April created conditions that the killers were patiently waiting for. If one were to see a pattern in these two killings that occurred within a brief space of one week and sixteen hours, first to be removed from the scene is the strongest possible successor to President Premadasa. Targeted immediately after was the President himself. Who, then, carried out the two assassinations? The government blames the LTTE while the Opposition wants to believe that the UNP had a hand in the killing of Mr. Athulathmudali.

The killers of Mr. Athulathmudali and Mr. Premadasa have, meanwhile, left not-so-negative ironies as well. The losses, however agonizing they may be, are not one-sided; the Opposition lost one of its frontline leaders while the UNP its foremost leader and

the President of the country. Both fell victims to a particular kind of political culture characterized by violence, intolerance, partisan fanaticism and individualized power projects.

If the UNP's theory of LTTE involvement in these two most stunning political killings in Sri Lanka is accepted, then it will invariably have enormous political implications. The UNP, while advocating this theory, is probably unaware of what it really means. It in fact means primarily that the politics in Colombo is overdetermined by the politics of the LTTE. In other words, the LTTE is deciding Colombo's politics, and the Colombo politicians in the government as well as in the Opposition are merely reacting to an agenda craftily designed and executed by Velupillai Prabhakaran. The Tiger involvement theory also means that chaos or peace in the South is inextricably linked to the war and/or peace in the North.

The bottom line, then, is not all that difficult to deduce: time has come for all Southern politicians to be moderate and sober and to have a critical look at all political mistakes of the past 15 years.

D.B. Wijetunge's assumption of office as the President has the potential for creating conditions for reducing the turmoil in Sri Lanka's politics, provided that the UNP, the SLFP and the DUNF consist of politically intelligent men and women. Unlike two of his predecessors, Mr. Wijetunge does not appear to suffer from the strongman syndrome. He does not seem to be having a political agenda, centered on his own persona. Hence, he will not be an activist President as was Mr. Premadasa. Sri Lanka has suffered enough at the hands of strong men and women at the top; a weak President with no personal stakes in politics is Sri Lanka's need of the hour.

Mr. Wijetunge's incumbency as the executive president can constitutionally last till December 1994. The eighteen months ahead are likely to be characterized by an assertive Cabinet and possibly a stronger Parliament. If this happens, excessive personalization of state power, the hallmarks of the Jayewardene and Premadasa administrations, is likely to diminish.

An honest and dispassionate look at Sri Lanka's recent politics will convince us that personalization of political power has led to the decay of political and administrative institutions at every level. Similarly, the excessive personalization by the Opposition of its critique of the Premadasa administration has also negated the political efficacy of both the SLFP and the DUNF as alternatives to the UNP.

The leadership of the UNP, the SLFP and the DUNF represents different segments of the ruling class of Sri Lanka. It is their adversarial fragmentation that has prevented them from reading the writings on the wall. It is the atmosphere of political acrimony that has created conditions for the deaths of both Mr. Athulathmudali and Mr. Premadasa. What we have witnessed over the past few years is an acute crisis at the top, at the level of the ruling class. If this trifurcated ruling class fails to have a self-critical look at its own words and deeds, due to mutual hatred and animosities inherited from the recent past, it would be sheer bad luck for everybody. Good luck, if such a thing exists at all, demands the commitment to rebuilding of political institutions, reinforcing institutional checks – and – balances of power, reconstitution of Government-Opposition relations in a competitive but not rancorous atmosphere, and even constitutional reforms.

A national government, as being proposed by some, is perhaps not the best mechanism of addressing the crucial issues of Sri Lankan politics. Only a reformed UNP, a reformed SLFP and a reformed DUNF should form a national government. What is necessary at the moment is the formulation of a general political strategy aimed at (i) democratization of the political process, (ii) a political solution to the ethnic problem, and (iii) constitutional reforms. It is a collective responsibility of the ruling party, the opposition, the intellectual and business communities, and the religious leadership.

The writer is a senior lecturer in political science at the University of Colombo. He was also a politbureau member of the JVP in 1971.

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any event in which he participated into an extravaganza accompanied by all the stately pomp and pageantry resulting in the expenditure of vast sums of public funds. His village re-awakening (Gamudawa) festivals and the mobile presidential secretarial service periodically conducted in provincial towns were more like carnivals. The less publicity seeking new President is expected to discontinue this rather profligate practice.

One of the less publicised characteristics of the Premadasa regime was its proneness to setting up of unorthodox, unofficial, secret 'investigatory bodies' which had no statutory basis for their existence and functioned autonomously free from control by official law enforcement agencies, but reportedly remained accountable to the former President. In one of his first moves, the new President ordered the dismantling of a special security agency housed on the fourth floor of the National Housing Authority. This agency, headed by two retired senior high ranking police officers, was

reportedly responsible for carrying out a multitude of cloak-and-dagger covert operations including gathering of information about ruling party and opposition politicians, senior government officials and professionals and executives in the private sector. The funding of this agency came allegedly from a state corporation, but its existence remained a secret.

These are welcome and necessary moves in the right direction – and there are many more to be undertaken if the authoritarian trends and erosion of democracy and the rule of law that permeated the previous two presidential regimes are to be remedied. However, what the new President must realise is that the most important question facing the island and its people is the unresolved ethnic conflict. Mere expression of his willingness to negotiate – in fact that is what his predecessor also said for many years – would mean nothing until he takes concrete action towards the resolution of the conflict. That will be the true test and challenge for the new President.

Setback for Sri Lankan Ruling Party

Provincial elections have ensured an end to hegemony writes
John Rettie in Colombo

Sri Lanka's ruling United National Party has suffered its first big defeat since it swept to power in the 1977 elections.

The results of Monday's provincial council elections, announced yesterday, are certain to prove a watershed in the country's political history.

For more than 10 years the UNP has had its way, largely through violence and fraud. But on Monday voters struck back. Worst of all, it lost the jewel in the provincial crown, Western province – the richest and most populous which includes the capital, Colombo – where it was beaten into second place. It also lost southern and the North-Western provinces.

The UNP held on to four of the seven contested provinces and emerged as the largest party in six.

The mainly Tamil North-Eastern province did not take part because of the war with the Tamil Tigers. But some Colombo Tamils said they were happy at the first real step towards devolving power from Colombo.

For the UNP, which after 1977 was used by President J.R. Jayawardene and then by his successor the late Ranasinghe Premadasa as an instrument of authoritarian rule, the losses were shattering.

The political scene has changed dramatically since the assassination of Premadasa and his chief rival, Lalith Athulathmudali. As a result, the elections passed without much violence or fraud, both of which have been characteristic of most polls since 1977.

The main opposition group, the Popular Alliance, did well everywhere, especially in Western province, despite the chaotic organisation of its leading party, the Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) of Srimavo Bandaranaike.

It won 45 of the province's 104 seats, including the two bonus seats given to the party winning the largest number

under proportional representation. It came second in the other six provinces.

The Democratic United National Party (DUNF) which broke with the UNP under Athulathmudali's leadership in protest against Premadasa's repression, was a little disappointed by the result. Some who might have voted DUNF against the late president are thought to have returned to the fold after his death.

The enfranchisement of most plantation Tamils, given Sri Lankan citizenship by Premadasa after decades of denial, helped the UNP considerably in the central hill country.

The loss of Athulathmudali, the DUNF hero, also had its effect, as did 'the KGB factor', which in Sri Lanka stands for 'Kandy Goygama Buddhist'.

The goygamas form the majority upper caste, and President D.B. Wijetunge, elected by parliament after the assassination fulfils all the requirements.

Although the DUNF's new leader, Gamini Dissanayake, is also a 'KGB', he does not have the attraction of being president.

The DUNF, however, won nearly 15 per cent of all the seats and in the three provinces lost by the UNP holds the balance of power, a position from which it is expected to bargain for the post of chief minister in North-Western province.

The councils raise taxes and control the police and education.

With a potentially hostile opposition province based on the capital, the UNP central government will now have to negotiate and bargain. Whether or not violence continues, Monday brought normal politics back to Sri Lanka.

(Courtesy: The Guardian, 19/5/93).

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Jaffna Fast Turning into a Desert

In the Jaffna peninsula in northern Sri Lanka, the unprecedented increase in refugees and unemployment, since the war broke out, particularly in the last two years, has resulted in deterioration of the environment and depletion of natural resources.

Due to the non-availability of natural gas and other fuel-alternatives, the demand for fuelwood has increased. Although the residents have had some access to food supplies, water, medical assistance and education, they lack ready access to fuelwood.

The forest resource of the Jaffna peninsula covers an area of 7100 hectares or 7 percent of the land area of the peninsula. The forest includes natural plant communities both tropical thorn forest and dry evergreen forest but is essentially of a very mixed composition and a secondary forest.

The forest is a low open thorny scrub with scattered trees and patches of trees. There are two main places where forest has heavily been destroyed. The first is the east coast of the peninsula, particularly Nagarkovil area which covers 3750 hectares of the

scrub land and open forest of the peninsula. The second is the southern and eastern parts of the Palai area which covers 1360 hectares of the forest land of the peninsula.

There are more than 120,000 people as refugees who live in the interior of the peninsula and more than 100,000 people have lost their jobs by the war. Crowded into camps or settlements, situated on marginal lands, such sudden large concentrations of the people speed up the degradation of the environment and pose additional hardships for local people forced to compete for scarce natural resources.

Refugees who settled on previously unoccupied lands in the peninsula ravage the near greens for fuelwood to cook their emergency food rations. Sudden increase in unemployment and demand for fuelwood pushes the poor refugees into the forests far away from their camps. Those who do this fuelwood business were earlier farmers, fishermen, carpenters, masons and others.

Most of the men spend the entire day collecting fuelwood. They spend

about fifteen hours to go to the forest areas, to gather wood and to return to Jaffna. There are more than 3000 people involved in wood business.

Before the war broke out fuelwood was brought from the mainland areas such as Kilinochchi, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu for hotels and bakeries in Jaffna. Now the entire demand for fuelwood depends on the forest cover of the peninsula.

The presence of underground water is a blessing to the people and has been the most important condition for human activities in the Jaffna peninsula. If deforestation continues the underground water level will be affected. Along the east coast of the peninsula, there are extensive areas of sand. The scrubs and the trees prevent the sand encroachment on the cultivated land as the wind sweeps it landward.

With the increasing deforestation, evaporation will be great and the moisture available for plant growth will greatly be diminished. The land's capacity to retain water will be reduced. When rains are scarce, soils dry up and soil erosion, salinization and the loss of organic matters are increased.

In the long run there will be a climatic change, particularly in rainfall and temperature in the Northern part of Lanka.

A. Antonyraja Lecturer, Dept. of Geography, Jaffna University.

Call for End to Human Rights Abuses in Sri Lanka

At a public meeting in the Council Chamber of Walthamstow Town Hall on 23 April 1993, people gathered to discuss human rights in Sri Lanka and the British government. Lord Ennals chaired, and the speakers were Professor Michael Moore of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, P. Sangaravel, a former senior civil servant in Sri Lanka, on behalf of the Tamil Information Centre, Will McMahon of the Campaign Against the Arms Trade, Philip Spender of Index on Censorship and Neil Gerrard MP. The Mayor of Waltham Forest attended.

The meeting was jointly organised by Human Rights in Sri Lanka, Committee for Democracy and Justice in Sri Lanka, Campaign for Democracy and Human Rights in Sri Lanka, Lawyers (in Exile) for Democracy in Sri Lanka and International Tamil Foundation.

Hundreds of people 'disappear' at the hands of the Sri Lankan government each year, the speakers said. Journalists face obstruction, threats and violence; and throughout the island freedom of expression is stifled. Civilians in the North-East Province are bombed and the supply of food and medicines to them is impeded by the government. Though the mass media

in Britain are currently giving little coverage to the human rights situation, major abuses continue at a high human cost.

The former UK High Commissioner, David Gladstone, was expelled because of his concern about human rights violations. Nevertheless the British government is supplying weapons and training to the Sri Lankan security forces, and appears to have decided to step up sales of surplus armaments to the Sri Lankan and other repressive governments. Large quantities of overseas aid continue to be supplied to the Sri Lankan authorities by various international agencies and governments, especially that of Japan. Many people fleeing the violence have been denied full refugee status in Britain, and the situation of asylum-seekers is likely to become worse under new legislation.

A resolution was passed calling on the Sri Lankan government to stop bombing civilians, release all political prisoners or bring them to fair and speedy trial and restore freedom of expression; the UK government to review its policy of arms sales and aid; and the international community to put pressure on the Sri Lankan government to be made accountable for human rights violations.

Norway to Deport Asylum Seekers

The Norwegian government recently decided to deport a batch of 50 Sri Lankan Tamils whose applications for asylum or refugee status had been rejected. The decision said to have been taken by the Norwegian Ministry of Justice after extensive investigations carried out by a team of officials both in Sri Lanka and elsewhere is expected to be implemented on a staggered basis shortly by the Norwegian police, according to T.R. Aatlo of the Justice Ministry.

With a total of about 5100 Sri Lankan Tamils resident in Norway, they represent a leading group seeking asylum every year. 556 Tamils sought asylum in Norway in 1991 and 403 in 1992. The Norwegian authorities claim that their decision has been taken in consultation with the officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva and in Colombo. They also claim that there are thousands of Tamils living safely in Colombo and elsewhere and that there is no legitimate reason for them to seek asylum in Norway.

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Sinhalaisation of Trincomalee Through Colonisation

The Meaning of Trincomalee and Sri Lanka's Future

by Rajah Hoole

The Ferry crossing

The region south of Mutur punctuated by rivers has been commended for its unequalled beauty. A young woman was clutching an infant on a ferry making a brief crossing between lush green banks. She was going to her village of Korukkamam. Asked if anyone was killed in her village during the current war, her large eyes darted furtively at the uniformed men with automatics on either bank. 'No', she replied hurriedly, 'no one'. Asked if she lost any near ones, she hesitated. After weighing the matter she said, 'I lost my brother Marakathan and my brother-in-law Ganeshan'. 'Then there were many killed?' 'Yes', she replied. Fear and anxiety writ on her dark, wan face gave it a beauty that is born of patience in the face of suffering. There are perhaps other secrets that she would not divulge to a stranger, like how many of her brothers, cousins or nephews joined militant groups. Although there is a surface of calm with disappearances and killings by the forces in Trincomalee District at an all time low, a deep sense of foreboding among Tamils remains and is perhaps greater than ever. The explosive potential of the corrosion that is building up below the surface is likely to be missed by those anxious to give Sri Lanka a clean bill of health for human rights.

Ideologically motivated violence

The young woman on the ferry symbolises a decade and more of ideologically motivated state violence against Tamils and the Tamil response to it, both having their centres outside, in Colombo and Jaffna respectively. From just before and during the aftermath of the July 1983 holocaust, Tamils in Trincomalee were attacked by Sinhalese hoodlums, settled in Trincomalee during the two previous decades, backed by the Sri Lankan forces. As the civil war escalated from late 1984 the forces systematically destroyed Tamil villages while the civilians fled northwards to Jaffna and to India as refugees. Many Tamil youth who physically witnessed the violence joined one of the several militant groups. In mid-1986 the LTTE became the dominant group by laun-

ching fratricidal violence on others. The LTTE's militant base in Trincomalee was then not as significant as that of some of the other groups. This weakening of the Tamil militant strength, through putting other groups out of action, had far reaching consequences for the East. The Sri Lankan forces gained greater control of the area and political options for the Tamils were greatly reduced. Defeating the Sri Lankan forces was now out of the question. Among the LTTE's chief means of applying pressure on the government became the launching of attacks on Sinhalese civilians. For the Tamils it was also a time of demoralisation and division, when hundreds of young men who took up arms to defend their people were declared traitors and hunted by the LTTE.

The IPKF presence from August 1987 to March 1990 was a period of relative respite for the people of Trincomalee. Many of the refugees returned and tried to rebuild their lives. With the outbreak of war in June 1990, the Sri Lankan forces resumed the course once halted by the IPKF. Once more Tamil villagers lost everything and fled as refugees. The Sri Lankan forces again went about killing, looting Tamil villages and destroying houses built through decades of hard work, using bulldozers and explosives.

Laying the foundations of permanent conflict

On the one hand the government's public relations men are telling the world that conditions are right for a return of Tamil refugees now abroad. But many refugees who returned from India found their lands, town property and even houses built with their own hands, occupied mostly by Sinhalese brought from their areas in the South. In one instance that came before the land conference in late December, a Buddhist priest had wangled officially for his temple, a piece of land vacated following the outbreak of war, by nearly 50 Muslim and Tamil families. The priest had then settled Sinhalese families on the land. In nearly all such disputes the official stance amounts to the position that it is impractical to

evict Sinhalese squatters. In many cases official moves to regularise illegal acquisitions of lands is well under way.

There are other conspicuous signs of moves to Sinhalaise the district. New Sinhalese settlements are sprouting up along the Habarana - Trincomalee Road. Traditional Tamil names are being replaced with Sinhalese names. Even a church-based NGO has been coaxed into building houses for Sinhalese, who had lived on encroached land. Such people are being speedily given the government rehabilitation housing allowance for returning displaced persons. But Tamils who were indisputably displaced and had their houses destroyed by the state are mostly in refugee camps. In the Mutur area Tamil refugees who returned to their villages had not received their housing allowance for nearly two years. The army's plans for giving security clearance for Tamil refugees to return to their villages are not such as to inspire confidence. For instance in February this year, refugees from Kuchaveli, north of Trincomalee town, were being urged to return. But there were huge gaps of about 5 miles or more between Trincomalee and Nilaveli on one hand and between Nilaveli and Kuchaveli on the other, where security clearance had not been given for a return of refugees.

In Thambalakamam, a mostly Tamil Hindu village, the army officer in charge of the local camp had taken the initiative to build a sizeable Buddhist temple - yet another step in dotting the place with Buddhist shrines. This is in keeping with the old recipe - first an army camp, then a Buddhist temple and then a Sinhalese colony. In effect it is, destroy Tamil houses, damage or hamper worship at Hindu temples, build Buddhist temples and houses for Sinhalese colonists.

Thus conditions of the civil conflict have been manipulated to prevent Tamils from exercising rights over their property and in turn under the umbrella of military occupation, Sinhalese brought from the South are being encouraged to encroach on these lands. Then an administrative bludgeon, wielded by hand picked officials, is being used to regularise these encroachments. In fact the Western countries and India pressing for a return of refugees has become something of an embarrassment to the government. For, its policy was not about giving Tamils confidence as

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equal fellow citizens, but one more akin to the treatment of a vanquished foe.

An old story

In the wake of the anti-Tamil violence of July 1983, the ministry of lands and Mahaveli development by extra-ordinary gazette notification acquired lands bordering Manal Aru dividing the Tamil speaking Northern and Eastern provinces. These lands in Tamil administrative units were placed under Sinhalese administrators at Anuradhapura. Thus began the Welioya scheme to settle Sinhalese in the area. Like the developments after June 1990, this scheme was originated at a time when Tamils, reeling from violence, were at their weakest. The 6th amendment to the constitution of August 1983 had excluded the Tamil opposition from parliament. The new improvisation to age old government policy was given verbal expression by the minister for national security in December 1984. He said that it was the government's intention to settle the Tamil question by planting Sinhalese toughs such as fishermen and ex-convicts among Tamils. The Welioya scheme is today a military district under a co-ordinating officer, subject to attacks by the LTTE.

The settlement of migrant Sinhalese fishermen in Trincomalee on land acquired by the ministry of fisheries has been going on for several years. The Air Force farm installed in Mudalikulam (Morawewa) in the late 60s made the Tamils subject to isolated incidents of violence whose gradual displacement recently became a full retreat. Another strategy is to increase the Sinhalese population in an area, create a new Sinhalese administrative (AGA's) division, which then becomes virtually a no-go area for Tamils.

The most conspicuous testimony to the state's intentions came in the form of tremendous activity in the late 70s and early 80s uniquely focused on the Trincomalee district, almost none of it, notably, was intended to benefit the local people. Trincomalee became the only district with communally based special appointments, with Sinhalese officers appointed as additional AGAs and GSs in predominantly Tamil divisions. Procedures were begun to vest vast extents of private and crown lands with state corporations, including all lands east of the Trinco-Kandy Road from the edge of Trinco town to Monkey Bridge with the Ports Authority, and 11 miles of coastal land north of Trincomalee with the Tourist Board. The sort of thing intended could be discerned from the case of Prima Flour

Mills, a Singapore based private company which opened a plant at Trincomalee. All appointments were required to have been cleared by the Government Agent / Trincomalee for reasons of security. Consequently 80% of the employees were Sinhalese brought from outside.

The most curious of all was the programme to restore ancient Buddhist temples launched by the late minister of industries and scientific affairs, and vested by him with various state bodies. These shrines, like other Hindu shrines, were testimony to the district's plural past. Much of the district's folklore and culture derive from Koneswaram Hindu temple at Fort Frederick. An old Buddhist shrine Rajaraja Perumpalli (Vilgam Vihare) is believed by serious scholars to have been a shrine of Tamil speaking Buddhists. The equation Sinhalese = Buddhist backed by force rather than scholarship, was used as a formula for acquisition. With the state identifying bo trees with Buddhism, the minorities came to fear the sight of any bo tree. The bo tree is a tree of meditation for all Indian religions and are commonly found near Hindu shrines.

Roots of chauvinist ideology and implications

During the colonial period the local elite consisted of clans with huge land holdings, who were later joined by successful entrepreneurs. Many of them had close links with the representatives of colonial powers and were frequently party to intrigues against local interests. They were confirmed in their positions with titles and patronage. Since independence in 1948, power has effectively been in their hands. Although deprived of several of their huge personal land holdings due to the reforms of the 70s, they remained the arbiters over land and wealth. The new UNP government of 1977 moved close to multi-nationals dealing in agriculture and leased out huge tracts of lands, for example to sugar companies in Moneragala and to Nestlé elsewhere. These met with huge protests in the early 80s from peasant groups. The North-East was spared through the deteriorating security situation, although preparations with land acquisitions were underway in Trincomalee for multi-national investment. A combination of circumstances which included large tracts of land in the South leased out to multi-nationals or devoted to cash crops, a concomitant exacerbation of poverty and land hunger in the South and the resulting challenge posed to the ruling establishment, provided a further impetus to send Sinhalese poor into Tamil

areas. In addition this served the ruling class as a possible means of pacifying the Tamil areas, where its authority as well as its economic interests were under challenge. An assertion of the Sinhala-Buddhist ideology came in useful as a means to secure short term ends, though disastrous in the long term as we have seen. How this ruling class views the ordinary Sinhalese, whose cause it ostensibly champions, is evident in the ferocity with which the JVP led rebellions of rural Sinhalese youth were put down in 1971 and the late 1980s.

The human face of this contempt for ordinary Sinhalese, resulting from fear and insecurity, appears in a story related to me by a clergyman in Vavuniya during the 1971 uprising. An office in the volunteer regiment was a planter by profession, educated at St. Thomas College. His men received a consignment of automatic weapons to replace their old outmoded rifles. The officer tested his weapon by mowing down a group consisting of a dozen Sinhalese prisoners.

It is in the light of this reality that the colonisation of Sinhalese in Tamil areas in the name of defending the Sinhalese nation must be examined. Other ruling establishments through history, faced with discontent at home, have used colonies as an outlet. Oliver Cromwell, the leader of the English revolution, 1640-1660, who was backed by the landed gentry, faced with demobilising his huge army, gave them lands confiscated from Irish Catholics. The Irish example becomes useful in understanding some of the key issues involved. These are the English or Scottish Protestant vs Irish Catholic cleavages played up and used to deprive the latter; the self generating emotions and zeal fuelled by the ideology and settler mentality. Several of these aspects are also evident in the poignantly tragic story of Palestine. We thus get some insight into the origins, functions and roles of the ideologies involved.

As long as such an ideology retains its force in whatever form, the other must remain second class citizens. It becomes an offence to admit any mark of distinction among those being deprived as a group. The expression 'Irish nobleman' became a term of derision. One of the messages of the state inspired violence of July 1983 was that it was an offence for Tamils to own wealth or indeed even houses. The Sri Lankan state badly needs borrowed money, and does feel much more vulnerable than Israel about the commitment of donors. For this reason its public relations machinery has worked hard and has been fairly successful in

giving the impression that the legacy of July 1983 has been buried. It is precisely this legacy that is so much in evidence in Trincomalee. Only the violence at present is potential and growing rather than starkly physical as in July 1983, 1985-87 and the latter half of 1990.

It must be recognised that there is also land hunger among Tamils and Muslims in Trincomalee, many of whom do not even own residential land. Further, most Hill Country Tamils do not own any land at all.

The Tamils do not and cannot boast of a class comparable in size, wealth or influence to the Sinhalese ruling establishment. Few Tamils enjoyed close social ties with or shared in the intrigues of colonial rulers. A sizeable class of Tamils took to education and secured a very modest wealth from positions such as clerical servants or professionals in the lower rungs of government service, particularly under British rule. Even this was used by the Sinhalese elite to misdirect the anger of ordinary Sinhalese, resulting in bouts of communal violence. Many of those Tamils now losing their land in Trincomalee are those with very modest holdings of 2 or 3 acres and they are about the richest in Trincomalee. They do not bear the slightest comparison with the wealthy of the South and are constantly becoming poorer.

Aspects of the Tamil response

Like in the Irish instance there have been a variety of Tamil responses ranging from the parliamentary, to one anticipating international socialism that would subsume ethnic and national divisions, to one advocating, at least on the surface, uncompromising separatist violence such as that of the LTTE. Which one is dominant at a particular time and which would determine the outcome will depend on changing internal social prerogatives, whether the state is becoming enlightened or not and many largely accidental external factors. There is no logical necessity about a particular outcome.

A federalist (home rule) resolution to the Irish question which would have been the healthiest outcome and which was advocated by the Irish Parliamentary Party, came close to success, when it also became the policy of the Liberal government of H.H. Asquith. It ultimately failed because of peculiar exigencies and the national mood surrounding the First World War (1914-18). The result was civil war and separation.

While the oppression from the Sri

Lankan state was harsh, the prominence attained by the LTTE's response owes much to the internal compulsions of Jaffna society and Indian tutelage of the militant cause. (This has been lucidly argued by the late Dr. Rajani Thiranagama in *The Broken Palmyrah* [Vol II, Chapter 6]). People in rural areas who feel powerless against the callousness of the state tend to believe that the Tamils would have been finished if not for the LTTE.

But the LTTE's record speaks otherwise. Its singular obsession with power led it to destroy anyone however committed to the Tamil cause and anything however beneficial to the people, if it challenged the totalitarian aspirations of the LTTE leadership. Thus were the intellect and energies of the people shackled. The cause thus so weakened, the LTTE by turn courted the patronage of the Indian and Sri Lankan states. It then fell out with them mindless of the cost to the people. These quarrels arose only because and when it became clear that it did not suit these would-be patrons to offer the LTTE power on its terms. Again as time went, internal resentment placed embarrassing constraints on the manner in which it could exercise power, as evidenced in the intolerance towards Muslims.

Consequently it obstructed the IPKF's plans to resettle Tamils in Trincomalee displaced by the Sri Lankan forces during 1985-87. Its period of connivance with the government and its terror left the Tamils, particularly those in Trincomalee, without effective political or parliamentary representation during this critical hour. As mentioned earlier, the LTTE's self-inflicted weakness led it to challenge the government through attacks on Sinhalese civilians. This rather strengthened the move towards colonisation by reinforcing anti-Tamil ideology and placing the government under pressure, however unwelcome, to redirect resources to this end.

The LTTE's indiscriminate violence against Sinhalese and Muslims made it extremely difficult for ordinary people among the latter to even understand the problems faced by Tamils. To their minds they see Tamils living in the south, while they are unable to move in Tamil areas, and are thus unable to perceive the complex tragedy.

A response that has considerable sympathy among both Tamils and Sinhalese but is not yet a political force is one that gives primacy to human rights and its concomitant values. It appeals to their common history and the pressing needs all communities have to live together. They are after

all, third world peoples and non-persons in global terms.

The future still lies very much open and will depend on what people are willing to work towards and make sacrifices for. The Irish struggle did last about 250 years, and for nearly 200 years the Irish Catholics were legally second class citizens. During those years the Irish language nearly died and is being revived today only through a conscious effort at bilingualism. The Tamil crisis too may eventually blunder into the birth of a separate Tamil state, with its attendant problems like the six counties of Northern Ireland having a protestant majority. Such would have a slender basis in history and would be a tragedy rather than a triumph. The alienation of the Muslims by the LTTE through massacres and expulsion would make the division of the country a nightmare, to say the least.

The cost to the people

For an impoverished country Sri Lanka spends, together with the inevitable supplementary estimates, nearly Rs. 24 billion (US \$550 million) on defence – or about 20% of the annual budget. A close examination of what is happening on the ground in Trincomalee and the Weli Oya region would strongly suggest that sizeable unaccounted funds from the defence ministry, Mahaveli Authority, rehabilitation ministry, fisheries ministry and the Coconut Cultivation Board, to name some obvious examples, are being covertly misdirected to further Sinhalese colonisation of Tamil areas. These projects are under selected officials and Tamils are generally, if not as a rule, barred from access to information. These funds are also loosely accounted for. The cost therefore of keeping the Tamils second class citizens, though unknown, is over 20% of the government's budget plus collateral costs.

That an operation of such proportions has to be conspiratorial and shrouded in secrecy reveals two things. One is, contrary to official professions, the persisting anti-Tamil character of the state. The second is the closed nature of government and its proneness to corruption on a massive scale. Corruption in the defence ministry has invited much press comment. It comes as no surprise that this poor country has produced ministers spoken of by the people as among the richest in Asia.

Thus the very anti-Tamil ideology of the ruling elite has, besides squandering a sizeable portion of the state's resources, contributed to the under-

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THE SUB-CONTINENTAL SCENE

Bleak Prospects for Democracy in Pakistan

by Aabha Dixit

The climax of the power struggle between President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and his Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, ended with the latter's unceremonious dismissal.

Using the powers bestowed on the presidency by the infamous Eighth Amendment, Ishaq Khan in less than three years packed off a second democratically elected government in Pakistan. In the process of ejecting a former political ally, the septuagenarian President may have actually weakened his own position in the long run.

Internationally, Ishaq Khan's terminal action has given the impression of being anti-democratic, and it will take a herculean effort by the President to convince observers at home and abroad of his democratic credentials and sense of fair play.

Army Back in Limelight

The army has again come back into the political limelight as the most significant power institution. There is little doubt, notwithstanding an assertion of 'non-interference' by the Army chief, Gen. Abdul Waheed Kakar, that Ishaq Khan could have taken that drastic stand without the Army's concurrence.

The Army's under publicized role has all along been evident, with Kakar's visits to Washington and Paris postponed so that he could be on hand for any eventuality.

In a series of swift political actions, following the dismissal of Sharif, the President appointed a nonentity, Balkh Sher Mazari, as the caretaker Prime Minister and announced that elections would be held on July 14.

Charge of Corruption

The new government, in an obvious bid to restrain the dismissed leader, has brought cases of corruption against his family and the various businesses it controls.

Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who suffered a similar fate at the hands of Ishaq Khan in August 1990, has mended her fences with an adversary and formed an anti-Sharif alignment with the establishment. Although Benazir has not taken up any formal position in the caretaker

government, she has allowed her party members to join it.

In the short run, Bhutto's strategy of splitting the troika has been successful, but it would be naive for her to believe that the establishment's deep sense of suspicion towards the Bhuttos would be overcome by this one single act.

Problem for Bhutto

In the process of making overtures to the ruling elite, Bhutto may have succeeded in having the cases dropped against her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, but has angered her erstwhile alliance members who continue to remain stoutly opposed to Ishaq Khan's actions.

In Pakistan's chequered history of judicial probity and independence, the reprieve won by Bhutto on the criminal cases is temporary. The charges can easily be revived if she falls out of line from the unelected elements who dominate the political structures.

On the other hand, Sharif has refused to take the humiliation lying down. While beginning a mobilization campaign, he has declared that he will not only challenge the dismissal in court, but also will seek the people's support in repealing the Eighth Amendment if voted back into power in the July 14 elections.

The amendment, inserted into the Constitution in 1985, has been controversial for years. It was implanted by the late dictator Zia-ul-Haq to give him leverage while dealing with civilian governments. It unilaterally allows the President to dismiss any government, both at the federal or provincial level, and dissolve elected assemblies, if he is satisfied that they are unable to function efficiently.

The powers assumed by the President are so wide-ranging that in effect he could become a dictator by invoking provisions of the amendment. While Zia used the provisions to dismiss the Junejo government in 1988, Ishaq Khan, who inherited Zia's mantle, has used it with greater telling effect in removing Bhutto and Sharif when both held majorities in the National Assembly.

Zia's use of the amendment powers was a last-ditch measure, while Ishaq

Khan has used them to refashion Pakistan's political destiny according to his liking.

Considered an Insider

When Bhutto was dismissed in 1990 and replaced through a controversial election later that year, there was a general feeling that the establishment had tightened its grip over the country beyond doubt.

Sharif, who was brought into politics by Zia, was considered an insider and rated a reliable leader who would carry out the establishment's wishes. But being ambitious, as Prime Minister he felt it was time to step out of his benefactor's shadow, a decision that Ishaq Khan viewed with disfavour.

There were several reasons that both contestants felt the time was opportune to take precipitate measures. The unexpected and controversial death of the Army chief Gen. Asif Nawaz Janjua, removed from the political scene an actor who had just begun playing a greatly visible role in national politics.

Signals His Intentions

Janjua's thinking was at variance with the other members of the troika, and it was a matter of time before he would have initiated a purge.

But by bringing in a relatively unknown as the new Army chief, Ishaq Khan signalled his intentions of heading with the troika, and in the process unleashed the power struggle that was to claim Sharif as its most prominent victim.

The intention of choosing Kakar was obvious. He would require time to assert his position within the military establishment, giving Ishaq Khan the necessary manoeuvrability to consolidate his position by sewing up a second term at the President's Palace.

His Sense of Timing

Ishaq Khan had banked on Sharif's inability to take a public stand against him, given the treasure trove that the President had on the corruption scandals. But the feisty strongman from Punjab had his own sense of timing.

Realizing that a presidential re-election would allow Ishaq Khan another five years to dominate him, Sharif obviously viewed the current political situation as favourable. The President, he hoped, could be neutralized by repealing the Eighth Amendment.

In that endeavour, he hoped to get Bhutto's support, as together they had the necessary two-thirds electoral strength to repeal the amendment.

The new Army chief was just settling in and the President, with less than a year left in his term, was about as weak as he could possibly get.

Launching the Campaign

Ishaq Khan used his annual address to the National Assembly last December to unofficially launch his candidacy by attacking the UI government, while Sharif decided to attack Ishaq Khan in a roundabout manner by demanding repeal of the amendment, calling it an anti-democratic and anti-parliamentary insertion.

Sharif's reasoning was that without the powers bestowed by the amendment, the President would not have the stomach to fight a re-election bid. But he underestimated the President's retaliatory capacities. He went on record to say that it was his duty to defend every article of the Constitution and he would prevent any subversion of it.

In a bid to build counterpressure on Sharif, Ishaq Khan began activating his supporters in most political parties, pushing Sharif into a corner. The distrust between the two had failed to bring them into any solid alliance, leaving Sharif exposed and in the lurch.

Sharif's Tactical Retreat

While Sharif made a tactical retreat by having his party nominate the President for a second term, Ishaq Khan was in no mood to relent as he sensed his chance to crush an emergent power centre. He continued to encourage ministers and advisers to resign from the Sharif cabinet and ventured into attacking Sharif within the Pakistan Muslim League.

He pushed the candidacy of Ghulam Khan Hoti for the party presidency to deny the Sharif nominee, Abdul Sattar Laleka, a cakewalk. The Pathan, at the same time, also contained any bid to outflank him by having the provincial Chief Ministers of Sind, Baluchistan and the Northwest Frontier endorse his candidacy and support Sharif's dismissal.

He thus forced the Sharif protege in Punjab, Ghulam Hyder Wyne, to soft-pedal the issue of support. Eventually, Ishaq Khan was able to dislodge Wyne from the chief ministership too.

Sharif's television speech was more than a tacit admission that the President had won the battle. It pleaded for political survival by taking the issue to the people. Sharif hoped to pre-empt any decisive action by the President by making the power struggle public.

But he grossly miscalculated and revealed for the first time that he not only was politically beleaguered, but

also had lost his political acumen. By appealing to the people, he was grasping at straws. The people have never been able to save any political leader from the establishment's juggernaut.

Having created the necessary political fissures, Ishaq Khan splintered the political opposition and dangled the bait of office to keep it that way. By selecting Balakh Sher Mazari, a Baloch tribal chief residing in Punjab, he hoped to satisfy the demands of the Punjabis and other ethnic groups. He can capitalize on Mazari's lack of a political base to make him act as a political front.

A Difficult Issue

The most difficult issue for the President, however, would be to find a politician equally pliable but with a semblance of a political base. If he has to rub out the stigma of anti-democratism, holding elections is a must, and given his personal interest in seeing Sharif and Bhutto bite the dust, it is unlikely that he will want either to return to power.

Herein lie the seeds of future problems for the President. To prevent a major political party from coming to power, he would need to break it up and provide 'administrative support' during the elections.

Could Be a Boomerang

If he were unable to do either, the whole exercise could boomerang on him. It could lead to the repeal of the Eighth Amendment or force the Army to take over to prevent the politicians from getting the upper hand.

Ishaq Khan's late decision to dismiss Sharif proved again that democracy in Pakistan was at best a gilded interlude between direct martial law or backseat driving by the praetorian guard.

The decision, in the wake of disclosures that Ishaq Khan favours acquiring the atom bomb, is bound to generate much scepticism in Western capitals. His hardline views on contentious issues like Kashmir, Afghanistan and support to terrorist groups are bound to make neighbouring capitals view the reversal of democracy with alarm.

Without a major political party backing him the way the Pakistan Muslim League did during the Bhutto dismissal, he may have bitten off more than he can chew at the moment.

He faces the problem that without a National Assembly, his re-election for a second term cannot be held, and unless he rigs the promised elections, he cannot keep out Sharif or Bhutto.

(Courtesy *India Abroad*).

Concern on Communalism in South Asia

Shocked by the frenzied demolition of Ayodhya's Babri mosque and the harrowing repercussions, there is a great feeling of concern among us of the South Asian Forum in the Netherlands. In the successive waves of communal violence and vandalism, which have occurred in the region since that infamous Sunday of 6 December 1992, thousands have died, many more have been injured, hundreds of thousands uprooted, and a vast number of homes and business houses destroyed, including many worship-centres. Hindu-Muslim troubles in India have been accompanied with communal scenes in Bangladesh and Pakistan. In addition, in Sri Lanka also has been witnessed the Sinhala-Tamil ethnic strife. The ugly communalism, that is the pernicious politics of mobilising the people of an ethnic group or a religion against that of another, is clearly on the increase. In this, most dangerous is the spectre of fascistic Hindutva ideology in India and its implications for South Asia as a whole.

In these developments, most deplorable has been a clear evidence of insensitivity, and often connivance, of

the law-enforcement agencies in not providing protection to the people, nor curbing the communalists. This was clear in the eruption, persistence and recurrence of the scenes of violence and vandalism. State and central governments, civic and police authorities, and even the judiciary, all showed their social prejudices and or political opportunism. There have been clear instances of a partiality for the majority community by the officials and politicians, and also of the promotion of sectarian politics.

On the one hand, there is a clear exposure of the secular farce, in according the religion(s) a place in the polity. This started early during the anti-British struggles for independence. Even the left parties have remained victims of practising the farce and aggravating communal divisions among the people. That led to a partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 in the historic compromise patronised by the British imperialism. A communal holocaust accompanied a massive displacement of peoples, divided

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by religion, across into the new entities of India and Pakistan. It was no solution with the latter country breaking again into two co-religionist entities. In Sri Lanka also, the seeds of ethnic tensions were apparently sown during the colonial period in the Tamil-biased bureaucracy built by the British for ruling the country. In all these countries, since birth, the tensions have remained simmering, and even new ones emerged, due to the aggravated antagonism in the majority community against the local minority or minorities.

On the other hand, also is exposed the reality of Parliamentary vote-bank politics, practised in all the countries. One-person one-vote system of elections was, and remains, transplanted on to the people accustomed to the community-centred social relations. It has become a vehicle for the politics of getting block votes. Frustrations of real life make people to recede into the clutches of communal leaders exploiting the faith or ethnicity and, in turn, led by the latter and the illusions, born from false hopes, throw them into the fold of the political opportunists. It is most glaring in India, where mainly Congress has been benefiting in this game, first a secular farce of favouring Muslims to capture their block votes and then clear swerve for Hindu votes. Lately, this has only helped the Hindutva's forces, politically in the BJP and socially in the Siva Sena and RSS etc., which have led the anti-social criminals in recent waves of communal violence and vandalism.

The rise of Hindutva communalism holds dangerous portents: chain reactions of violence and terrorism in the subcontinent, and a take-over of India's central government by the fascistic Hindus. It has clearly alarming consequences of socio-political anarchy and instability within India, and in South Asia, due to the expansionist and hegemonistic designs of India's ruling classes. This must be a warning to the democratic forces in all countries of South Asia.

No doubt, there is an abundant evidence of secular affirmations of the people at large, witnessed since that ignominious Sunday. However, we can not remain complacent and this new challenge of the right has to be taken seriously. Checking communal violence remains in the local domain in mobilisation of the neighbourhood and appropriate law enforcement. A community alert and concerned for local peace and harmony can stop rumours and prevent clashes. Also it can demand apt law enforcement.

The communal virus is, however, more serious. In India, it seems to hold in its grip the wide middle class Hindu psyche. This may not be peculiar to India, as the middle classes are ready victims of frustrations everywhere. Growing economic crisis, causing hardships and insecurity, breeds communal divisions and social tensions, which are promoted by political opportunism. The latter has sustained old divisions, and created new ones, as abundantly seen all round. Muslim masses have failed to free themselves from their communal leaders in India and elsewhere. Hindus, Sikhs and Dalits in India, and Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka have fallen in the clutches of communals. Even Bhutan seems not to be free. New tensions are rising within and between the countries of the region. The communal virus can be eliminated only by persistent struggles of the suffering people for a secular and democratic society. For success in the peoples' struggles for a better life, communal peace and

harmony are vital in all countries of South Asia. This new challenge of the right can be opposed only by a new strategy of the forces of the revolutionary left.

South Asian Forum has a role to play in this struggle by helping in the free flow of information and unrestricted movement of the peoples of the region, by exposing and opposing the obstructions imposed by the anti-people governments; and by placing correct information before the Dutch and European people, and by exposing biased publicity and all politico-economic interventions from outside into the countries of the region.

Amsterdam: 15 April 1993

**Amrita Chhachhi, Khalid Hameed,
C. Pathmamanoharan, Narendra Singh
Ali Khanqan Mirza and others.**

South Asian Forum
c/o BPSC
P.O.Box 40066
1009 BB Amsterdam
The Netherlands

JAFFNA REVISITED

Mrs. Anandhi Suriyaprakasam the Tamil programmes producer of the BBC in London, addressing the members of the Medical Institute of Tamils at a seminar held recently at the Queen Ann's Hospital in Tottenham, rendered an emotional and a 'cry for help' speech, outlining the atrocities and the mounting suffering inflicted on the Tamil population of North Sri Lanka.

Anandhi was armed with the very latest information having returned recently on a fact finding mission to the Tamil Eelam. In Colombo, Anandhi was discouraged to visit the North of the Island by Mr. Bradman Weerakoon (advisor to the President). As a BBC journalist she and her colleague (BBC representative in Colombo) sought the necessary permission from the Sri Lankan Defence Ministry, to motor down to the borders of Killinochi. She said: 'As journalists from the BBC my colleague and I were allowed entry into Killinochi by the army control post there.' Her next move was to get to Jaffna. She had to bribe her way, play hide and seek to arrive in Periyaniham (coastal area about 3 miles from the centre of Killinochi). Here they paid Rs. 150 per head to catch a small motorised fishing boat to ferry them across to Killali. This is when their lives were in real danger, as search lights operated by the Sri Lankan defence forces scanning these coastal areas have the power to spot, stop and shoot innocent

people travelling to Eelam. Several such boats have been intercepted and shot at, in the recent past, at the cost of many innocent lives. As the boat could not come ashore in those shallow waters she had to walk knee deep with her belongings on the head and slippers in her hands, to board the vessel which was almost half a mile away at sea. With 20 people in that boat, the boatmen had to push the vessel further into deeper waters until they were neck deep in water. The motor was started and like a 'slow boat to China' it commenced its onward journey at midnight, amidst a roar of sporadic firing of artillery in the inland areas by the Army and possibly by the Tigers, she said. From the time she set foot in the boat Anandhi said: 'I was reciting the Kantha Sashdi Kavasam to take me safely to my motherland.' Her prayers answered, they all alighted safely, offshore in Killali and waded their way across to the mainland. From there, they caught the only bus (running on Kerosene and vegetable oil) operating to Jaffna town. 'As BBC journalists we were able to get through No Mans Land without any hitch'. Jaffna town she said was like a cemetery, 'buildings shattered, concrete structures and girders lying twisted, piles of rubbish all over, schools partly damaged and many houses demolished by bombs.'

She visited the Jaffna hospital and found it was under-staffed, inadequate

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water supply, no electricity, only a small generator to carry out minor surgery in a make-shift operating theatre. She found only a single general surgeon on duty. Casualty doctors' vacancies have not been filled for sometime. The doctor in charge had told her that many lives could have been saved if they had a neurosurgeon. She was told that medical supplies have been short for some time now, that essential medicines and vaccines are not available, in addition to inadequately trained nurses. She observed that the wards were overcrowded and there was poor patient care. 'Mothers in labour are brought to the hospital on bicycles or bullock carts. Patients with heart problems are also transported in a similar manner. Many of them die enroute to the hospital or on arrival there.' The doctor in charge had appealed to her to request all the Sri Lankan Tamil doctors and Medical men in the U.K. to come to their aid and help their people in this dire time of need. 'Please go there and train some of our own people. Please, please. It is your own blood, your sisters, brothers, sons and

daughters. They need your help. Please I beg of you. Please take turns and go to Jaffna, train some of them to cope with emergencies and save lives of our own people, who are in desperate need of your skills.' Anandhi at this point could not constrain her emotions. She burst into tears and gradually composed herself.

Her next stop was the Jaffna University Campus where she met a bevy of undergraduates who told her 'Acca (sister) we can study without electricity, burning oil lamps, we can study with the minimum of textbooks and stationery, but when the Heli's (helicopters) fly over us day in and day out we run for our lives to the closest bunkers. We keep doing this routinely as we do not know when they would shell us down. Perhaps the next time you come here we may not be alive or you may find us as mental patients in an asylum.'

Anandhi could not spot a 'kundan' (fat person) in the whole of Jaffna. Most of our people there are undernourished and starving she said. Many children she had seen appear to be in a 'worse state than those children of Somalia we see on television.' According to her estimate, there are more

than two lakhs of Tamils in refugee camps in the North. 'Although the TRO (Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation) is caring for 600 families in camps the organisation is unable to meet the demand for more help that is urgently needed.'

When I spoke to Anandhi on a subsequent occasion, she did tell me of her meeting with Prabhakaran (leader of the Tigers). She asked him whether he could fight 80,000 men of Sinhala forces armed with modern weapons with only about 10,000 of his men. An astute Prabhakaran's spontaneous reply was: 'Sister, aren't you aware of what happened to America in Vietnam and don't you know what befell in Afghanistan when the Russians fought them with sophisticated modern weaponry and many a thousand armed personnel.' Prabhakaran also told her: 'My people must live in dignity and not as slaves'. When she posed the question: 'Do you genuinely want peace?' His reply was: 'I am not laying any conditions. It is the Government of Sri Lanka. We are prepared to talk and negotiate. It is up to them. The ball is in their court', he added.

by Dr. K.C. Rajasingham.

NEWS ROUND-UP

● **THE CONDUCT** of the state-controlled media would be monitored by a special bureau during the forthcoming provincial council elections, according to senior officials of the Free Media Movement (FMM). Previous experiences showed that the state-controlled media, particularly the radio and television, were exploited unfairly by the government. The information gathered by the bureau they proposed to set up would enable the movement to create an awareness about the biased conduct of state controlled media, and the information gathered could be used as evidence whenever legal action was possible and would be submitted to the Commissioners of Elections weekly until they were over, the officials of the FMM said.

● **THE GOVERNMENT** has directed the army high command to ensure that army deserters do not get involved in political activities in the forthcoming provincial council elections. The directive was to take effective steps against the involvement of thousands of army personnel who had deserted their posts during the last two years in the election campaign. This is the first time in Sri Lanka where the army has been alerted against possible sabotage and attacks

and counter attacks by army deserters. The government has been prompted to take these steps in view of the possibility of the opposition engaging army deserters in election work.

● **'THE TAMIL PEOPLE** thought of a separate government for themselves after they found that the governments ruling this country were not representing the Tamil speaking people. There is nothing wrong in this. When the necessity arises for a separate government, land becomes an important factor to implement this. In this context, the Tamils are justified in their struggle. The State-aided colonisation and the land policy of the government in the North-East has affected the Tamil people. This policy of State-aided colonisation should not only stop forthwith, but those schemes which have already taken place must be withdrawn. The Sinhala people should not give their support for this type of State-aided colonisation,' Mr. Victor Ivan, Editor of the Sinhala Weekly *Ravaya*, said in a recent interview given to the Tamil language monthly *Sarinihar*.

● **VASUDEVA NANAYAKKARA**, the leader of the Nava Sama Samaja Party, has called upon the government to release from detention the leader of the Up Country Peoples Front, Periyasamy Chandrasekaran. He stated that specially because Chandrasekaran has already been in deten-

tion for over two years, he should be released forthwith and given full freedom to participate in the forthcoming provincial council elections. Chandrasekaran was taken into custody and held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act for allegedly harbouring Varathan who was wanted in connection with the bomb attack on the the Army Joint Operations Command headquarters in Colombo in June 1991 and the assassination of former State Minister for Defence Ranjan Wijeratne. Varathan committed suicide by consuming a cyanide capsule when his hideout was surrounded by police personnel.

● **ARULNESAN SURENDRAN** was recently sentenced by the Colombo High Court to imprisonment for a term of 18 months suspended for ten years and a fine of Rs. 7,500 in default for a further two years after pleading guilty to the lesser charge of failing to give information to the police about the conspiracy to murder the former Minister of State for Defence, Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne. In this case A. Surendran alias Zaheer was indicted under the Prevention of Terrorism Act with being a member of the LTTE and receiving military training in Jaffna between 1 January 1989 and 30 June 1991 and for failing to give information to the authorities that Pottu Amman and Pren of the LTTE had conspired to murder the minister.

● **INDICTMENTS** filed against hundreds of JVP suspects under emergency regulations for relatively minor offences such as pasting posters, failure to give information to the police, obstructing roads, collecting identity cards, issuing threatening letters and attending JVP classes are being withdrawn on the orders of Sri Lanka's Attorney General, Tilak Marapana. A total of 3,070 indictments have been filed after the 1988/89 JVP uprising and 2,011 suspects were discharged on grounds of lack of evidence. In respect of another 198 cases, the AG has advised the police to file charges. He has also instructed his State Counsel prosecuting in the High Courts to agree to imposition of suspended sentences in cases where the defendants plead guilty to lesser charges to enable these persons to be released from custody.

● **GOVERNMENT** is maintaining 26 refugee camps in the Trincomalee district with 4730 families. In addition there are 3362 refugee families living outside the welfare camps. Government spends Rs. 8 million monthly for dry rations to feed the refugees. There are 5 refugee camps with 1181 families in Trincomalee town and Gravets division, 6 camps with 1175 families in Muttur division, 2 camps with 149 families in the Kinniya division, 5 camps with 782 families in the Kachchaveli division, 5 camps with 722 families in the Morawewa division and 3 camps with 721 families in the Tampalakamam division. The total number of people displaced in 1990 was 51,398 and up to now 35,849 families have been resettled.

● **RESPONDING** to criticism that the government was starving the people of Jaffna in northern Sri Lanka, Mr. Christy Silva, Secretary to the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Social Welfare, said that around 26,509 metric tonnes of food and other essential items were sent to the Jaffna peninsula during the last three months through the Government Agent. In addition to these items, the government had also sent 6,500 barrels of kerosene to the Jaffna GA, whom he had met on 7 April. Mr. Silva claimed that the GA, while requesting for 5,000 more barrels of kerosene, was satisfied with the quantum of supply sent in the past three months and that prices of most of the commodities had come down in the peninsula.

● **IN THE ASIAN SUB-CONTINENT**, Sri Lanka was second only to Pakistan in spending the highest amount of money on defence and the government had spent in excess of Rs. 2200 millions in the last ten years to carry on

the war in the North-East, said Joseph Pararajasingham, TULF MP, at a recent meeting held at Periyakallaru in the eastern province. The government was continuing to spend vast sums of money in purchasing more and more weapons including bombers and tanks. Unless the government realised that the Northeast problem could not be solved militarily and made efforts to seek a political solution, the country would go bankrupt. In the Northeast, at least 40 persons were being killed on an average daily, and they include civilians, militants and soldiers. Well over 60,000 had died already and about 5,000 were missing, the MP added.

● **THE DEMOCRATIC** United Front (DUNF) in its submission to the International Monitoring Committee for the Provincial Council elections has accused the ruling UNP of alleged 'blatant malpractice and oppressive measures' that would affect a free and fair election. It has alleged that a number of government employees

have been transferred to distant places on the mere suspicion that they were supporters of the DUNF. It has also cited blatant exploitation of the government-controlled media to publish and broadcast only news relating to the ruling party. The other complaints by the DUNF include that opposition parties had been denied permission in many instances to hold public rallies and while they are prevented from putting up posters in public places on the ground that they are in contravention of the law, supporters of the ruling party and its candidates are freely permitted to put up posters as the police turn a blind eye.

● **THE NAVA SAMA SAMAJA PARTY** (NSSP) has brought to the attention of the Commissioner of Elections that electoral lists were not available in many areas including Kandy. Party Secretary Dr. Wickremabahu Karunaratne in a letter to the Commissioner has told him that he doubted whether these lists would be available to the voters before the elections were held.

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If you wish to find out more about S.C.O.T. and contribute towards the work with these groups please contact: SCOT, 7 Gossington Close, Chislehurst, Kent BR7 6TG. Tel: 081-468 7181.

READERS FORUM

ENOUGH OF THIS BLOODSHED

Mr. V. Thampu's article that appeared in your February issue, reflects the opinion of a good majority of Tamils I believe. As he says what the Tamils want now is a 'Safe Haven' and nothing more.

We are alarmed at the extent of human rights violations and the enormous cost of human lives, that has been caused by this ongoing war. The crisis has escalated to the highest level and shows no signs of being resolved.

There seems to be no creditable alternative between the Government and the L.T.T.E.

The Tamils feel that it has almost paid its debt to the L.T.T.E. for using it as a pawn. The problems facing the people in the North and East are innumerable. No infrastructure, no food, no medicine, no money, no laws, no justice, no employment, no education – nothing whatsoever and most of all has deprived them of the freedom of speech. All these factors have forced a great number of people to flee from their homeland and seek asylum in foreign lands.

The deep tragedy of this conflict is a threat to our land and future generations. There's very little doubt that the situation in our homeland is very very serious. The atmosphere of mistrust and fear as well as the hopelessness experienced by the youth who see a bleak future for themselves has prompted thousands to find accommodation in alien lands.

People continue to suffer abuses of basic human rights that are shocking. They are not subject to norms of international human rights and humanitarian law and no one seems to have a conscience to condemn these abuses. The old and the wise dare not open their mouths to express their feelings in fear of execution.

It's very distressing to find that the severity of the situation is so little known to the international community. The world's conscience was pricked by the pictures of starving children, like walking skeletons and in the hands of death, very often seen on TV. Graphic images were provided of Somalia and Bosnia but none of our people's plight has been given so much publicity in the foreign media.

We don't want our country to go to the extent of Somalia, but if this war continues there's little doubt that, we

may take the place of Somalia in the near future unless something is done.

Time is running out and we must urge the leaders of both sides to adopt a new strategy to end the conflict, find an end to the lasting resolution of the ethnic conflict and restore peace and justice to the Tamils. It's worsening day by day.

We deserve a better leadership and better alternatives than what we are getting now.

The continuing violence, the reluctance of the war lords to end the conflict – best exemplified by the ship-load of arms destined for the North that was intercepted in India recently, shows the leaders are determined to prolong the war.

How much of Jaffna society has been destroyed so far?

Where are the intellectuals, the academics and the master brains gone? What's the state of the one and only university and the Medical Faculty? How much of effort and perseverance had been put in order to set them up? They've been devastated and in a state of collapse. Those who wanted to serve their country despite all the possibilities they had in finding a haven in other lands opted to stay behind and now what's their fate? Some of them are either in heaven not Haven or dumbfounded and awaiting their turn to an unknown destination.

Now the people are only concerned about survival and nothing more. They have had enough. Enough is enough. They cannot stand any more. It has driven them to that stage of frustration.

It's quite clear that this conflict cannot be solved militarily. By resorting to intensified warfare there would be only a massive tragic loss of civilian life and nothing more. It appears it's impossible for both parties concerned to arrive at a mutually acceptable agreement.

For the sake of all those who continue to suffer, the cost of the conflict, it's essential that there be an immediate internationally monitored ceasefire and then come to a settlement. Tolerance and compromise are needed on both sides.

Why can't the foreign based pro-Tigers who champion the cause go to the North and East and see for themselves the starvation of their brethren, the situation prevailing there of untold agony and misery that has been thrust upon them.

I think the time has come for the Tamils as a whole nation from every part of the world to say in one voice 'Enough of this bloodshed'.

The saviour of the Tamil Nation, Mr. V. Prabhakaran, the champion of Buddha Tharma Mr. Premadasa, we beg of you to lay down your arms, come to the table, talk over and put a halt to this war which is going to make neither of you a winner nor a loser.

Just for a moment, think of the innocent lives that are dying without even seeing the light of sunshine in their lives.

Life is precious. It's worth living, please do let them enjoy the fruits of life.

Let us all plead wholeheartedly to both of them on behalf of all who are crushed in our sweet homeland. Please do have mercy on them.

The quality of mercy is not strained!

Rajes Sampantar,

5-14 Bonila Avenue,
Winnipeg R2M1J1

ASSASSINATIONS IN SRI LANKA

As Sri Lanka continues to mourn the sad deaths of the late President and the late DUNF leader, it would naturally be difficult for such a politically conscious society to forget the recent political rifts between the two leaders which arose primarily from differences in their social origins and consequent political bases.

It would however be inappropriate to forget the late President's and the late DUNF leader's joint and respective contributions to Sri Lanka, particularly in connection with opposition to outside interference into the internal affairs of the country.

Amongst the various disturbing features and consequences of the whole episode is the fact that the public was conspicuously bombarded with misleading rumours and wild allegations as to who were the most likely culprits behind these two assassinations. No sooner the late DUNF leader was assassinated, the Government was accused of being behind the crime, despite the undisputed fact that the Government was the biggest consequent loser. Once this allegation undermined the late President and made him politically weak, it enabled a successful assassination attempt to be made against him.

Thereafter, both assassinations have been blamed on the LTT. This is despite the fact that the LTT is one of the biggest losers from the late President's assassination. Regarding the so-called evidence which point to one or both of the assassinations having been carried out by the LTT, one must differentiate between an assassination planned and

implemented by the LTT and one which any Tamil youth could have been hired for, or even tricked into carrying out.

Another relevant fact is that both the late President and the late DUNF leaders were firm believers of Sri Lanka's ability to resolve her problems internally. The late President's position on this count and his determination to pursue a political rather than a military solution to the problem in the North were also reiterated by him in a

recent BBC International phone-in programme. It is also significant that the late general Kobbekaduwa was also assassinated shortly after his internationally publicized comments on the war which were similar to those of the late President.

The above circumstances including the chronological sequence of the assassinations and the almost immediate subsequent call to escalate the military offensive could in fact point to a well planned conspiracy to carry out

the two assassinations.

One could also see a similarity between this conspiracy with how the Anuradhapura massacre was carried out and blamed on the LTT and how Hitler arranged for a gang of red shirted people to set fire to the Reichstag and made it an excuse to massacre the leftists.

Bernard Wijedoru,

P.O. Box 90866, TST,
Hong Kong.

BOOK REVIEW

At The Crossroads

A Critique on the Hindu way of Life
by K. Rajasingham – Colombo 1993

This is a very interesting book. Written by one who was a Deputy-Commissioner of Inland Revenue and had been serving in Zambia as Tax Consultant, it is symbolic of the dilemma that has confronted the middle-class professional Tamils of Sri Lanka since 1983. Given the inescapable truth that Hindus in Sri Lanka are largely Tamils, the book could as well have been subtitled 'A Critique on the Tamil Hindu way of Life'.

The book opens (see Introduction) and ends (Chapter IX – pp.145-6) with the 'provocation' for writing the book – the riots of July 1983, the suffering the Sri Lankan Tamils underwent and how the problem continues unsolved even after a decade.

The Introduction reveals the author, his background and the aim of the book:

'... the unforeseen catastrophe of the July '83 ethnic uproar threw the complacent Tamil, both young and old, completely out of gear. While the young ones reacted very emotionally and turned to militarism as the only option for their vindication and future survival, the elderly and the infirm, some of them at least, thought it fit to do some rethinking of the cherished values, our beliefs and customs and Hindu philosophy as such' (p.iv, emphasis by the reviewer.)

To Mr. Rajasingham, a religion is its 'philosophy' and not the rites and ritual that are part of the faith. He sets out to identify the basic cause for all the Human problems and locates them in Desire and Contentment. He refers to the philosophical answers given in Hinduism relating to these and says that these high ideals were beyond the reach of the common man, who in his inability to comprehend the philosophy went into ritualism (p.32),

which led him on to casteism and other inequalities.

After discussing the position of contentment and arguing that none of the Eastern philosophies 'successfully have resolved for man the problem of living his life in this world, finding love and contentment that he so desperately needs' and indicting that 'organised religion has done more disservice to religion than promoting it' he goes on to discuss the Great Hindu Savants who kept the philosophy alive.

The author discusses the role of meditation and the place of magic in religion and speaks of the intensity of power achieved through meditation. There is a very useful discussion on Sai Baba.

He contrasts the devotionalist tradition with the intellectualist tradition within Hinduism. He concentrates his argument on liberation through meditation. There is a discussion on the 'Hindu Visualisation of Divinity', relating it to the needs of meditation. At the end of it he says that when fulfilment of worldly desires became impossible, contentment was sought after as the panacea for all the ills of the mind and the Renunciation comes into vogue as the accepted solution to bring contentment by the denial of all desires good and bad. . . . So much so what begins as an aid to a successful life here on earth seems to end up with the opposite objective.'

In chapter 9 he speaks of how eternal happiness in Hinduism has been achieved through arduous self-denial, renunciation and meditation. Commenting on it the author says:

'In evaluating his effort therefore the world can only revere and respect him whilst the exercise remains a self-seeking effort, no less. It cannot be otherwise either, as it has all to do with the contentment and happiness of that individual's soul and can never be a shared experience for the less daring, less qualified.

'Is this then what the Hindus really want?'

The most revealing part of the Book is understandably its final chapter wherein he says:

'If (the process of liberation) soon became such an arduous job that only a few dedicated souls could achieve it whilst the vast majority had fallen by the wayside disgruntled, and disillusioned by their conduct and the beliefs to which they had subscribed for so long. No doubt then he is at the crossroads.'

The author ends his book with a quote from Alistair MacIntyre:

'Religion needs to be translated into non-religious terms and not simply rejected. This is the atheism of Feurbach, of Frederik Strauss and Karl Marx. Its task is not a purely intellectual one, it is rather to transform society, so that men will no longer need to resort to religious forms of expression.' (p.161 emphasis by reviewer).

So the Critique ends up with the realisation that the transformation of society is the most crucial one. People have talked of the ills of the world, 'the point however is to change it' said Marx.

Mr. Rajasingham adopts an intellectualist approach to religion and seems to hold on to the view that the philosophy of a religion is more important than its rituals. In fact he seems to ascribe a low position to rituals. But the problem is, for the average man religion is faith and ritual and both anthropology and sociology hold it as fundamental to religious behaviour.

While discussing the problems of desire and contentment in the Hindu view of things, the author refers to Buddhism too and makes some pithy comments on what goes on in the Buddhist fold.

It would not be correct to subject a work of this type to the type of academic criticism that is reserved for works written for and by the academia. The value of a work lies in

Continued on page 29

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MATRIMONIAL

Jaffna Hindu parents seek fair, pretty, preferably professionally qualified girl in twenties for their medical doctor son, Canadian citizen, practising in Canada. Send details and photo. M 657 c/o Tamil Times.

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WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couple on their recent wedding.

Jivitkumar son of Mr. & Mrs. C. Viyakesparan of 2 Oaklands, 787 B Kenton Lane, Harrow, Middx. HA3 6AH and Roshanthi daughter of Mr. & Mrs. T. Mahendran of 29 Haig Street, Lower Hutt, New Zealand on 1st May 1993 at Old St. Paul's Church, Mulgrave Street, Wellington, New Zealand.

OBITUARIES

We regret that the following Obituary appeared incomplete in the last issue. It is repeated below.

Rev. Nesakumar Kadirgamar, Minister, Church of South India, beloved husband of Rane, father of Romila, much loved youngest son of the late Rev. J.W.A. Kadirgamar and Mrs. G.N. Kadirgamar, loving brother of Lila, Rajan, Alagan, Padma, Silan, Sita, Sathian and Kumaran; brother-in-law of late Arasakone Solomon, Mahilmalar, Rane, late C.E. Anandarajan, Sakuntala, S.V. Chandran, Vathana, Suvendrini; son-in-law of Mr. & Mrs. G. Gunaratnam, brother-in-law of Ratnakumar, Thangaratnam, Manorani and Devi passed away 28 November 1992, Christian Medical College Hospital, Vellore, India. Funeral and interment services led by his nephew the Rev. G.D. Anandarajan took place in Vellore. Services of thanksgiving

were held in Maruthanamadam, Jaffna; Colombo, Tokyo, Toronto, Sydney and Singapore. Remembered with affection, Easter 1993, by the members of his family, nephews, nieces, grand-nephews and grand-nieces. Inserted on behalf of Mrs. G.N. Kadirgamar 'Welsh Illam', Maruthanamadam, Chunnakam, Sri Lanka; by Silan Kadirgamar, 5-4-22 Minami Aoyama, Minato-Ku, Tokyo 107, Japan.



Mr. Elangaiyar Gurusamy (86), Retired Ceylon Government Railway and former Chairman, Town Council, Kankesanthurai, beloved father of Dr. Langainarayanan (Trichy), Navukarasi Ponnampalam (U.K.), late Shanmugavadivu Panchadcharam (Inuvil, Sri Lanka), Parimalakanthy Pandithavarathan, Vijayaluxmy Paramasivam (both of Colombo), Kanchanamala Puvanenthiran (Switzerland), Thangaluxmy Tharmapalasingham, Yogambihai Gajendra (both of U.K.) and Gnanambihai Shanmugaraja (Canada) passed away in Inuvil, Sri Lanka 17th February 1993. We thank all for their messages of sympathy and support during the period of grief - 24 Mill Ridge, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 7PE. Tel: 081-958 4086.



Mr. Vythilingham Elampoornar (Elam), former Area Manager, British Telecom, loving son of the late Sinathamby Vythilingham and Kathirkamu Parupatham Vythilingham (Canada); beloved husband of Puvanambikai; loving and precious father of Kalaiyarasan and Sangeetha; loving brother of Elavarasy Veepoushanan (Canada), Elanchelvy Senthilkumar (Canada), Elanthevy Amalakumar (U.K.), Elango (Canada) and Elanchenny (USA); brother-in-law of Veepoushanan, Senthilkumar, Amalakumar, Chithiradevy Elango and Dr. Indrani Elanchenny - passed away peacefully on 19th April 1993, at 57, Westmorland Road, North Harrow, Middlesex, UK. The cremation took place at

Golders Green Crematorium, London NW11, on Sunday the 25th April 1993. Telephone: 081-427 2726.

Elam was a keen promoter of Tamil language and culture in the U.K. and has been the key founder and organiser of various Tamil schools.

We, the Tamil Union of Herts and Herts Tamil School join everyone in conveying our heartfelt condolences to the family and salute this ever pleasant great man of the community.



Saravanamuthu Appathurai Subramaniam (60), formerly Chief Cashier, Mascons Ltd., Colombo, beloved husband of Seethadevi; loving father of Sathibalan (Canada) and Sathiakala (U.K.); father-in-law of Suganthi and Asogan; grandfather of Sharanya and Niraniya passed away on 27.4.93 in Tooting, U.K. after a brief illness - 129 B Seely Road, London SW17 9QX. Tel: 081-677 6182.



Parameshwari Sabanayagam Retired teacher, Kopay Govt. School, Vembadi Girls High School and Our Lady of Refuge, Jaffna. Beloved wife of Spencer Selvadurai Sabanayagam; mother of Kamalini, Padmini, Sivakumaran (all of U.K.), Dr. Nirmala, Sugumaran, Kalaivani, Damayanthi (all of Canada), Karunakaran and Vijeyakumaran (both USA); mother-in-law of Rajendran, Dr. Nagarajah, Dr. Sivaji, Mohan Jeremiah, Sivadas, Vasuhi, Rahini, Rathika; grandmother of Nirooshan, Yalini, Nirshanthan, Parthiban, Maithili, Arun, Jivakan, Nirrethana, Tanya and Diviya; sister of Kanagasabapathy, Nadarajah and Thillagawathy, passed away. Funeral took place in Highland Memory Gardens, Ontario, Canada on 1st May 1993. - 172 Fairlawn Park, Sydenham, London SE26 5SD. Tel: 081-778 9013.

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of **Dr. Manohara Nadarajah**, formerly of Katsina, Nigeria and later Bedford General Hospital, U.K.. On the first anniversary of his passing away on 25.5.92.

You are always in our hearts and in our thoughts.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by your wife Indranee and sons Suthaharan and Vaseeharan - 52 Marnham Crescent, Greenford, Middlesex, UB6 9SW.



Mrs. Ratnadevi Mandalanayagam, Chunnakam, Sri Lanka.

Born: 11.1.1918 Died: 17.5.88.

Your love and affection we will ever cherish.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered on the fifth anniversary of her passing away by her children, grandchildren, sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. - 'Greenacres', 63 Sandown Park, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 4RT, U.K.



In everloving memory of **Dr. Parameswaran Kandiah** on the third anniversary of his passing away on 12.5.90. Sorrowfully remembered by his beloved wife Pathmasany and loving children Thayalan and Pathanjali - 29 Mounston Close, Hartside Grange, Hartlepool, TS26 0LR, U.K.



In everloving memory of **Mrs. Maheswary Sabaratnam** who passed away on 21.5.89.

Times may change, but
Memories of you never fade
In our hearts you will always stay
Loved and remembered everyday.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by daughters, Menakai, Sarojini, Sakuntala; sons-in-law Thanabal, Sothi and Sivaramalingam; grandchildren Sumathy, Sriharan, Sriram, Sinanee, Subethira, Shanthi, Vanee, Tilly and Arjunan and great grandchildren Gajan, Kumaran, Luxmi, Radha, Jonathan, Jennifer, Jason, Sarangan, Dharshini and Maheswary Jannanie - 23 Arthur Street, Winchester, MA 01890, USA.

An Appreciation

News of the untimely death of **Professor Vanniasagaram Karunanathan**, Professor of Surgery at the University of Jaffna, was received with great sadness by his many professional colleagues, friends, relatives and the hundreds of his patients, students and trainees who had been the beneficiaries of a kind and loving surgeon and surgical teacher for the past three decades. His funeral took place at Kanatte, Colombo on the 24th March 1993.

Professor Karunanathan hailed from a medical background, being the eldest son of the late Dr. & Mrs. Vanniasagaram of Malla-kam. He had his early education at some of the premier institutions in Colombo and Jaffna - Royal, St. John's and Hartley - and selected, not surprisingly for someone with a great ability to relate to people, a career in medicine. Having graduated from the University of Colombo in 1955, he continued his surgical training at its Teaching Hospital. During a brief assignment as Medical Officer of Health, Chilaw, he was awarded a medal for outstanding public health service - an early indication of his total commitment to remain with and care for the community in Sri Lanka.

Having completed his surgical training in the United Kingdom, culminating in the award of the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons, Karu returned to a surgical career in Sri Lanka that spanned the next twenty five years. He served as a Consultant Surgeon in many of the major provincial and teaching hospitals - Trincomalee ('68-'71), Galle ('72-'75), Kandy ('75-'81) and Jaffna ('81 onwards). Such dedicated service extending the length and breadth of Sri Lanka no doubt made him well known and well loved by the people of all the communities in Sri Lanka - a fact that was clearly underscored by the attendance at his funeral.

The pinnacle of his career was his appointment to the Foundation Chair in Surgery at the University of Jaffna. Karu was not a flamboyant personality, but his quiet mannerism and humility masked an inner drive of intense commitment to the University and to his students and patients. He was a source of strength to his colleagues, many of whom often turned to him for both professional and personal advice. This was sought knowing very well that what would be offered was genuine and sincere, and delivered with a sense of humour and wit that was so characteristic of his inimitable style. His immense and deep intellect and analytical mind was ever so valuable in the context of dealing with the trials and tribulations of directing a medical curriculum and the delivery of health care in a community moving towards catastrophic political and sociological changes. The life and job of a surgeon during this period, catering to the needs of the militants and the military alike, was a balancing act that required immense courage and tact.

Karu was also closely involved in Post Graduate medical activities and was a member of the Boards of Studies in Surgery and Otolaryngology and an examiner for the M.S. (Surgery). In his early days, he also played an active part in the emerging medical Trade Union movement and was elected President of the Kandy and Galle branches of the GMA and later as Vice President of the national body. The esteem in which he was held by his colleagues resulted in his election to the Presidency of the Clinical Societies of Galle and Kandy and the Jaffna Medical Association.

Professor Karunanathan is sadly no more but he will be remembered above all as a wise but humble individual who treated and served all alike with respect and dignity.

N. Sreeharan.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

May 31 O.B.A.'s Festival of Cricket at Maori Park, Worcester Park, Surrey. Tel: 081-567 2352/391 0351/668 8903.

June 2 Pirathosam.

June 3 Vaikasi Visakam.

June 4 Full Moon.

June 6 Trinity Sunday.

June 10 Corpus Christi.

June 16 Ekathasi.

June 17 Pirathosam.

June 18 7.15pm Malaysian Friendly Club presents Cultural Evening of Carnatic Music & Bharatha Natyam at Commonwealth Institute, High Street Kensington, London W8. Tel: 081-679 6095.

June 19 Amavasai. 6.30pm Kana Kuyil Contest backed by Band Rainbow and featuring Special Guest singer Kulaseelanathan at Brent Town Hall, Forty Lane, Wembley, Middx. Tel: 081-904 9227/205 0397.

June 19 6.30pm Tamil Performing Arts Society presents Tamil Drama Festival '93 - at South Norwood Centre, Sandown Road, London SE25 4XE. Tel: 081-459 4335/470 7883.

June 23 Chathurthi.

June 26 Aani Uththiram.

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June 26 Vembadi Old Girls' Association (U.K.) presents Summer Dinner Dance at Lola Jones Hall, Tooting Leisure Centre, Greaves Place, off Garratt Lane, Tooting, London SW17 0NE. Tel: 081-647 9069/349 1172.

June 27 SCOT presents Carnatic Vocal Recital by O.S. Thiagarajan at The Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Tel: 081-764 7912/870 9897/468 7181 & 0277 223981.

June 29 St. Peter & Paul Day.

June 30 Ekathasi.

July 11 6.30pm Melhandan Athlenam presents Carnatic Vocal recital by Sangeetha Vani Nageswari Bramananda at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 in aid of the educational needs of deprived Saiva children in Sri Lanka.

At the Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 071 381 3086/4608.

June 5th, 20th, July 3rd, 17th, 31st & Aug. 7th (Concluding session) 5.30pm. Lecture on Mahabharata by Sri Mathoor Krishnamurthi.

June 6 Bharata Natyam by Padma Murali.

June 12 Sitar by Partha Chatterjee.

June 13 6.30pm Flute by Raghunath Seth.

June 18 7.00pm. Hindustani Vocal by Sharad Sathe.

June 19 5.30pm. Lecture on African Experience by Dr. Habib Zuben. (Former UNESCO Scientist).

Highgate Murugan Temple, London N6

Vaikasi Visakam (Lord Murugan's birthday) will be celebrated on Thursday, 3rd June '93 commencing at 7.00pm with Abisekam followed by Pooja and Shanmugar will be taken out in procession.

The Annual Festival will commence on 12th June '93 and continue for 15 days culminating on Saturday, 26th June '93 which is Aani Uththiram day. Arrangements are being made to have traditional Natheswaram performed. An outstanding lecturer from India is expected to deliver a series of religious discourses (Kathaprasangams) every day. For details please contact the Administrator on Tel: 081-348 9835.

A vacancy exists for an Assistant Administrator on a rota basis. Those interested should apply in writing immediately to the undersigned. Applicants should preferably be vegetarians with a practical knowledge of Hindu (Saiva) Temple management customs and rituals according to traditions in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. Possession of a U.K. driving licence is an added qualification. For further information please ring Vama on 081-398 6078 after office hours.

200 A, Archway Road,
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N. Vamadevan,
Chairman.

Subathra's Arangetram



Subathra Subramaniam's Pushpanjali, ably performed in lively tempo, was a bright start to her Bharata Natyam arangetram on Saturday 10th April at the Bhavan Centre. This was immediately followed by a Ganesha Vandana choreographed by the Dhananjayans.

She brought cheerful vitality to the stage, easily communicating her enjoyment of dance to the audience, and her keen sense of rhythm and ability to maintain a good speed contributed to the impression of liveliness.

Her Alarippu in Raga Nattai, Tishra Eka Tala ('Tishram Tala' is a misnomer) was neatly executed, and with clear and graceful movements she did full justice to the Jathiswaram in Ragamalika, Misrachapu Tala choreographed by her guru Sri Prakash Yadagudde - who also choreographed all the other items mentioned below.

She entered with enthusiasm into the Varnam about a maiden's separation from her Lord Muruga, although she did not always allow herself that momentary lingering which would have added greater strength to her very capable rendering. The Jathis were beautifully composed and gave fine scope for Subathra to show her talent.

The Keerthanam about Lord Nataraja in the Kannada language was short and sweet, and the Padam in Raga Todi, Adi Tala, showing a young maiden's anger and despair at Krishna's mischievous pranks, captured the underlying mood of affection.

The Thillana was characterised by the brightness and verve which comes naturally to Subathra, although the item would have benefited by the inclusion of more Koraves.

The Managalam brought an enjoyable evening to a close - an evening which reaffirmed the value of the guru shishya

tradition and showed what results can be achieved with a good teacher and gifted student.

The fine quality of the musical accompaniment contributed to the success of the occasion. Musicians were: Prakash Yadagudde - natuvangam, Sivasakti Sivanesan - vocal, K.S. Bhavani Shankar - mridangam, B.K. Chandrashekhhar - violin, and Joy Sudharshini - veena. The compering was competently carried out by Subathra herself.

Subathra came to the UK from Malaysia, and has been studying Bharata Natyam with Prakash Yadagudde of the Bhavan Centre since 1988. She is his eighth student to have given her debut performance.

Venu Gaanam in London



A recital was organised by 'Eastern Fine Arts Promotions' at the Wembley High School Hall on 1.5.93, in which the main artiste was Sri K. Jananayagam on the flute.

The recital commenced with the Varnam 'Evvari Botha' in Abohi raga followed by 'Vinayaga' in Hamsathvani which he played with vibrance and included creative swara. The song beginning with 'Saraswathy' in raga Saraswathy was played with musical elegance and the kachcheri got warmed up when he tastefully played one of Sri Thiyagaraja Swami's Pancharatna pieces, Shathiyangene in Arabi raga.

The recital continued with the song 'Sama-ja Vara Ramana' in Hindolam and alapana in Kamas delighting the audience with an expert rendering of the famous song Proseva, a composition of Mysore Vasudevacharya. He played two more pieces in raga Naga-kaanthari, Mohanam and rendered the raga Hemavathi with extensive alapana and played the piece Sri Kanthimathim composed by Theedshithar. He softly and ably played in raga Vasantha, a piece beginning with 'Seethamma' and 'Kanagasabapathyiku' in Adana and the thevarem 'Idarinum thalar-inum' in Kethara gowla.

After the interval, he rendered in traditional carnatic style Ragam Thanam Pallavi in Amruthavarshini raga. The pallavi was on Misra Jathi Jembai tala. Towards the end the ragamaliga consisting of Ananthabairavi, Mayamala Gowla, Sahana and Nilambari was like a crown of the programme of the evening played eloquently and melodiously. The kachcheri ended with Thiruppugal and Mangalam.

On the whole the recital was in unadulter-

ated carnatic style with richness in laya. I would recommend the programme to all rasikas of classical South Indian music. Two and a half hours of his music took us to a high plane of enjoyment.

I must refer to the able support given by Dr. Luxmi Jayan on the violin. I have watched her performances steadily progressing over the years. She was a source of great strength to the artiste of the evening. The young duo miruthangists Jason and Jonathan Pararajasingam showed calmness and dexterity typical of very experienced percussionists. Bangalore Prakash on Gatam was very able and rhythmic and blended well with the rest of the team. Selvi Vathani Varatharajan on the Thambura was patiently keeping the sruthi during the whole concert.

Nageswari Brahmananda.

'The Face'



Prakash Yadagudde's dance ballet 'The Face', in which he and Kumari Nina take the leading roles, was performed again at the Bhavan Centre on Sunday 25th April, the last date of its spring tour.

The show is an enjoyable one with plenty of variety, and follows the life of the young dancer Anand. Three scenes are particularly outstanding:

The dance-drama in the village square – the original source of Anand's inspiration to be a dancer – gives scope for a lovely sequence between the demon Bhasmasura, played by K.S. Bhavani Shankar, and Mohini, played by Kumari Nina. The demon in striking Yakshagan costume is a wonderful foil for the beautiful enchantress, who leads him to be the cause of his own death, and the episode has great visual impact.

The scene where Anand takes dance classes from the young student Charu is beautifully portrayed in the Nityadhami tradition – the many stages of learning being condensed into a short space of time – and we discover that simple adavus, performed to unaccompanied spoken jathis in practice dress, can be

both effective and enjoyable. The duet is an unusual and memorable one, and not without a sense of humour.

The dance contest between Anand and Charu at the end of the ballet is the highlight of the show. Charu wants to return to classical dance after being lured into commercial dance, and she has to persuade the disillusioned Anand of her sincerity. It is a fine opportunity for both dancers to show their talent as they take it in turns to outdo the other.

Nina, dances with grace and accuracy to the sitar, while Prakash, dancing to the strong Pakhawaj bols, has a chance to remind us that his movements can have extremely beautiful sculptural outlines, however briefly held. His sequence is a rare occasion to see the dynamic quality that nritta can have when danced with passion – anger almost – and his performance at this point is brilliant.

The ballet is well supported by seven young dancers trained by Prakash: Gita Cambow, Tina Das, Anusha Gurunathan, Pinache Khan, Deepa Rebeiro, Snehal Shah and Subathra Subramaniam. Acting parts were played by B.K. Chandrashekar and Shahed Murad according to the venue.

A major source of inspiration for the ballet is of course the music, which was composed and directed by T.V. Gopalkrishnan in India. It guides the story and reflects its moods with great skill and imagination, giving the impression of variety within unity.

The project has received funding from the Arts Council and London Arts Board, and support from the Bhavan Centre, London, where Prakash is Head of the Bharata Natyam Department.

Continued from page 17

mining of efficient and honest administration. This is the minimum that is needed to stabilise the open economy on which the survival of this elite hinges. The lessons of the IPKF intervention and the JVP insurrections have been readily forgotten.

The Irish armies of James II, defe-

Continued from page 25

that it reveals the workings of the sensitive and the perceptive minds, that are confronted with the problems that disturb and dislocate their 'tranquil' life. In typical idealistic way, they tend to look for the answers in the 'texts' and the philosophies and not in the empirical realities.

But the logic of that search, once started, will end up in society, as Mr. Rajasingham himself finds in a quote from Alistair MacIntyre.

Mr. Rajasingham's work is a source book for anyone writing on the intellectual history of the middle-class Sri Lankan Tamils who had to face the riots of July '83 and live with its after-effects thereafter.

Karthigesu Sivathamby,

Professor of Tamil,
University of Jaffna.

A Novel Musical Exercise

Lovers of Carnatic music in South London were treated to an extraordinary musical exercise – an exposition of PALLAVI, an essential component in major Carnatic concerts – on Sunday, 25th April, at the Willis Road Hall, Croydon. Smt. Manorama Krishna Prasad, eminent vocalist and a trained musicologist, unravelled the mystery lying in this musical frame and demonstrated the structural beauties and time measures in selected nine different types of Pallavi. Her easy style and sureness in swara grouping and tala variations, together with the dexterous handling of the mridangam by the well known master of rhythm, Sri Karaikudi Krishnamurthi, kept the full house audience spellbound. It was a pleasant sight to watch three great musicians of high rank – Manorama Krishna Prasad, Karaikudi Krishnamurthi and the expert violinist Dr. Lakshmi Jayan – in an unusual conviviality exchange their own points of view to the delectation of the audience.

The exercise was superbly novel and served as an informative exposition on the mysteries of our musical system. Kalabhavanam deserves congratulation for arranging such instructive, at the same time entertaining musical features for the benefit of our London audience. At the same time the cooperation offered by the top ranking artistes is commendable.

– Kalyani.

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ated by William of Orange, went on to win palms on European battle fields. Deprivation, oppression and famine drove hundreds of thousands of Irishmen to seek their fortune in the New World and in the colonies. Tamil youth too have left these shores in comparable numbers to seek their fortune in distant lands. Their reasons, besides similar ones, also included the intolerance of the dominant group. It is only now that the pejorative term 'economic refugee' has come into use. What these Tamil refugees share with their Irish forerunners is a great sense of unease, if not detestation, of the government at home. Unless the government is made to act with great wisdom, this tragedy is far from having run its course.

What then of the young lady in the ferry and the child on her breast? One only hopes that the grown up child will inherit a land where its nurture would give the mother lasting happiness, and will not be driven by brutal circumstances to carry a gun. This child one hopes will not meet with physical death at the hands of the forces, or a living death behind a gun. Too many children have suffered such fates. Too many hearts of mothers have been wrenched asunder.

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