

Tamil TIMES

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right to say it."*

-Voltaire

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Senseless Killings and Elections

The killing of 21 and the wounding of 41 more civilians in an indiscriminate bombing mission undertaken by the Sri Lanka Air Force on 15 September soon followed by the deliberate massacre of 54 civilian villagers reportedly by the LTTE in the Amparai district on 18 September demonstrate beyond doubt the sheer brutality and inhumanity that characterise the ongoing war between government forces and the LTTE.

In both instances, the victims were innocent civilians. The actions by both parties are clearly a grave and blatant violation of international humanitarian law. In the first case, the Sri Lankan military's attempt to escape liability and condemnation on the pretext that they were aiming a military target and the deaths of civilians were accidental is clearly unacceptable. The government and its forces have a duty to ensure that they take all reasonable precautions even in a situation of war to avoid targeting non-combatants and civilian property. Palpably, the military has failed to do so on this occasion. On the contrary, there is a perception that either the air raid was undertaken with criminal wrecklessness, or was a deliberate and indiscriminate retaliatory one for the fatalities the military suffered elsewhere at the hands of the LTTE. In either case, they stand condemned.

Though the LTTE has not claimed or accepted responsibility for the massacre at Amparai, there cannot be any doubt that this was a cold-blooded and deliberate attack upon defenceless civilians while they were asleep. It is reported that this massacre was carried out in retaliation to the killing of Tamil civilians in the bombing raid three days earlier. This act of savagery stands equally condemned.

The continuing senselessness of these types of killings underscores the paramount and urgent need for a negotiated solution to the ethnic conflict and the ongoing war between government forces and the LTTE. The several peace marches in which thousands of ordinary people have been participating, and the attempts by religious and business leaders to promote negotiations would appear to have left little impact upon those who have the power to bring about peace and an end to the war. Even the little momentum that was gathering in the recent past towards a peace and negotiations would appear to have been stalled by the prospect of early elections. The government is engaged in grandiose celebrations of its five-year tenure in power and is said to be preparing for snap elections. The Opposition United National Party leader has flown to London to seek advice and support from a well known public relations firm in regard to the strategies and propaganda to be deployed during the election campaign. The LTTE itself is reported to be not keen in responding positively to any moves towards negotiations until after the forthcoming elections.

So the war will continue accompanied by the type and scale of senseless killings one witnessed in Mullaitivu and Amparai recently as the politicians indulge in their electoral games. It is not only Nero who played the fiddle while Rome was burning.

21 Civilians Killed in Bombing Raid

As heavy fighting resumed between government forces and the LTTE in the Mannar district, at least twenty one civilians, including school children and women were killed and more than forty seriously wounded when two Kfir jets of the Sri Lanka Airforce bombed a crowded public place in Puthukkudiyiruppu in the Mullaitivu district at about around 10 am on 15 September. The Puthukku-diyiruppu market and a many houses and buildings nearby were destroyed in the air attack.

Tamil Eelam Vaanoli, the commercial service of the Voice of Tigers (VoT) radio gave details of the civilians were killed and 41 wounded in the attack adding that ten houses were damaged. According to the radio following civilians were killed in the air strike:

Sangarapillai Sellamanikam (70), Ariyanayagam Gajanthini (12), Selliah Arumugam (59), Kanapathipillai Yogarasaa (36), Antony Thavarasa Thersammah (50), Packiyanathan Reetama (56), Antonio Christia Florence (54), Pathmarasa Jenitta (15), Gnanasegaram Letchumipillai (43), Anthonypillai Sebamalaimuthu (45), Thanadas Jenodi (25), Sinniah Ugapaalasingam (35), Savariyon (50), Sinnathamby Thambu (55), Thambiah Subramaniam, Alam Rose Konstoses (20), Rasanayagam Uthayaruban (18 Thevanayagam Sebastianpillai (52), Arumugam Jeyaraaman (50), Jeyaraman Chandrakumar (20), Jeyam Jeysankar (33), and Antonio Melrose (29).

The indiscriminate nature of the bombing raid in which scores of non-combatant civilians came to be killed and injured and their property destroyed has been severely condemned.

Intense fighting resumed recently when government forces advanced further in an attempt to capture more LTTE controlled territory. LTTE reports claimed that the army's attempt was thwarted by fierce resistance from the Tigers. Casualties from both sides said to be very heavy with hundreds of soldiers and LTTE fighters being killed or injured. The LTTE reported that government forces had suffered a major defeat. The LTTE in a statement sent

from its London office said the Tigers had killed more than 75 government soldiers for the loss of 27 of their own cadres, including 12 women Tiger fighters in the battle on 12 September. "The Sri Lankan army suffered a serious military debacle when the government troops launched a fresh offensive campaign on Sunday to capture more areas in the Mannar district," the LTTE statement said.

A spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said that sixteen civilians were killed on the spot and six who were seriously wounded died in the hospital when Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) jets bombed a busy market place in the morning yesterday in northern Sri Lanka. =20

"It is with deep regret and concern that we confirm the death of 21 civilians consequent to the air strike in Puthukkudiyiruppu yesterday. We deplore the fact that the air strike was in a civilian area," ICRC spokesman Harasha Gunawardana said.

The sub-delegation of the ICRC in Puthukkudiyiruppu is less than two kilometers from the market place which was bombed. Mr. Gunawardana said that the ICRC provided emergency dressing material, IVs etc., to the Puthukkudiyiruppu hospital.

Meanwhile, a Tamil politician in Colombo said that the SLAF attack on the civilian target appeared to be in retaliation to the heavy losses suffered at the hands of the LTTE on Sunday 12 September by the Sri Lanka army north of Mannar. He pointed out that civilian targets have been bombed by the SLAF in past following major set backs in the war with the Tigers. Unconfirmed reports indicate that 138 Sri Lanka personnel, including two officers, were killed and 902 were wounded when the Tigers counter attacked a major offensive by government forces.

In condemning the bombing raid, the National Peace Council in a statement dated 17 September stated, "The airforce bombing and killing of 21 civilians and injuring of many others in the Mullaitivu district is a cause for immense grief, anger and suffering

among the directly affected people of the area. We believe that military and political strategies that lead to such tragedies must be condemned and rejected by all right thinking people wherever they may live.

"These civilian casualties follow the military operations by the Sri Lanka army against LTTE-held positions in the Mannar district on the other side of the island. The only outcome of these operations appears to be the death toll, with over two hundred combatants killed and several hundreds more injured at a minimum. The ground situation after the fighting appears not to have changed at all with the two sides locked in a continuing stalemate.

"Despite the procurement of virtually unlimited quantities of new armaments and the continuing recruitment to the armed forces, the fact is that the ground reality is not changing in any way that could be construed to be positive. The only changes are those for the worse, in the level of cost, both human and material, and the loss of democratic and humane values. War can never address the issues of governance in a country.

"It is not surprising that in the context of this brutal and senseless war, and the sufferings deliberately or accidentally inflicted upon the people of those areas, that so many of them should openly wish the military to withdraw. This was the sentiment publicly expressed to a group of journalists who visited villages of the north-east along with the National Peace Council earlier this month.

"We urge the warring parties to recognise the limits of military force in imposing a unilateral solution upon the other, and instead to make a sincere decision to enter into dialogue with one another to reach a mutually acceptable solution."

The London-based Amnesty International in a statement issued on 15 September condemning the killing of civilians in the bombing raid said, "The reported presence of 'legitimate' military targets in the Puthukkudiyiruppu area of Sri Lanka, where 21 civilians were reportedly killed in a bombing raid on 15 September, does not absolve the Air Force of its responsibility under international humanitarian law to take all possible precautions to avoid harming civilians, Amnesty International said today.

"Amnesty International believes that the reported high number of civil-

ian casualties and the significant distance between the intended objective of the air strike and the actual place where the civilians were killed, raise serious doubts about the quality of the intelligence used before the bombing raid. It also raises questions as to whether the alleged military value of this attack was proportionate to the risk it posed to civilians.

"A military spokesperson denied this had been a deliberate attack on civilians. He told Amnesty International that two bombing raids were carried out in the area, one of them aimed at a Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) camp at Nandikadal, about four and a half kilometres to the east of Puthukudiyiruppu.

"The spokesperson said the Air Force had attacked a legitimate military target, that the reported killings of civilians were being investigated, and that the attack had followed normal procedures, including prior checks with intelligence sources regarding any civilian presence near the area.

"Amnesty International has written to President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga expressing concern as to whether this may have been an unlawful attack. The organisation asked a number of specific questions about the Air Force's adherence to fundamental rules of humanitarian law. These include the prohibition of direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects and the prohibition of attacks on military targets expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.

"Other rules require specific precautions to be taken when launching attacks, including desisting from an attack if it becomes apparent that the objective is not a military one or the attack risks being disproportionate.

"Amnesty International is concerned that this incident may indicate that not all precautions are being taken to protect civilians, for instance in the Air Force's selecting and vetting of targets, in choosing the timing of attacks, in the way such attacks are carried out, and in ensuring that civilians are being given advance warning when possible.

"The human rights organisation has also asked to receive relevant details of the rules of engagement and other instructions given to pilots in order to assess whether these comply with international humanitarian law."

54 Villagers Massacred in East Sri Lanka

At least 54 Sinhalese villagers from the Amparai district in eastern Sri Lanka were killed on 18 September reportedly and their houses set on fire by LTTE cadres in an apparent orgy of violence to avenge the deaths of Tamil civilians killed in an air raid by the Sri Lanka Airforce three days earlier in the Mullaitivu district.

An agency report datelined 18 September said that guerrillas belonging to the LTTE descended on the village of Punchisigiriya in the east of the country and attacked the inhabitants with knives and swords according to local police officials.

They said the attacking force consisting of over 100 mainly of women fighters of the LTTE known as Freedom Birds, torched three houses before leaving the area.

A radio news report by the SLBC said 12 people in one family had been wiped out in the massacre. The victims had gone to the village to attend a religious ceremony to invoke blessings on a relative who had died recently. "The victims were asleep when the attack started," said a local official.

"The Tigers seem to have chopped up the people because firing would have alerted security posts." However, some of the victims were also shot dead at close range, he said.

Police reinforcements sent to the village after the attack recovered the

bodies of eight children, 17 women and 23 men, officials said. Five women were among 20 people who escaped with serious injuries. Police said another six people in two more villages were killed by the guerrillas during another pre-dawn massacre.

The majority of the victims were massacred at the 31 settlement at Gonagala in the Umana Divisional Secretariat area, all victims had been cut and chopped to death. At least 47 people including many children and women were killed there. Some people and children had been knifed inside their houses, some bodies were under tables. The victims included two pregnant women. Some of the victims had been tied up before they were cut to death. The massacre is the first since 1995 strike on Mangalagama, a village in the Ampara district.

Of the 47 killed, 14 had died in one house, he said. A group of relatives had come there to participate in a bana preaching ceremony on Saturday to invoke blessings on a person who had died earlier. The inmates of the houses and all relatives who had come there for bana had been butchered, Wanasuriya said.

At least six more persons were killed at Pokurugama, Aranthalawa in the Maha Oya police area and at Bendrekka in the Tampitiya area.

Trincomalee as a 'City for Culture of Peace'

The UNESCO has launched a programme to declare Trincomalee as a "City for a Culture of Peace" on the International Day for Peace which falls on September 14 as declared by the UNESCO, said Mr. Premadasa Udagama, the Secretary General of Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO addressing the journalists at the press briefing held at the Government Information Department auditorium on 9 September.

This day will be universally celebrated throughout the United Nations System worldwide on September 14. The Government of Sri Lanka has des-

ignated Trincomalee which is a multi religious, multi ethnic city in order to show solidarity with this international movement and to represent Sri Lanka at the peace process lead by the UNESCO throughout the world, Mr. Udagama stated.

The declaration ceremony will be held in Trincomalee with the participation of ministers, school children, government officials and many others on September 14. This occasion would be universally historic at a time when there is an urgent need and eager hope for peace and harmony in the world, he further added.

Chemmani Mass Grave

Proving to be True

For the past 15 years, Sri Lanka's Jaffna peninsula has seen so much of death that residents cynically say that they would not be surprised if the entire region turned out to be one big mass grave.

And the accidental discovery of about 20 skeletons near the Jaffna stadium only strengthens this view. So, it comes as no real shock to anyone that an allegation of a mass grave at a spot outside Jaffna town is fast turning out to be true. The government too has acknowledged that between 400 to 600 people disappeared between August to November 1996 from the peninsula without a trace.

Since September 6, eight skeletons, including that of a woman, have been dug up by investigators from different sites at Chemmani, a vast marsh land at Ariyalai, in a massive operation mounted by the Sri Lankan Government.

Two more were dug out in June during a preliminary dig in the area. According to reports from Jaffna, some of the skeletons bear marks of assault, for instance a cracked skull, or a broken bone. After 10 sets of remains, investigators are now convinced that more lie buried.

"The indications are that there could upwards of 100 bodies at Chemmani," said Dr William Haglund of the Physicians for Human Rights, one of the three international observers invited by the Government to witness the excavations.

Uptil now, the information on the surreptitious burials provided by death of prisoner Somaratne Rajapakse and four other ex-soldiers, all of whom were convicted last year for the rape and murder of a teenaged Jaffna girl, has proved accurate.

The two skeletons, dug out in June, were identified as those of two young mechanics arrested by the Army in August 1996 from a garage at Ariyalai, not far from Chemmani.

They were not heard of thereafter until their bones were dug up at Chemmani. Investigators are now taking seriously Rajapakse's claim that between 300 to 400 "disappeared" people lie buried under the soil of Chemmani.

Refusing to accept the claim are family members of the "disappeared". But everyday, a knot of people gather at the site and fearfully watch the shovels and the pickaxes dig into the ground.

Their agony was aptly summed up by 62-year-old Paramanathan Selvarajah, whose son went missing in August 1996. He told this newspaper in June, "I would be shattered if the remains of my son were found buried at Chemmani, and I would be shattered if they were not. The only way I can be happy is if my son returns to me alive."

The disappearances have been the most severe test for President Chandrika Kumaratunga. Seen as a people-friendly ruler when she was elected, Kumaratunga fiercely criticises the previous United Nationalist Party (UNP) government's human rights track record.

The disappearances, and their link to the mass grave at Chemmani proves that the Government's reputation is not lily-white either. That said, the Government has made no attempt at a cover-up, and has instead gone ahead with the investigation, if only to appease international and domestic human rights groups.

"It is unusual for a government in the midst of a conflict to be undertaking an investigation that holds implications for its army. For this, the government needs to be commended," said Mark McKenna, representative of Asia Foundation, a US-based non-governmental organisation that is aiding the investigation. *(The above report is by Nirupama Subramanian datelined 14 September in the Indian Express)*

Historically Significant

American Forensic anthropologist Dr. William Haglund said that the Chemmani mass graves exhumation investigation is historically significant because no other Government had undertaken an investigation into the alleged wrongdoings of its own military while the conflict was still raging. He was speaking to the media at the Hotel Lanka Oberoi.

Dr. Haglund of 'Physicians for Human Rights' (PHR) a Massachusetts based organisation said that he would have thought it sinister if the Government had not extended an invitation to foreign observers. In reply to a question asked by a journalist, he said that there was no hindrance to the investigations.

He said that the legislation in Sri Lanka did not permit evidence of foreign experts to be led before Courts, hence the local forensic experts advised by his team were doing the collection of evidence.

Melissa Connor, Forensic Archeologist and Robert Stair, Chief Investigator of the Canadian Police in Vancouver commended the Government's efforts for the transparent investigations carried out in connection with the exhumation of graves in Chemmani disclosed by Cpl. Somaratne Rajapakse the former soldier condemned to death with accomplices in July 1998 for the rape and murder of Krishanthi Kumaraswamy.

Mr. Stair an experienced investigator in Kosova, and different countries of South America and Europe said he was impressed by the 50 CID men who were 'throwing everything into the investigation'.

Dr. Melissa Connor whose other exhumations have led her to El Salvador, Guatemala, Rwanda, Yugoslavia and Kosovo said that eight bodies including at least one body of a female were recovered within the past week.

Mr. Marc McKenna representing the Asia Foundation said that the Government was standing by its commitments and that the transparency of the excavations was evident by the fact that the press and family members of the missing persons were allowed to visit the alleged sites.

Peace Process Stalled

With speculation rife about a snap presidential election followed by parliamentary elections, all the moves gathering momentum hitherto in regard to the peace process including possible talks with the LTTE will be delayed until after the elections, political commentators in Colombo believe. They say While all the political parties are gearing up for the elections and making preparations for their electoral campaign, the peace process promoted both by the government and some civil society organisations are set to be pushed back on the national agenda.

Even foreign diplomats who have actively encouraged the peace process are of the same view. "At a time when the major political parties are in the middle of a campaign, it is difficult to expect them to take a stand on contentious issues. So the peace process will be delayed," a Western diplomat is quoted to have said.

Those who appear to have had contacts with the LTTE seem to of the view that the LTTE leadership is also not interested in making any move in respect of any possible talks with the government until after the elections.

Some are saying that the murder of Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam who relentlessly pursued the peace process and urged a political settlement through negotiations, and the unexpected death of former UNP foreign Minister Shahul Hameed, a heavy-weight politician within the opposition UNP who always advocated negotiations have also contributed to derailing of the peace process.

Before his death, there were reports that the the LTTE had told the late A C S Hameed that it would not hold talks with the Sri Lankan government before the national elections next year.

It has now emerged that the late Mr Hameed had three meetings with the LTTE's political theoretician, Dr Anton Balasingham, in London and that he had briefed the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader, Mr M H M Ashraff, about this on September 2, at the last meeting of the Businessmen's Initiative for Peace. But no details are available as

Mr Hameed died on Sept. 3.

However, a few days before he died, Mr Hameed said that there was no possibility of talks prior to the elections in view of the fluid and competitive political situation ahead of the polls. The two main political parties would be jockeying for political positions and competing for the vote, and under these conditions, no consensus was possible on what should be placed before the LTTE if there were talks.

It is commented that Mr Hameed's contention about the impossibility of talks with the LTTE before elections, could have been a reflection of the LTTE's view expressed by Balasingham back in London.

Meanwhile reports indicate that the Opposition and UNP leader Ranil

Wickremesinghe is expected to discuss party's election strategies with officials of the London-based PR firm Sachi and Sachi during his current visit to London. It was recently revealed through an e-mail addressed to the UNP leader, but misdirected to another person that the PR firm is to supply the most modern IT technology to the UNP in its forthcoming election campaign.

Wickremesinghe who will be the main challenger to President Kumaratunga left Colombo on 14 September for Germany and from there would fly to London for meetings with Sachi and Sachi, hired by the UNP to boost party's image in the runup to the election.

Newspapers in Colombo report that Wickremesinghe and some of his close advisors believe that the London firm could help them with correct strategies to win both presidential and parliamentary elections.

Vasudeva Launches New Political Party

The LSSP Member of Parliament Vasudeva Nanayakkara who was recently expelled from the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) has launched a new political movement called the "Democratic People's Congress".

One of the very few remaining firebrands of the left movement in the island, Vasudeva claims that the DPC would be the foundation and rallying point for all progressive forces in the country to join hand to take the nation to a new political culture in the coming millennium. He says that the manifesto of his new movement has already finalised and calls upon all the people who are critical of the People's Alliance government to support him.

Vasudeva who was elected to parliament in August 1994 under the Peoples Alliance alleges that the PA government and its leadership had betrayed the masses by not honouring the promises given in 1994. Therefore, Vasu says that the PA leadership cannot be trusted any more and it was time for the people to think of another political movement as an alternative to face the

challenges in the coming century.

Vasu says that the new movement would work towards the democratisation of the society with much focus on national development resisting globalisation of the economy. Vasu is also critical of the government's pursuit of the war and wants to the end the war by devolving power to the periphery in a more realistic manner.

Though Vasudeva has formed a new political movement he has urged the LSSP leadership to reconsider the decision which was taken to expel him from the party. He has written to the LSSP General Secretary Batty Weerakoon stating that the decision taken to expel him was inconsistent with the party constitution. Vasu asserts that the LSSP constitution requires the party to call a meeting of the party conference every two years but it had not been done since 1994. Therefore, he argues that the decision to expel him is unconstitutional and therefore recinded.

The LSSP leadership which expelled Vasu from the party decided to stop further action which would have

resulted in the expulsion of Vasu from Parliament Vasu having been a member of the People's Alliance government crossed over to the opposition benches in Parliament two months ago. Before he crossed over he told Parliament that he could not continue in the government ranks anymore as the PA has let down the masses. Once a MP in the PA government is expelled from the respective political party, the leadership of that party has to inform the PA Secretary of that expulsion and the PA Secretary in turn would inform the Secretary General of Parliament that the respective MP is deemed to have vacated

his seat in Parliament. In the case of Vasu, LSSP leader Batty Weerakoon has stated that Vasu should remain in Parliament as a member of the House. It is said that this lenient attitude towards Vasu is reported to reflect the feelings of the rank and file of the party among who Vasu is quite popular.

There are those who think that with the formation of the new political movement, Vasudeva is preparing himself to be a left candidate in the next Presidential election to challenge both President Chandrika Kumaratunga and the UNP leader Ranil Wickremasinghe. If that happens it will be the third time

that Vasu will be contesting for the most powerful post in the land. Earlier, he contested Presidents J. R. Jayewardene and Ranasinghe Premadasa unsuccessfully. If Vasu is adopted as a common "left candidate", he may fare better than he did in his previous encounters. But given the sectarian divide that characterises the left in the country, and also given the fact that Vasu resigned from the NLSSP and joined the LSSP only weeks before he filed his nomination papers under the PA ticket to contest the August 1994 parliamentary elections, it will be big surprise if he is to be adopted as a common left candidate.

Tortured in Police Custody Amnesty is Concerned

Amnesty International has expressed concern in respect three persons who are reported to have been tortured in police custody. In a statement dated 10 September, AI states that the three young Tamil men named Sri Ram, student; Anthonipillai Binoth Vimalraj, and Sivagnanasunderam Sri Kanthan (28) have been severely tortured in police custody in the capital, Colombo. All three may be in urgent need of medical attention.

"Sri Ram has been severely assaulted by police at Mirihana police station. A final year student at the Open University, he was arrested on 25 August 1999 at Kotahena reportedly in connection with the killing of Dr Neelan Thiruchelvam, a member of parliament, by a Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) suicide bomber. Eight other students arrested by the Mirihana police have since been released: two of them were badly tortured, and have scars from being beaten on their backs and hung up by their wrists.

"Anthonipillai Binoth Vimalraj, originally from Mannar, was arrested on 24 August at New Asia lodge. During interrogation at Kotahena police station he was allegedly beaten all over his body, had pins inserted under his fingernails and had an iron rod inserted into his anus.

"Sivagnanasunderam Sri Kanthan is in custody at the headquarters of the Crime Detection Bureau (CDB) in Colombo. Relatives were allowed to visit

him for the first time on 4 September, a month after his arrest, for five minutes. They say his face was swollen, he had difficulty walking and appeared to have a fever.

"Other sources reported that he had been hung by a rope and beaten all over his body. Sivagnanasunderam Sri Kanthan, originally from Kodikamam, Jaffna, was arrested on 4 August at Wellawatte.

Background Information

"For years, torture has been one of the most widespread human rights violations in Sri Lanka. Amnesty International has obtained many testimonies from victims of torture, and medical certificates corroborating these testimonies. The prevalence of torture is also revealed in Supreme Court judgements awarding compensation to victims of torture, and in recent reports from government inquiry commissions: the Committee to Enquire into Unlawful Arrests and Harassment recorded 47 complaints of torture between July and December 1998.

"There have been widespread reports of torture since the conflict between the security forces and the LTTE resumed in April 1995. The LTTE are fighting for an independent state of Tamil 'Eelam' in the north and east. In Colombo, members of the Tamil community are at risk of arbitrary arrest and detention. Large numbers of Tamils are regularly arrested there during cordon and search operations, particularly fol-

lowing LTTE attacks. Though most of those arrested in these round-ups are released once their identity has been checked, those suspected of links with LTTE are held for longer and are likely to be tortured. Young Tamil men originally from the north or east of the country are especially at risk.

"Sri Lanka acceded to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) in 1994, and torture has since been made a criminal offence. However, under current legislation, the security forces have broad powers of arrest and detention. These wide powers have contributed to the prevalence of human rights violations, including torture. Torture has also been facilitated by widespread impunity of the perpetrators. To date, no member of the security forces has been brought to justice for committing torture.

Recommended Action:

"Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- expressing concern at recent reports of torture at several places of detention in Colombo, including Mirihana and Kotahena police stations and the headquarters of the Crime Detection Bureau (CDB);

- urging the authorities to undertake full and immediate investigations into these reports and take the necessary steps to bring the perpetrators to justice;
- urging the authorities to grant Sri Ram, Anthonipillai Binoth Vimalraj and Sivagnanasunderam Sri Kanthan access to any medical treatment they may require, and to their families and lawyers.

Fear of Further Political Killings - Amnesty Appeals

Amnesty International has made an urgent appeal in respect of the risk to the lives of certain Tamil politicians at the hands of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. In the appeal dated 24 August, Amnesty International states that it "is concerned for the lives of several politicians belonging to Tamil political parties represented in Sri Lanka's parliament. They include members of parliament, party leaders and elected representatives functioning in local authority bodies in the north and east of the country.

"Their lives are at risk from members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), an armed opposition group fighting for an independent state of Tamil Eelam in the north and east of Sri Lanka. The LTTE has repeatedly issued notices calling on members of these parties to resign or face the consequences. Many of them have received threatening letters and telephone calls, in the name of the LTTE, or front organisations such as the 'Sangilian Force', 'Ellalan' and 'Pandara Vanniyar Group'.

Among the people considered to be at immediate risk are Rajavarothiyam Sampanthan, Secretary General and member of parliament (MP) for the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), and Veerasingham Anandasangari, Vice President of the TULF. According to newspaper reports, their names are on an LTTE 'hitlist', which the police recently obtained information about. The name of Neelan Thiruchelvam, another MP representing the TULF, was reportedly also on this list. Neelan Thiruchelvam was killed by a suicide bomber suspected to be a member of the LTTE near his home in Colombo on 29 July.

"In Jaffna district, local politicians belonging to these parties have also repeatedly received death threats. Among them are Nadarasa Raviraj, acting mayor of Jaffna and other politicians belonging to the TULF. K Sivajilingam, Chairman of the Valvettiturai Urban Council and member of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), is also reported to be at immediate risk.

"Although some of these politicians have been provided with protection by the government of Sri Lanka and are being accompanied by armed bodyguards, in Amnesty International's view, this does not alter their civilian status.

Background Information

"The LTTE has been held responsible for numerous human rights abuses, including widespread killing of civilians. Among them were several politicians belonging to Tamil political parties represented in Sri Lanka's parliament.

"Most recently, as stated above, Dr Neelan Thiruchelvam, MP was killed. In 1998, Sarojini Yogeswaran, mayor of Jaffna, and her successor, Ponnuthurai Sivapalan, were killed. In 1997, Arunasalam Thangathurai, MP, was shot dead in Trincomalee.

"In 1989, the then leader of the TULF, Appapillai Amirthalingam, and Vettivelu Yogeswaran, MP, were killed by gunmen at Amirthalingam's house in Colombo. While the LTTE claimed responsibility for the latter two killings, its leaders have remained silent about the other killings. The 'Sangilian Force' reportedly claimed responsibility for the killing of Sarojini Yogeswaran. A hand-delivered letter to the Jaffna-based newspaper, Uthayan, stated that she had been killed 'for refusing to step down from the Mayor's post'.

"The LTTE has also increased its intimidation of local councillors functioning in Jaffna district. In April 1998, all members of the newly elected local government bodies there were ordered to resign immediately or face death if they failed to comply. At least eleven local councillors in the Jaffna district have since been killed. Among them was Murugan Poopalasingham, member of the Kopay local council, elected under the banner of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), who was killed in May 1999.

"Amnesty International's appeals are guided by the principles of protection of the individual enshrined in Article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. Common Article 3

forbids governments and armed opposition groups alike to torture, to deliberately kill civilians taking no part in hostilities, to harm those who are wounded, captured or seeking to surrender, or to take hostages. Sri Lanka ratified the Geneva Conventions in 1959. In February 1988 the LTTE announced that it would abide by the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and its Optional Protocols I and II.

"Amnesty International's action on behalf of these politicians should in no way be interpreted as an endorsement of them or their parties' political platform. As an impartial and independent human rights organization, Amnesty International's appeals are issued on the basis of international standards. In particular, Amnesty International believes that these killings are in clear violation of international humanitarian law, which prohibits the killing of anyone who is not taking a direct part in hostilities.

Recommended Action:

"Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- explaining Amnesty International's action on behalf of those protected under Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and noting the LTTE's announcement in February 1988 that it would abide by the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and its Optional Protocols I and II;

- condemning the deliberate and arbitrary killing of members of parliament and politicians belonging to political parties represented in Sri Lanka's parliament as being in violation of international humanitarian law;

- expressing concern for the lives of Nadaraja Raviraj, Rajavarothiyam Sampanthan, Y Balachandran, K Sivajilingam and Veerasingham Anandasangari and other national and local politicians belonging to these parties, who reportedly are under threat from the LTTE;

- urging that a clear statement condemning the deliberate and arbitrary killings of all civilians, including politicians not taking direct part in hostilities, is issued by the leadership of the LTTE; - appealing to the LTTE for an immediate halt to attacks on people taking no direct part in hostilities by the LTTE or by forces under LTTE control.

Suspicious Surround Manickathan's Killing

D B S Jeyaraj

Pierre Vergniaud at his trial in 1793 during the French reign of terror made the comment that "It was possible to fear that the Revolution (French) might like Saturn, devour each of her children one by one". This remark attributed to Vergniaud who incidentally was guillotined to death has become a familiar and inevitable fact of life for the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The armed struggle that was originally inspired by the lofty ideal of political liberation for the Tamils has now lost sight of its earlier objectives. It has now degenerated into a savage and meaningless orgy of bloodletting where intra-Tamil fratricide has become the dominant trend. The latest such victim of this internecine warfare is the well known Peoples Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) personality, Manickathan.

Nagalingam Manickam Rajan known generally as Manickathan alias Thasan Das was the Deputy leader of the Peoples Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and its military commander. On September 2nd he was killed when an explosion occurred at Vavuniya the southernmost town of the predominantly Tamil Northern Province of Sri Lanka. According to initial reports the explosion occurred around 12.40 pm at "Lucky House" camp which functioned as the headquarters of the PLOTE in Vavuniya. Lucky House known generally as Lucky camp is situated within the Vavuniya Urban Council limits at Rambaikulam behind the Catholic St. Josephs Church - about half a mile from the Clock tower road junction. The two storey building was named Lucky house as its builders cum owners now in Canada had a thriving business "Lucky Stores" in Vavuniya at one time. Though Manickathan had been lucky enough to weather difficult situations in the past, he was not lucky enough to survive the latest attempt made on his life at Lucky House camp.

Killed along with Manickathan was his lieutenant Tharmalingam

Thevarasa alias Illango, the Vavuniya region military leader of the PLOTE and Murugesu Gunaratnam alias Vino the PLOTE Public Relations Officer in Vavuniya. Vino had earlier been the Deputy Chairman of the Poratheevu Pradeshiya Sabha (Local authority) in Batticaloa District. One of Manickathan's body guards Uthayakumar alias Thavam was seriously injured and has been admitted to the Anuradhapura Hospital.

Vavuniya residents described the explosion as very powerful causing reverberations all over the town. It is stated that while Vino died instantaneously and Illango a little later on the spot Manickathan himself died on the way to hospital.

Contradictory Versions

There was some confusion about how the attack was conducted. Police reports initially stated that an LTTE suicide killer was responsible. Manickathan and Illango were seated in the office room on the first floor of Lucky House camp when the assailant had allegedly climbed up the stairs, got into the room and then triggered off the bomb strapped around his body the story went.

Subsequently Police contradicted their earlier statement and denied the involvement of a suicide bomber. The new version was that an explosive device of the claymore variety affixed to the ceiling above the staircase had been triggered off just as Thasan and Illango were descending.

Informed sources from Vavuniya when contacted by this writer on the telephone that the initial impression of a suicide bomber being involved was due to the fact that the PLOTE member from Batticaloa Vino had suffered the full force of the blast His body had been torn to bits. Vino had been ascending the stairway while the other two were descending when the explosive device went off. The injured Thavam was standing at bottom of the staircase. Since Vino's body had disintegrated

greatly it was presumed at first that he was a suicide bomber with explosives strapped around his body. Hence the earlier report of a suicide bomber.

Subsequently investigations revealed that the bomb had been covertly affixed to the ceiling. The extensive damage to the building inclusive of a gaping hole in the roof bears testimony to this. It may be recalled that a similar method was adopted last year too in the case of the explosion at the Jaffna Municipal Council premises in Nallur. TULF Mayor for Jaffna Pon. Sivapalan, Jaffna Military commandant Brigadier Susantha Mendis and several highranking police and municipal officers had died in that incident. They were all assembled for a conference to discuss new traffic arrangements for Jaffna. The claymore explosive had been hidden in the ceiling and then triggered off by a remote control device. The claymore explosive devices are usually placed on ground as landmines to target mobile patrols or convoys. Deploying one on the ceiling and making it explode in a downward direction was considered a unique innovation by the LTTE then. Now the same method seems to have been used to fatally target Manickathan and his associates.

According to Vavuniya sources there were about 15 to 20 members of the public on the ground floor of Lucky Camp when the explosion occurred. Mercifully none of them were harmed. They were all waiting to meet Manickathan. Vino the public relations officer of the PLOTE had been chatting to them. Manickathan with eleven of his senior cadres was in conference on the upper floor. Later nine of them came down but Thasan and Illango stayed on for some confidential talk. Then Manickathan called Vino up. Even as Vino was going upstairs Thasan and Illango came out of the room and as they were coming down the staircase, the lethal device exploded. According to eyewitness reports Manickathan was loudly inquiring from Vino whether tea and refreshments had been provided to the visitors. Those were his last words.

Internal Collusion ?

The confusion was compounded by the fact that the explosion had occurred within the highly fortified PLOTE headquarters at the Lucky House Camp. Of the nearly 800 cadres of the PLOTE about 400 were stationed at

Vavuniya, their stronghold. Lucky House was the head camp. Even when there were doubts about a suicide killer involvement the question that arose was how did that alleged explosive strapped person manage to enter that camp without being detected and walk upstairs to the room and self-destruct?

The same doubt persisted later when the cause was attributed to an explosive device fixed to the ceiling above the stair case. Again the question was how was it possible to affix an explosive device within the high security camp? Preliminary answers to these questions pointed very clearly to an inside job in the sense that some internal connivance or involvement had to be there. There had to be collaboration by some PLOTE cadres in the affair. It was also possible that a person closely trusted by Manickathan may have been responsible.

Secondly if the bomb had been triggered off by a remote device how did the person responsible know that Manickathan was coming down the stairs at that very moment? Was that person then within the camp in full view of what was happening? Or was he or she in the immediate vicinity observing the scene? Did the assassin who triggered the remote device also pretend to be agitated over the incident and even help in carting off Thasan to the hospital? The fact that the incident could not have been made possible without inside help have raised certain questions of this nature.

Subsequent investigations threw more light. The prime suspect was a man called Gnanaseelan alias "Thamby. This man had been earlier in the EPRLF and later EPDP. He had left the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party and after a year of being in "limbo" joined the PLOTE. This man had gone missing the day before the incident. It is suspected that it was this person who affixed the explosive device two days before the explosion. There are doubts as to whether this person had established contact with the LTTE during the one year transition period between his tenures at EPDP and PLOTE. In a bid to clarify the situation PLOTE leader and Wanni district Parliamentarian Dharmalingam Siddharthan spoke personally to EPDP Secretary General Douglas Devananda by telephone.

Preliminary investigations have also revealed that the remote control device had been exploded by a person

called Saravanamuttu Ariyadas. It is alleged that the man was staying at a house close to Lucky House and had been observing Manickathan's activities through binoculars. He had apparently pressed the remote device at the appropriate moment. Ariyadas was taken into custody by the Police at Anuradhapura while returning to Colombo. He is supposedly a native of Kayts and had been residing in Saudi Arabia for quite a while. Meanwhile the PLOTE itself is conducting its own investigations and has illegally arrested more than 20 people for questioning. All members of the public present at the PLOTE camp when Manickathan was killed too were subject to intensive grilling by the PLOTE. It is expected that further investigations by the Police could reveal more details about the killing.

The Dwindling Species

Manickathan is one the dwindling species of Tamil militants with a track record of two decades involvement in the Tamil political struggle. He was born on 14 January 1959 in Jaffna and has been involved in Tamil militancy from his teens. He is married to Shyamala hailing from Vavuniya and has three children. Thasan is a native of Jaffna town itself. His father Nagalingam ran a small lumber cum furniture depot at Martyn Road in the heart of Jaffna town. Thasan's mother is Sinhala and incidentally the sister of former Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) General Secretary Upatissa Gamanayake's mother. Gamanayake along with JVP leader Rohana Wijeweera was killed in military custody under dubious circumstances during Ranasinghe Premadasa's Presidency in 1989. The Manickathan - Gamanayake relationship is an interesting case of two cousins, one in the north and the other in the south, being actively involved in two extremes of the political spectrum concurrently. Incidentally it was this relationship that helped to cement the ties between PLOTE and JVP when those organizations were led by Uma Maheswaran and Wijeweera respectively.

Thasan (Some spell it Dasan) had his early education at the Catholic Primary school in the Our Lady Of Refuge Church premises between Hospital Road and Third Cross Street. Later he went for secondary School studies at Jaffna Central College but dropped

out from school early because of his political involvement. It is said that though his mother was Sinhala and the Sinhala Maha Vidyalayam was situated very close to his home Manickathan and his siblings who grew up in a Tamil ethos did not study there. He was in the early stages a junior member of the TULF student and later youth wings. He also functioned as a "helper" of the original undivided LTTE, when Uma Maheswaran was chairman and Prabhakaran Military commander. There were many such helpers those days and they were not "official" members of the LTTE.

In 1977 Manickathan worked actively for the TULF's Vettrivelu Yogeswaran who contested in Jaffna. The TULF swept the polls on a mandate for Eelam. A few weeks later at the St. Patrick's College Carnival a fracas broke out between some Tamil youths and Sinhala Policemen. Former TELO leader Sri Sabaratnam and Manickathan were among those who fought the police then. This incident triggered off nationwide violence against Tamils then.

Founder of PLOTE

Later as time went on the Tamil youths became disillusioned with the TULF. It was around this time that Manickathan was arrested by the Police for scribbling anti-TULF graffiti on the Jaffna Hospital wall in front of Yogeswaran's house on Point Pedro Road. After his release Manickathan moved to the Northern mainland of Wanni. There he became involved with certain Agricultural settlement projects. During that period he became very close to people like Dr. Rajasundaram, Thambipillai Santhathiyaar and Thangarajah alias Paranthan Rajan etc. After the Uma Maheswaran - Prabhakaran split of 1980 he along with Paranthan Rajan and Santhathiyaar chose to throw in his lot with Uma Maheswaran.

Along with Uma Maheswaran Manickathan was one of the founder members of the PLOTE. He later went to Lebanon and obtained military training in one of Dr. George Habash's Peoples Front for Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) camps. Returning to Sri Lanka, Thasan participated in the Anaikottai Police Station attack the first of its kind in Tamil militancy and the Kilinochi bank robbery. He is said to be responsible for the gunning down of four policemen on duty at an election meeting

of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) held in Nachimarkovilady, Jaffna on May 31st 1981. This provoked unruly elements of the police to indulge in a spree of violence resulting among other things in the total destruction of the Jaffna Public Library. Thasan was arrested while sleeping at his home on Martyn Road on suspicion and detained in Colombo.

He survived the Welikade Prison massacre of 1983 July fighting the Sinhala prisoner mobs face to face with others like "Panagoda" Maheswaran, Douglas Devananda etc. and was then transferred to the Batticaloa jail. He escaped during the Batticaloa Jail break and made his way to India. Severely ill because of torture in custody he spent many years in Chennai and the PLOTE camp at Orathanadu in Tanjore district. He returned in early 1987 to Vavuniya and set up a PLOTE camp in Chettikulam. The PLOTE in 1987 opposed the IPKF presence and expressed solidarity with the LTTE. Manickathasan personally tried to arrive at an understanding with the LTTE and had on several occasions helped the beleaguered LTTE cadres. It also provided arms and training to Sinhala JVP cadres in order to create mayhem in the South.

The PLOTE under Uma Maheswaran had been the first Tamil militant group to identify correctly the role played by India in the Sri Lankan ethnic crisis. The booklet "Vangam Thantha Paadam" (The lesson of Bengal or Bangladesh) released by the PLOTE was an eye-opener. Later the PLOTE adopted an independent stance calling for the IPKF withdrawal and contested elections in Jaffna. It was routed.

But in spite of PLOTE overtures the LTTE with logistical assistance from the Sri Lankan armed forces attacked PLOTE camps in Mannar and Vavuniya districts during Premadasa's Presidency. The PLOTE retreated in confusion.

Vavuniya Power-base

Soon it altered its political position towards the LTTE. Slowly the PLOTE began re-establishing itself in Vavuniya. Vavuniya town as well as the greater part of the district has long remained a citadel of the PLOTE. This was mainly due to the efforts of the highly politicised PLOTE cadres who won the hearts and minds of the people then. Thasan and the military wing was the cutting edge of the organization.

One consequence of Manickathasan's endeavours was that the LTTE in spite of its overall hegemony in the Tamil areas could not retain a dominant presence in Vavuniya town and environs.

After the murders of PLOTE leader Uma Maheswaran and Kandaswamy alias Sangiliyan in separate incidents in 1989 there was some internal restructuring. Siddharthan son of former TULF MP V. Dharmalingam became the PLOTE leader. Manickathasan became its military commander. Soon he elevated himself as its deputy leader too. Gradually the PLOTE devised a new equation with the Sri Lankan armed forces and began to enjoy autonomous power within Vavuniya.

The taste of absolute power in Vavuniya had a corrupting influence on Manickathasan according to PLOTE insiders. Soon he began imposing taxes on the people. Vehicles involved in transport of people and goods had to pay a levy. So too did businesses and farmers. The PLOTE under Thasan also exercised a monopoly over the sale of eggs and coconuts in Vavuniya. Agriculturists had to pay taxes too. In addition "donations" were extracted from ordinary people themselves. Those who did not pay up were "arrested" by the PLOTE on the pretext of being LTTE supporters, detained indefinitely and tortured. In addition suspected LTTE members or informants too were illegally detained and tortured. There was internal repression too and several PLOTE cadres too were subjected to this harrowing treatment.

There were several places of torture in Vavuniya the most notorious being the "Malar Maaligai" (Flower Palace) camp and the Lucky House camp where Thasan ultimately encountered death. The existence of a torture camp in Lucky House was dramatically revealed last year when a detainee in shackles escaped and burst into the adjoining Church while morning mass was going on. He fell at the feet of the parish priest and cried out to be saved. When armed cadres of the PLOTE entered church and tried to take him away the priest refused to let the escapee go saying he had obtained sanctuary. The PLOTE members turned nasty but were prevented from indulging in violence by irate worshippers at the Church. Ultimately the Police came and rescued the escapee. This incident as well as many others regarding torture have highlighted by the London based hu-

man rights organization, Amnesty International. The AI has been consistently spotlighting the illegal torture and detention by Manickathasan's PLOTE in Vavuniya.

Perplexing Phase

Though the political and military wings of the PLOTE as a functional entity were careful to avoid overlapping, Manickathasan in recent times displayed an ambitious political streak when he contested the Jaffna Municipal Council elections and aspired to be its Mayor. The TULF won and Sarojini Yogeswaran became the first woman Mayoress of Jaffna. Thasan though elected as a Councillor declined to serve and returned to Vavuniya. Thereafter there began a controversial, perplexing and troubled phase in his life. There were three aspects to this phase.

The first dimension of this phase was the launching of a vicious intra-organizational campaign to oust PLOTE leader Siddharthan. It was an all out and pathetically one sided offensive by Manickathasan's military wing against Siddharthan's Political Wing. All those alleged to be Siddharthan supporters were warned not to set foot in PLOTE offices. Siddharthan's driver himself was assaulted and hospitalised by Thasan himself. Jaffna local authority members considered partial to Siddharthan were forced to resign their posts. The chairman of the PLOTE controlled Point Pedro Urban council was abducted by Manickathasan's men and forced to sign a resignation letter. After escaping from PLOTE custody the man obtained protection from the army and later from the comparative safety of Colombo retracted his "resignation".

So great was the threat from Manickathasan to Siddharthan that the latter was compelled to adopt a very low key lifestyle even in Colombo keeping his movements secret. Subsequently Thasan seemed to have realised that he lacked the ability and personality to function as the PLOTE head. He opted to allow Siddharthan to function as the de-jure leader while he himself would be the de-facto one. A few weeks before his death both PLOTE leaders appeared jointly before sections of the media and declared that there was no differences between them.

Ironically Manickathasan's death and consequent funeral has once again brought the split within the PLOTE to

the fore. When Siddharthan and some other political wing leaders went to Vavuniya for the funeral sections of the military wing including acting chief Hari Baabu began remonstrating.

Interestingly Hari Babu is an old PLOTE hand who participated in the abortive attempt by the PLOTE to seize the Maldives in 1988 by overthrowing its government. He was jailed there from 1988 to 1993. During his incarceration he suffered a nervous breakdown and had to be treated for dementia.

Apparently the PLOTE military wing suspected Siddharthan's hand in Manickathasan's killing. His statement that it was the LTTE that killed Thasan made the latter's supporters suspicious of the former's motives. It was felt that a cover up operation blaming the LTTE was being done.

There is also the question of reforming and regulating the PLOTE military wing. The politically savvy Siddharthan obviously realises the need to discipline the military wing and thereby salvage the political support for the PLOTE that once existed in abundance in Vavuniya. But the military cadres will naturally

resent Sithar's interference in their lifestyle and in a bid to prevent it raise suspicions against him as a pre-emptive strike.

The opposition to Siddharthan and his associates was great when they went to pay their last respects to Manickathasan lying in state at the Uma Maheswaran cemetery in Kovilkulam, Vavuniya. There was also talk of a plot to assassinate him. So Siddharthan turned back amidst "Bronx Cheers" by his military wing comrades. Later Hari Babu was to twist this fact and allege publicly that Siddharthan's non-participation at the funeral was proof of his mala fides involvement in Thasan's murder. He also threatened to cleanse and purify the PLOTE of treacherous elements.

The Second Phase

The second aspect of Manickathasan's controversial conduct was his open confrontation with another Tamil group the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization or TELO. The clash began initially as a turf war with both groups competing to levy "Taxes" on the traders of Vavuniya. Soon Manickathasan

personally led a bitter and bloody campaign against the TELO resulting in the deaths of several cadres and supporters. The TELO retaliated and soon there was a full scale "civil war" in Vavuniya resulting at one stage in the entire town getting paralysed. Several innocent civilians too were caught in the crossfire. The residents of Vavuniya agitated for the disarmament of both groups. The security forces were obligated to confiscate some arms. Both groups objected strongly saying they were sorely needed to defend them from the LTTE.

The situation became too hot in Vavuniya and leaders of both groups shifted temporarily to Colombo. But again the conflict spread to the Metropolis. The Vavuniya leader of TELO Rajaratnam Kugarajah alias Kugan and two others were shot dead by unknown persons at the posh Majestic Shopping Complex premises in Bambalapitiya. It was widely believed that Manickathasan had personally executed them. There was a public outcry that the Tamil groups should not be allowed to continue their fratricidal violence in Colombo and the police began looking for Manickathasan to interrogate him.

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Thasan absconded. He then flew out to Singapore and from there to Mumbai.

It was suspected that he went to Mumbai to meet a former PLOTE leader Vamadevan alias Rajan who is allegedly involved in the narcotics trade now. From there Thasan moved to Bangalore where his one time mentor Paranthan Rajan (Leader of ENDLF) is living running an orphanage. Thasan then got down his wife and three children and left them there. In fact they came from India for his funeral.

He then went to Chennai. It is said that the Q branch (Intelligence unit) of the Tamil Nadu Police became aware of his presence and had supposedly tried to interrogate him. It is also believed that the Indian authorities fearing a replay of on the lines of EPRLF leader Pathmanabha's assassination on 19 June 1990 in Kodambaakkam did their best to be rid of him. Another factor was the suspicion that with his "palestinian" background Manickathasan could have been acting for Pakistan's ISI too. Finding Chennai "inhospitable" Manickathasan returned to Colombo. Even as he landed in Colombo there were news reports in Indian papers that Thasan was a Pakistani agent. Thasan denied this charge vehemently in Colombo.

The Third Phase

The third and perhaps the most controversial aspect of Manickathasan's recent conduct was his attempt to appease the LTTE and align with it. Earlier Sri Lankan intelligence officials had been irritated by the discovery that the PLOTE was harbouring suspected LTTE operatives in their camps. Then there was the detection of calendars published by the PLOTE showing the picture of a tiger mauling a lion lying spread-eagled over the north eastern areas of a Sri Lankan map. All calendars were confiscated. It was well known that all this was Manickathasan's handiwork. It was felt that the PLOTE was merging with the LTTE.

Thasan also began giving interviews to the Tamil press saying that the LTTE and PLOTE were "brothers" while the army was always the enemy. On another occasion he said that the PLOTE would give up Vavuniya if the LTTE wanted it. When the armed forces began confiscating arms he threatened to team up with the LTTE and fight against the government. He also announced that he had instructed

his junior cadres to merge with the LTTE. Later there were reports in the Lankan media that more than 70 had joined the LTTE.

Against the backdrop of this bizarre conduct by Manickathasan his killing too becomes an issue of speculation. Though suspicion naturally points to the LTTE there is legitimate ground for doubt because of the overtures made by Manickathasan to that outfit. Would the Tigers have killed someone who was trying to ingratiate himself with the LTTE is a moot question. Also given the prevailing state of affairs other possibilities too stand out. It could have been the TELO; it could have been the dirty tricks department of the army; it also could be the handiwork of PLOTE elements opposed to Manickathasan. Given the fact that the Lucky House camp was an impregnable fortress the possibility of an internal squabble is more possible.

The Track Record

After all the track record of the PLOTE is a sordid history of internal repression and splits. Sivanewaran, Santhathiyaar, Rajmohan, the 212 killed in the Indian camps and finally Uma Maheswaran himself are all testimony to PLOTE's capacity for internal elimination. Even a few years ago Manickathasan was allegedly responsible for the killing of Arjuna the Trincomalee PLOTE leader and a veteran of the ill fated invasion of the Maldives that was thwarted by the Indian navy. He was also said to have been responsible for the death of Karavai Kanthasamy a political activist of the PLOTE who was on the verge of crossing over to the Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP). It is also rumoured that Thasan travelled to Switzerland and killed a former cadre Robin and his wife in order to suppress information about Manickathasan's involvement in the killing of former leader Uma Maheswaran. There has always been an allegation about his role in that death though no concrete proof is available. All these visible signs of the internal divisions within PLOTE and the open flare up between the military and political wings in Vavuniya in the aftermath of Thasan's death are further pointers to the state of confusion prevailing within that outfit.

This internal split along with the enmity regarding other groups notably the TELO has helped cause clouds of

doubt to appear whenever the PLOTE was targeted effectively in the past as well as now. In recent times the PLOTE has suffered many major setbacks. Last year on May 12 Manickathasan's deputy commander and "alter ego" Selvathurai Shanthakumar alias "Sinna Thasan" alias "Alavaanku Thasan" and six other PLOTE cadres were killed in a claymore mine attack while travelling in a convoy. It was suspected that the real target was Manickathasan whose vehicle had parted company just a few minutes before.

Last year also saw PLOTE member of Parliament from the Wannai district Shanmuganathan alias Vasanthan being killed in another Claymore landmine attack on July 15th. Vasanthan's two year old son too was killed while his wife sustained serious injuries. Some weeks later another PLOTE Parliamentarian Balachandran's house was shot at but he survived. On July 16th this year Thasan's secretary and right hand man Sabaratnam Baskaran alias Dumal was killed in a claymore mine attack. The explosive was attached to a parked cycle and triggered with a remote mechanism.

All these incidents in Vavuniya along with those attacks in Jaffna against PLOTE members clearly indicate that the LTTE is consistently targeting the PLOTE. It is an accepted fact that the most skilful and deadly exponents of the claymore mine device are the LTTE. Yet it has not been possible to point a definite finger of guilt because of the suspicion that other agencies too may be involved. This climate of uncertainty is one on which the LTTE thrives. They continue with their actions systematically and ruthlessly while the victims and aggrieved parties indulge in mutual recrimination. Even now the Special Task Force Commandos have been taking action against the TELO in Vavuniya. They think the recent landmine attacks by the LTTE against them were implemented through TELO connivance.

In that context the killing of Manickathasan too naturally raises doubts about the perpetrators. Nevertheless to those analysts who have been observing the LTTE pattern of attacks there is no doubt about who was responsible. The LTTE is currently aiming to demolish all effective alternatives to it within the Tamil community.

In Vavuniya the PLOTE too enjoys some popular support though much

of it has eroded because of Manickathasan's ignoble conduct. Still the LTTE wants to reduce the PLOTE to a non-entity through selective assassinations. It may like to co-opt some of the junior PLOTE cadres as Tigers. The LTTE deputy military commander Balraj himself is an erstwhile PLOTE member recruited later by the Tigers. The LTTE however is unlikely to accommodate senior members from other groups. They are forever dubbed as traitors or anti-social elements who must be eliminated.

In the case of Manickathasan he was always perceived by the LTTE as a "thug and criminal" who had to be eradicated. He had also allegedly killed and tortured quite a number of LTTE members and supporters. So there never was any chance of his being pardoned and accepted by the LTTE in spite of his repeated overtures. It may even be possible that the vacillating attitude displayed by Manickathasan in recent times towards the important task of containing the LTTE may have contributed to his demise. The present confusion about his death would linger for a while. But it is only a matter of time before the truth emerges.

The important factor however is to recognise that the killing would not have been possible without internal connivance. This means that the LTTE has either deeply infiltrated or bought over cadres in the PLOTE. Such a possibility should make the alarm bells ring for the PLOTE, other Tamil groups and in the final analysis the armed forces.

There is also the larger question facing the Tamil community. Whatever Manickathasan's defects or merits there is no denying that he was at one time a youth who embarked upon the enterprise of achieving through armed struggle a country for the Tamils called Tamil Eelam. Now he too like innumerable Tamils before him has been exterminated at the altar of the Eelam struggle. The question that Tamils must answer after intense soul searching is two fold. First, who has arrogated unto himself the infallible right of executing fellow Tamils and who decides the criteria upon which life after life is snuffed out brutally as alleged traitors? Second, even after this endless cycle of deaths that has undermined the community from within are the Sri Lankan Tamils anywhere within reach of that elusive goal that is Tamil Eelam? ●

One Nation or Many: Observations on the Sri Lankan Crisis

Meghnad Desai

It may be helpful (if any such rational analysis can ever be in the politically charged context of present day Sri Lanka) to start by stating that Sri Lanka is an island whose people practice four religions (principally, with several others for very small fractions of the populations) - Buddhism, Hinduism Islam and Christianity; and speak three languages (again principally) Sinhala, Tamil and English. Numerically Christianity is practised by the smallest proportion among the four religions and English is the first language of few but the second language of many. But the cultural influence of Christianity and English far exceeds the numerical strength of their practitioners. They are part and parcel of the modern/colonial - post colonial history of Sri Lanka. Geographically, Sri Lanka is divided into North, East, South and West plus the interior. People speak of the dry zone and plantation areas in the interior and the four NEWS" regions along the coast.

Four religions, two or three languages and at least six regions provide 48 or 72 combinations of religion/language/region. A religion/language/region trichotomy does not, of course, exhaust the lines along which people's consciousness and living practice can be classified. A most important omission is gender which cuts across the trichotomy. An earlier generation of writers would have put class above all other dimensions. There is also of course caste - that very peculiarly South Asian category - which permeates Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists as well as Christians across South Asia. But only a few of these "cells" are non-empty. Thus Sinhala speaking people are primarily Buddhist or Christian, Tamil speakers are Hindu, Muslim or Christian. English speakers are Christians as well as Buddhists or Hindus etc.

In terms of regions, Tamils are largely in the North, the East and the plantations (upcountry) regions but they are also in the West (Colombo region) Sinhali speakers are also around the island.

Thus while it is possible and indeed predominant practice to think of the problem" as that of Sinhala Buddhist versus Tamil Hindus, and North and East versus the rest, even if such a problem was settled, it would leave many issues of Sri Lankan politics unresolved. Muslims and Burghers and plantation Tamils do not fit easily into the duality as currently conceptualised.

Table 1: Sri Lanka: Language x Religion matrix

Language/Religion	Buddhism	Hinduism	Islam	Christianity
Sinhala	x		x	x
Tamil		x	x	x
English	x	x	x	x

Thus in the language x religion matrix above, the first two rows and columns have the two major groups around whom the duality is constructed. But around that 2x2 matrix are the other columns and other rows which cannot and should not be ignored. (This is similar to the situation in Israel-Palestine. It is not of Jews versus Muslims because there are Christian Arabs as well.

Table 2: Sri Lanka: Language x Region Matrix

Language/Religion	West	South	North	East	Interior Dry	Interior Plantation
Sinhala	x	x		x	x	
Tamil	x		x	x		x
English	x	x	x	x	x	x

Similarly if we look at language x region omitting English speakers as they are spread across the islands), the symmetry of West, South and Dry zone for Sinhala speakers and North, East and Plantation for Tamil speakers is spoiled by Sinhala speakers in the East and Tamil speakers in the West. While the last two are minorities, their presence cannot be ignored.

Nationhood in South Asia

Nationhood can be defined along a variety of ways but more recently two ways have been emphasised - territorial and ethnic. In the history of South Asia, nationhood has been constructed along religious lines (Hindu/Muslim, nations as by the Muslim League and Jinnah in the 1940's India). Religion, however, was not enough to keep Pakistan together and in 1971, it broke up as between the Bengalis speaking Muslim East Pakistan Bangladesh and West Pakistan/Pakistan which is Muslim but multilingual.

Bangladesh did not become part of a united (red) Bengal as many thought likely in 1971 but religion and language jointly crystallised the separate nationality of the Bangladeshis as opposed to Bengalis of West Bengal. In the doomed struggle for Khalistan some Sikhs defused their nationhood as along religion/language and territory lines. [I have dealt with some of these issues in Desai (1997).

For the present India has chosen to define herself as a multi-religious, multi-lingual, multi-regional polity where nationhood is defined along territorial lines. There are tensions in this

definition - most recently due to the articulation of Hindutva by the BJP [see Vanaik (1997)]. But the dynamics of parliamentary democracy has for the time being reasserted the multi-religious multi-regional and multi-lingual polity. Pakistan has defined its nationhood along a dominant religion but multiple language, multiple regional yet single territorial lines. There are again tensions due for example to the dominance of Punjab. The identity problems of the Mohajirs, the Shia-Sunni divisions etc. but Pakistan remains a territorial entity. The dispute about Kashmir is all the more intense because of the need in both India and Pakistan to define nationhood along territorial lines.

Nationhood in Sri Lanka

Against this brief excursion into other South Asian nationhood, how do we think of Sri Lankan nationhood? It would seem that Sinhala Buddhist nationalism as articulated since the mid-1950's would like to define Sri Lanka as a single religion single language nation across its entire territory. This is what compels its champions to retell the story of Sri Lankan history along a

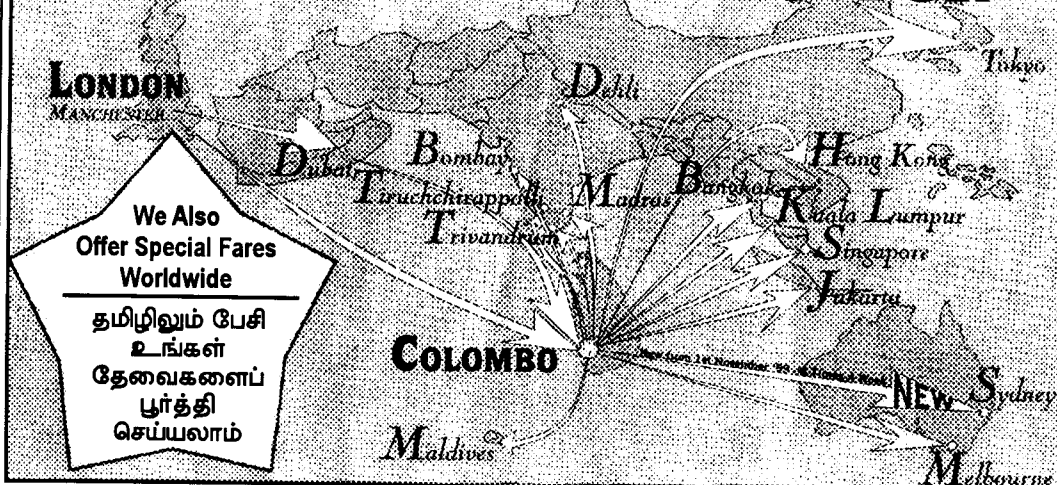
seamless 2,500 year tale of Sinhala Buddhist domination. Whatever the veracity of such a story (and truth is never objectively - ie in a universally accepted way - definable in this context) its construction is compelled by the programme of nationhood which it is meant to bolster.

In its own view Sinhala Buddhism thinks of Sri Lanka as a single unitary territory with provinces but not regions or States. In this it is dissimilar to both India and Pakistan but more akin to Bangladesh. But it lacks the single language, single religion domination that Bengali Muslims enjoy in Bangladesh. As seen above not all Sinhala speakers are Buddhists and a Sinhala Buddhist identity would exclude anywhere up to 30% of the population. By comparison, in Bangladesh, Bengali Muslims are in the 90% range.

To define Sri Lanka as a Sinhala Buddhist nation is plausible if nationhood is defined along ethnic lines. It is in claiming the entire territory of Sri Lanka for this particular nation that problems have arisen. Even if the remaining 30% or so had been divided in negligible proportions along other dimensions [in the other 47 or 71 cell],

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there would have arisen questions of minority rights as human rights in any Constitution. In that case, some accommodation could have been found which would have recognised minorities as having rights as such - as minorities - relative to a majoritarian hegemonic national identity defined along language/religion lines.

[Even with the numerical dominance of Bengali-speaking Muslims, Bangladesh has had to face the issue of Chittagong hill tribes. The problem of Bihari Muslims who belong to Pakistan is another instance of how minorities even when small have to be accommodated in a one-nation state.]

But of course in Sri Lanka the 30% minority is neither evenly scattered across the island nor will a simple accommodation as minority be sufficient given the history of 20th Century Sri Lanka. For one thing there is a large minority - the Tamils who have a claim to be the co-community of Sri Lanka. For another this community has large regional concentration in the North and the East as well as in the interior up-country area.

Independence without Nationhood

Sri Lanka became independent without a protracted nationalist struggle violent or non-violent as in the case of India. Indeed the Story of Ceylon becoming Sri Lanka is one of collaboration between the British and the various fractions of the local people. Thus Sri Lankan nationhood was not defined sharply as a reaction to the imperial presence. British presence was in some ways less "other" in Ceylon as it then was, than in India. As a majority community, Sinhala Buddhists defined themselves more in opposition to Christian (Catholic) (or Muslim or Malayalee speaking communities (Jayawardene (1986)). It was by constructing the other as alien-foreign, Indian, that the local was crystallised.

The lack of a national struggle meant that when independence came it was granted rather than won. The constitution of independent Ceylon was not drafted by an elected Constituent Assembly, but handed over by the British. Thus the task of defining nationhood was carried out not consensually as in (post-partition) India, but in the populist pressures of democratic electoral politics. In a democracy with a first-past the post electoral system, numbers are at a premium. A majority

is a commanding position. The Westminster system also confers immense powers on the majority party in Parliament. If the majority community could also construct a parliamentary majority in a Westminster system then it can write its own ticket legally and constitutionally [this was the position of the Ulster protestants in Northern Ireland vis-a-vis the Catholics. It was the Catholic challenge to domination by the elected majority from 1968 onwards that made Northern Ireland a tough problem in British politics that is only now, after thirty years, coming close to resolution (March 1998)].

The definition of Sri Lankan nationhood was thus conducted through legislation in parliament, a process requiring simple majority rather than two-thirds or three fourths as in constitution making. From 1948 onwards therefore, there has been on the one hand an attempt by the majority community to define nationhood along Sinhala Buddhist lines. On the other hand there has been a pattern of resistance by the second largest group to insist on inclusion in such a definition or recognition as another Sri Lankan nation.

The division along party-political lines very much British style. Right and Left at the outset diverted attention from the strength of the majority community. On the one hand the UNP and on the other an unstable coalition of Left, centre-left parties - SLFP, LSSP etc, focused attention a British style attenuation of governance. The battle in the domain of economic policy making between Right and Left also perhaps diverted attention from the very different basis along which the national question was being tackled. The Left parties Stalinist, Trotskyist etc, were particularly diverted in this way mistaking the populism of Sinhalese parties as representing genuine people centred or mass politics. The ignominious collapse of the Sri Lanka Left into majoritarian populism did a lot to remove the parliamentary option of the Tamil minority. There was no conceivable coalition that could obtain majority in parliament that would guarantee a legitimate place to Tamils in any definition of Sri Lankan nationhood.

Confronting the National Question

Thus it was that from the mid 1950's onwards the Sinhala-Tamil relations became extra parliamentary. Pacts were signed between Bandara-

naik and Chelvanayakam in 1957, and between Senanayake and Chelvanayakam in 1965. The need to sign such pacts was a recognition that the parliamentary road was now impossible for the Tamils. At that time the battle centred on the issue of language. Was Sri Lanka a one language or a two language nation? [English was always to remain an extra elite language.]

The Sri Lankan state was also under other - economic - pressures. The failure to achieve sufficiently rapid growth which could absorb the expanding labour force in the rural and the urban areas led to the JVP-led rebellion in 1971. The collectivist moves to accommodate these pressures were also populist in their preference of the majority over the minority.

During the 1970's, Sri Lanka maintained an extensive welfare provision and achieved a high level of human development. At the same time, its performance as an open economy deteriorated and it was too small to pursue an autarkic economic policy. The shift to a liberal economic regime was accompanied by a reduction in the welfare provision. The balance shifted even more against the poor of the minority community.

India gave itself a Constitution in 1949 and since the formation of the Republic in 1950 has accorded a central place to the Constitution. It is one of the longest in terms of number of articles. While it has been amended more than seventy times, there has never been talk of another Constitution. By contrast, Sri Lanka has given itself new constitutions twice since independence. In 1972 and 1977, the Constitution changed but each time the issue of nationality for the non-Sinhala speaking Community was not addressed. Indeed the Executive Presidency inaugurated by J R Jayawardene concentrated executive power even more than in the Westminster type government. There was no level above the elected government which could be appealed to by any minority.

For a while, a Tamil Party, TULF, attained the status of an official opposition Party but of course, in the context of an Executive Presidency it had less power than before. The pacts between the two communities thus became international with India playing the Big Brother role through the 1980's. Events of 1983 no doubt gave spur to India on this front. But by that time,

several Tamil formations, EROS, EPRLF, LTTE - had abandoned parliaments and pacts.

Neither the 1983 understanding between India and Sri Lanka nor the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement and the consequent Thirteenth Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution solved the issue. It was not possible for an outside power such as India to solve what is after all an internal issue of Sri Lankan people. The tensions within Sri Lankan society, even within the majority community about the national issue, manifested themselves in the assassination of President Premadasa as well as several other politicians echoing the earlier assassination of S W R D Bandaranaike in 1959.

A New Framework for Solution?

Two recent developments have changed the framework within which the national issue is being posed. First is the consensus among the majority community parties on economic policy. A Left/Right division still persists but it will lead to fewer reversals and restorations of the policies of rival parties in the economic sphere. Secondly, there has been a growing recognition that the unitarian structure of Sri Lanka needs to be modified by devolution. With some small differences, there is also consensus on this issue among the majority community parties [see ICES 1997].

There is now a Devolution package presented by the People's Alliance government which came into power in August 1994. This package takes the form of a new Constitution. This is the maximum offer that the majority community can agree to make to the minority community.

Of course, devolution by itself does not relate to the national question. The national question could have been settled in the 1950's even within a unitary framework if the 1957 Pact had been implemented. Thus in some abstract (though not very helpful) sense, devolution is neither necessary, nor sufficient to solving the national problem.

But of course the context is not abstract and has not been since 1983. The context is a bloody military confrontation which has ebbed and flowed as between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Army. The open military confrontation is in the North (Jaffna) area but terrorist attacks can be anywhere across the island. It is not only in terms of lives

taken, but in terms of a constant feeling insecurity, and of course in economic terms, of high and increasing military spending (up to 6.5% of GNP in 1997).

An Impossibility Result

A Sinhala Buddhist nation can now (1998) be constituted in Sri Lanka in only two ways:

- (1) By winning the military battle decisively and permanently defeating the LTTE or
- (2) by partitioning Sri Lanka into two territories.

Neither of these two ways is a stable solution to the national issue. Indeed in terms of a monistic definition of nationhood spanning the entire territory of the island, the second way is obviously, a defeat but the first is also untenable since even after the defeat of the LTTE, the Tamils Speaking population of Sri Lanka will not disappear and nor will the other minorities considered at the outset of this essay. Indeed, a Tamil speaking minority remains in the West of Sri Lanka even if there were to be a partition, as a Sinhalese one may remain in the second state as Sri Lanka.

But the emergence of a consensus or devolution among the Sinhalese parties, not uncontested nor free from its own risks of breakdown, indicates that after fifty years of independence, the project of defining Sri Lanka as a Sinhala Buddhist island (ie language and religion and territory) has been seen as impossible - the debate around the devolution packages still has its partition edges (hence the difficulty of obtaining 2/3 vote for it in Parliament) but there is this recognition of an impossible nationhood. The difficulty now is of discovering a viable and stable alternative.

A pre-condition required for the emergence of an alternative (ie realistic consideration of any one of several proposed solutions) is a recognition by both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Army that there is no way of winning the war and obtaining the political objective of nationhood desired. We are some way from this recognition yet. The breakdown of the latest round of negotiations between the Kumaratunga government and the LTTE after the utmost progress in negotiations to date, show that there is a feeling on the part of the LTTE that it can beat Eelam militarily and/or that by entering and

completing bilateral negotiations on any package whatsoever which is on offer will mean an objective not achieved. Similarly, the Sri Lankan Army believes it can exhaust and defeat the LTTE and regain control over Jaffna and other LTTE territory and restore peaceful conditions.

There is an asymmetry here which renders a consideration of alternatives difficult. The army of a sovereign state cannot cede territory without a military defeat. A guerilla army of a putative state can cease hostilities and settle a war and even claim victory if some of its objectives are met. There have been settlements in El Salvador and Guatemala of longstanding civil wars. Current compromises in Northern Ireland imply a recognition by Sinn Fein and its military counterpart - the provisional IRA - that their objective of a United Ireland is not (pro tem?) achievable. The rights of the Catholic minority will however be guaranteed if and when there is a settlement of the issue, hopefully by May 1998.

When we speak of a settlement of the crisis, it is useful to note that the present period is within a process started in 1995, by Chandrika Kumaratunga. This was an offer of a new Constitution which led to extensive negotiations which were then halted when there were new LTTE attacks in Colombo and elsewhere. Since these attacks, there is a military thrust to gain back Jaffna and resettle it on part of the Sri Lankan Army. The LTTE considers itself still at war. It is possible to take the view that a successful recovery of Jaffna and its resettlement by the former residents is a precondition for the reopening of talks on the devolution process. This is certainly the logic behind the current military effort.

If, however, recovery and resettlement of Jaffna leave the LTTE free to open up attacks on new fronts in the North and East or elsewhere via terrorist attacks, the devolution effort will never take off. This is because the civil war is such that neither side can win and neither side will surrender or even give up the fight. So an alternative must be found. The roots of the alternative solution lie back in the history of Sri Lanka. It is the lack of an inclusive constitution making process which seems to me to be at the bottom of the present crisis. A combination of Parliament and Pacts has been tried and failed. External interaction to broker

the crisis with military force (IPUF) devolution offer from the first pact of 1957 to the current constitution proposals. This has also now failed.

The problem common to all the failed attempts is that the majority community offers unilaterally various concessions. The real need is to start a multilateral, inclusive, symmetric process which, starting from the unsatisfactory present situation, will end in a consultation jointly made by all the people of Sri Lanka. Such a process will include not only the government and the LTTE but opposition parties as well as representatives of the other minorities - Muslims, Burghers in an inclusive way. The process is the solution, or at least the essential core of any viable solution. The process will not start with a draft Constitution given by the majority. Constitution making is the healing, nation rebuilding process. What should have happened in the 1950's around the debate on the language issue can happen now, several thousand dead bodies later in the late 1990's. It is only within such a process that the legitimate aspirations of the Tamils as well as all other groups can be expressed. The very recognition that there are a number of groups can be expressed. The very recognition that there are a number of groups in Sri Lanka beside the Sinhala Buddhist majority group, which have as much right as the majority to having national identities and must be accommodated within any notion of Sri Lankan nationhood is the essence of the solution.

Then Sri Lanka has to get back to where this essay started. Sri Lanka has to recognise internally and endogenously that it is a country of four religions, three languages and six regions. Cutting this three dimensional cake along any particular axis - religion or language generate unhappy anomalies. Thus Muslims of the West and the South are not the same as those of the East. Similarly, for the Tamils there has been for a long time and there is now more than one party which can claim to represent them. This makes it important not to miss out any one of the various "cells" which have a minimal size. If they choose to knit in various umbrella coalitions should be presumed. It is by acknowledging the separateness of as many cells as possible that a genuine and binding unity will occur. ●

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The Ethnic Crisis: Looking Below the Surface

Fr. Mervyn Fernando

The ethnic crisis and its violence has been dissected and analysed and explanations offered by a host of knowledgeable people, the viewpoint depending, naturally, on the standpoint: where does one stand, in the North, East or South? It is futile to expect a fully objective standpoint, despite such claims by many. But all these deal with what I would call the "physical" causes of the problem; causes touching language, employment, education, the Constitution etc.

There is no gainsaying that a complex combination of all these factors coupled with the inevitable aberrations of chauvinistic politics has been responsible for the crisis. But we have failed to recognise a very significant but hidden factor which has played a role behind the scenes. In order to recognise it we have to look beyond our noses to the global scene of the human drama.

As I have indicated elsewhere, national, racial and cultural entities upon the planet, hitherto relatively isolated, are getting thrown against each other on account of the population explosion and the travel and communication revolutions. The globe is "shrinking" with population expanding, resulting in both, congestion of life-space and increase in the quantity, intensity and complexity of interactions among peoples, with probability of conflict increasing proportionately. Up to very recent times man lived in what might be called tribal isolation.

On a rough calculation more than three quarters of the nation-states of today are less than 300 years old. That means, for the best part of human history, man has lived in small kinship and language/culture related groups in tribes, petty princedoms, kingdoms etc. Interactions between them sometimes took the form of competition (aggression, local wars) and sometimes co-operation (exchange, alliances) or some mixture of both. There was no scarcity of land and natural resources. Except for short periods of unitary government even our small country saw the co-existence of at least three "kingdoms" in

the 2500-year period of recorded history. Sri Lanka became a nation-state in the modern political sense only with the British conquest of the Island in 1815.

Reactions to the unaccustomed closeness experienced by nations and cultures as a result of the enforced convergence has often been on negative lines. Inner psychological acceptance and genuine friendship lag behind physical closeness and superficial interaction. So we have had, in the recent history of the world, several wars of aggression (two World Wars in this century), and the subjugation of the weak by the strong by force of arms, particularly in the colonisation of many parts of the Southern world by Northern powers.

War and bloody conflict have not ended but, remarkably, we can see that their character has changed, if we look close enough. Whereas in the past most wars were motivated by aggression and conquests, today wars and conflicts, limited to specific places and regions, are claimed to be defensive without exception - defense of territory, freedom, human rights, language/culture etc. In bygone days the strong made no bones about subduing and exploiting the weak, but today peoples are fighting not so much to conquer others as to liberate themselves from servitude of any form or defend their legitimate rights. This does not mean that motives of self-interest and expansionism are altogether absent; the primordial sin of greed and self-interest still bedevils the human condition resulting in man's inhumanity to man. But they are more clearly and easily recognised for what they are and resistance to them in violent and non-violent forms are readily forthcoming. The silverlining in the dark cloud of violence in our day is the aggressive affirmation of positive human values; unlike in an earlier age subjugation and repression will not be easily tolerated.

Despite the ugly and the evil in violence and suffering the world over we should not fail to notice the growth of

opposite movements of unification and convergence. Major political disintegrations have resulted in new integrations or associations of a similar nature, for example, the League of Nations after the disruptions of World War I and the United Nations after the chaos of World War II. During the last few decades a number of regional groupings have come into being to deal with issues of common interest such as the Organisation of African Unity, the non-aligned Movement, ASEAN and our own SAARC.

On the one hand we have seen the breakdown of artificial "Empires" e.g. the Soviet Union which was an enforced polity of previously independent national/ethnic entities held together by ideology and State dictatorship; on the other, hitherto free and independent Nations are coming together freely to form larger associations e.g. the European Community. In line with what we would expect in a rising tide of person community consciousness those socio-cultural entities which felt secure in their national/ethnic identities are able to come together to form larger voluntary communities. Conversely

those entities, often minority groups which felt insecure in their ethnic identity are struggling to free themselves to be themselves, an manifested by separatist movements the world over. Sri Lanka is a perfect example.

Up to the beginning of British colonial rule the Sinhala and Tamil peoples lived as juxtaposed but intermingling groups in conditions of relative peace with occasional episodes of war. The partiality of British rule to both Tamils and Christians (minorities) gave rise to a strong assertion, understandably, of Sinhala-Buddhist consciousness after Independence, which swiped at both Tamils and Christians. Leaving aside the Christian question, the policies followed by successive governments specially with regard to language and land, consolidated fears of insecurity in the Tamil community as a minority ethnic group in the national polity.

Naturally these fears led to tendencies of separation which come to a head in the mid-seventies with a section of the younger Tamil generation taking to arms for the cause of a separate state. On the other hand the Tamil separatist

cry and its violent militancy evoked strong fears of insecurity in the Sinhala people vis-a-vis the combined Tamil population of the North and East and of Tamilandu (South India), especially in the eighties when India was openly supportive of the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka.

In my opinion, both communities are gripped by fears of loss identity and of human space for racial/cultural survival and well-being. This is the root cause of the problem. As long as such fears are operative they will not be able to come together from within, in mind and heart. No forced or imposed "solution" will last. Psychologically and politically the resolution of the conflict lies in removing these feelings of insecurity which have been aggravated by continued violence on both sides in the past few years. If the greater responsibility lies with the majority community the co-operation of the minority community towards that goal is also vital for success. Since India is now disengaged from this problem it should help to alleviate fears of the Sinhala people on the one hand, and on the other,

(continued on next page)

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(Continued from page 26)

awaken the Tamil people to dangers of attrition and isolation in prolonged violence.

The painful question is, how much more violent struggle the two communities have to go through before realisation dawns that both can be enriched only in a symbiotic relationship, each allowing the other to be itself as Sinhala/Tamil - a unity in diversity. In other words what is called for is an enlightenment of mind and a conversion of heart, both of which are very foreign to politics and politicians, Army commanders and guerrilla leaders.

The prevalent socio-economic and political orders in the world are revealing their discordance with the rising new consciousness by the violence they generate. Just as pain reveals pathology in the body so violence manifests pathology in the body of mankind. It is in need of healing; but healing of the spirit comprises both enlightenment and conversion - enlightenment about the truth of mankind's ascent to a more free person-community level of "being human" and conversion of heart from the petty ego of the self and tribe/race to the larger whole of the human family, & finally of the whole universe.

From the above considerations, it is clear that both the Sinhala and Tamil peoples are being challenged to "die" to their present confrontational and "separatist" modes of being to rise to a higher level of unity which will paradoxically enhance the specificity of each. At the level of spirit that is at the human level, (unlike at the level of matter) union does not obliterate the uniting elements but differentiates them. The deeper the union between husband and wife the more the personality of each as man and woman will be enhanced.

But the "un-redeemed" or "unliberated" man seeks to grow by isolating himself; he is afraid that communication and sharing will diminish personality and destroy identity, but in reality the opposite is true, whether it be an individual or a group. Violence is the price we pay for resistance to this fundamental law of being, which has been preached by all the religions, but little practised. It is therefore at bottom a religious and spiritual endeavour demanding a painful personal and collective sacrifice.

But the religious authorities in the country have not shown evidence of

ALLIANCES AND DALLIANCES

Ramesh Gopalakrishnan

The world alliance is a wretched one in the dictionary of Indian politics. Alliance, or cohabitation, is a necessary evil, like the live-in systems of the West, or the marriages of India. There is no need to come together on any ground other than physical or perhaps familial ones. The system carries on nevertheless despite the occasional change in the matrix of players. The same is the case with a political alliance.

Witness the coming together of all and sundry in the socialist firmament keen to join the saffron BJP bandwagon. Sharad Yadav, who prides himself as the champion of oppressed castes, becomes the guiding force of Janata Dal United (and not Divided), going along with the Samata Party of George Fernandes and Lok Shakti of Ramakrishna Hegde. Sharad's main opponent for the post of Dal parliamentary board chief in 1994 was George and George left the party after he was defeated. Hegde, of course, was sacked by Laloo Prasad Yadav at this instance of H D Deve Gowda in 1996 when Gowda became prime minister. Today, Gowda and Hegde have reversed positions. Gowda is no more than a Dal faction leader in Karnataka with the farmer's tractor as his symbol and Hegde is playing the king-maker's role with aplomb. And Dalit leader Ram Vilas Paswan, one of those who voted along with former prime minister I K Gujral against the Vajpayee government, has coolly made up with Vajpayee himself in a bid to defeat Laloo in Bihar.

The case of secularist Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav is

serious attempts to enlighten and educate their flocks in this spiritual aspect of the problem. More seriously, the standpoints taken by some of them, both Sinhala and Tamil, clearly smack of racial chauvinism, the antithesis of the spiritual dimension. My hope is that the on-going ethnic violence will prove to be the Way of the Cross of our country which will lead to the death of isolated racial egos for a resurrection to a new harmony of pro-existence conducive to enhanced and enriched diversity of racial identity.

(Excerpt from "This Piece of Planet Earth: Sri Lanka")

even more curious! He has been accused of supping with archrival and Uttar Pradesh chief minister Kalyan Singh of the BJP. Mulayam is certainly cultivating the backward class leader in Kalyan, in a bid to overcome the challenge posed by the flight of Brahmin caste from the BJP and the Congress. Mulayam doesn't mind losing a few seats to the BJP in this process. At the same time, both Congress and Mulayam are trying to hard to wean away Dalit and Muslim voters from the Bahujan Samaj Party of Kanshi Ram.

The case of BJP is no better. In Haryana, the party withdrew support to the Haryana Vikas Party government led by former Congressman Banshi Lal. After Banshi failed to keep his government afloat, the BJP changed tack and announced support to Om Prakash Chautala of the Lok Dal. Memory is woefully short, for, nine years ago, it was the very same BJP which had led a struggle to oust Chautala after the latter was accused of murdering an independent candidate to get the election process stalled at Meham from where he was to be elected to the state assembly. Chautala at last failed to win from Meham and had to vacate the chief minister's chair. Now, he is cuddling up to the BJP, thanks to his father, Devi Lal, and George.

The ironies don't end there. The Trinamul Congress of Mamata Banerjee continues to cohabit with the BJP. Mamata, the street-fighting queen of Calcutta, sorry Kolkutta, now wants to even join the Vajpayee government if it is reelected. The same fiery queen was all sound and fury when the Babri Masjid was demolished by the saffron hordes. And, the BJP, for its part, continues to implement its anti-left agenda by cosying up to the Trinamul Congress.

The BJP's traditional allies - the Shiv Sena and the Akali Dal - are in no better position either. The Akalis have suffered a split, with the faction led by former Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee chief Gurcharan Singh Tohra breaking away from Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal. Tohra was unable to strike a major blow at Badal, but the elections may find Tohra doing anything to scuttle the Akali-BJP alliance.

The case of Shiv Sena is most unenviable. Sabre-rattling chief Balasaheb

Thackeray has come under fire from the Election Commission itself, with the statutory body disqualifying him from voting or contesting elections for carrying out communal propaganda during the 1987 elections. If Thackeray's campaign 10 years ago was communal, what to speak of his fascist drama during the 1992-93 riots in Mumbai and the subsequent elections for which he has been indicted by the Srikrishna Commission! Thackeray is unfazed and his supporters went to the extent of attempting to enter the Election Commission headquarters in Delhi. Thackeray is cool as he doesn't contest elections at all, donning the mantle of a saint. But the question remains whether he will campaign in the same vein during the parliament and assembly polls in Maharashtra. The response of the "good guy" Vajpayee to the Thackeray embarrassment is to remain silent. After all, votes do matter and not values for the good guy.

Come the election results, each political leader seems to have his own calculations. Sharad Pawar, who recently broke away from the Congress to form his own Nationalist Democratic Congress, dreams of taking over as prime minister in the event of a hung parliament. Buddy Mulayam also wants to remain in the fray, though both leaders may not get more than 25 seats each. The ever-irrepressible George will not challenge Vajpayee, but in case, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance fails to win majority, there's the chance, for him, to lead the usual non-Congress, non-BJP front government. At 70, this may be George's real chance of leading the country: when fellow socialists Chandra Shekhar, Deve Gowda and Inder Gujral have done it, why not George! Of course, if the Congress manages to scrape through, and if Sonia chooses not to get into the hot seat, there's the man for all seasons: the genial Sardar Manmohan Singhji, who has seen it all - by being everything from Reserve Bank governor, Secretary of the South Commission under Julius Nyerere and finance minister under Narasimha Rao - in one decade flat!

Of course, there are minions like Arjun Singh who have been nursing dreams of grandeur within the Congress itself! And why not, says, Purno Sangma, who has visions of becoming the first prime minister of the country from the beleaguered north-eastern region!

Such ambitions, mercifully, are not reciprocated by even Tamil Nadu's megalomaniacal politicians - Karunanidhi wants to rule in Chennai and would be glad if nephew Murasoli Maran is given a cushy portfolio in Delhi - to ensure the

BJP in Upbeat Mood

T.N.Gopalan

As India is set to enter into yet another costly round of polls, it looks like Atal Behari Vajpayee is destined to have yet another shot at the top job in the country.

Thanks to a series of blunders she committed since she decided to enter the political scene, Sonia Gandhi seems to have frittered away all the advantages she did have at one stage, and so the Congress is likely to twiddle its thumbs in the Opposition ranks for quite some more time to come.

No one is sure what such a scenario bodes for the nation - whether the Sangh Parivaar would set the agenda and pave the way for a fascist future or, as some claim, the BJP's allies from the DMK to the Telugu Desam Party

further growth of the Sun TV's countrywide and global operations. Jayalalitha does not mind becoming the prime minister, or finance minister - to ensure scuttling the income-tax cases against her or buddy Sasikala Natarajan. After all, their aims are too narrow and, for them, means alone justify the ends!

Stranger is the sight of the leftists getting close to the Congress in several states and to Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu. The leftists are fighting the Congress in West Bengal and Kerala, while having a direct or indirect understanding with it in a few other states - mainly to fight the BJP.

And veteran Marxist and Bangla chief minister Jyoti Basu declares that he is ready for retirement after the elections - to become the prime minister? After all, his leftist buddies have not really been kind to him when his chance to occupy the Race Course Road seat came up twice - in 1996 and 1999! He senses he may not have another chance. Or perhaps will this be his last chance?

Ideologies, programmes and even plain good-old simple-minded sense for party victory have taken a backseat. This is the time for realising alliances and performing dalliances, putting into practice visions of empire and displaying the sense of power over the milling crowds of the subcontinent. Power is like nectar and poison. It flows and ebbs - it risks everything and nothing - it enlivens and kills - all at once.

(TDP) would hold it on a tight leash and prevent it from flying off the handle, remains to be seen.

The very first nation-wide opinion poll predicted that the BJP would secure around 200 seats on its own and, with its allies, the tally could be in the region of 280, well past the majority mark of 273. The Congress could get up to 160 seats as per this survey. Other polls which followed said very much the same thing, though the numbers varied here and there.

The BJP has certainly acquired the image of a winning horse, but interestingly, in the process, it has sought to dilute its own Hindutva project.

Kushabhau Thakre, the new BJP president and said to be a hard-liner in the Advani mould, said the other day, "We have dropped many slogans...people are not ready to give a mandate to the BJP alone...they want a coalition."

It may be recalled that even though its last election manifesto talked about abolishing Art.370, which provides for some special privileges to Kashmir, a uniform civil code and building Ram temple at Ayodhya, the National Agenda for Governance drawn up by the BJP and its allies after the elections glossed over such contentious issues. A similar strategy has been adopted this time too, only this time the party has not issued any separate manifesto of its own.

Suddenly the BJP seems to have been transformed into a party of consensus. Anything, anything, the BJP high-command is willing to do, in order to cling on to power.

But why seek power at all if it cannot hope to achieve any of the goals it has set for itself? Though many opportunists and careerists have joined the BJP in the last few years, the fact remains the RSS hard-core has taken to politics not to indulge in back-room manoeuvres or even make money, they would rather seek to make use of the stint in power to promote the Hindutva agenda as much as possible.

As a journalist noted wryly, "The BJP which prided itself on being a party

with a difference, is now trying to project itself as a party of consensus, one ready to carry anyone and everyone along. Its minimum demand is that they accept the leadership of Vajpayeeji." Vajpayee himself is an eloquent symbol of the party's readiness to bend as far backward as possible in order to woo the voters across the spectrum. Till recently it was Advani who was calling all the shots.

In fact he was credited with having launched the party on the winning trail what with his (in)famous rath yatra during the V.P. Singh regime, his efforts culminating in the demolition of the Babri masjid.

It was Advani who was believed to have discovered the route to success by projecting a hard-line Hindutva. If it continued to increase its electoral performance by leaps and bounds since the drubbing it received in 1984, it had won only two seats then, it was Advani who was almost solely responsible for the dramatic turn-around in its fortunes. But the Advani-effect had plateaued in 1998. The BJP was way below the majority mark. If it was to form a government, it had to seek the support of many other big and small parties, and the support of the latter was conditional on the BJP's jettisoning, or at least pretending to jettison, some of its core principles. And the man for the moment was only Vajpayee who until that time had been seen as a weak-kneed and temporising Sanghi and one who had allowed the party to drift from one disaster to another.

That lily-levered parivaarman was the only personality acceptable to other parties which still fought shy of overtly endorsing the Hindutva. And as the BJP got a severe jolt in the Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and New Delhi Assembly elections last year, the Vajpayee faction started reasserting itself saying that the government had been hamstrung by the snipings from the RSS ideologues and that if left to itself it could acquit itself more commendably and win back the support of the people.

As it happened when the Vajpayee government fell and elections became

inevitable, it was again Vajpayee with whom such parties like the Trinamul Congress, the Telugu Desam Party and the DMK were willing to do business, he was the more acceptable face of the Hindutva. Predictably then the BJP's own election campaign is centering around the "glorious leadership" of Vajpayee and its posters carry his pictures alone by and large. Most party functionaries, largely Advani-loyalists, are fretting and fuming, but there is little they can do about it. Anyway they would like to wait till the BJP is firmly in the saddle on its own, at which time they could go for the jugular.

There are indeed some apologists who would have the rest believe that the BJP has gone through a process of Congressization and hence has become eminently acceptable to one and all. What they would not say of course is that Vajpayee himself is only pulling his punches, for obvious reasons. The Pokhran blasts were his initiative more than anybody else's. He had planned to conduct the tests even during his 13-day stint in power in 1996, the BJP itself revealed later.

And when the Christians were being hunted down in Gujarat, the Prime Minister brazenly called for a public debate on conversion and had little to offer the victims anything by way of consolation. Gujarat itself is a fearsome reminder of the real nature of the BJP. The government there openly flaunts its Sangh credentials, and the minorities are periodically lynched by the Sangh parivaar. So bad is the situation there that even the Congress would not put up even a single Muslim candidate. It is in such a nefarious company Vajpayee finds himself, and surely he will be kicked aside when the BJP gains an absolute majority for itself.

Be that as it may, if the secular camp finds itself at the receiving end today, it has to blame only itself. Sonia did seem to be making waves when she entered politics last year, rather reluctantly it looked like - she was able to avert a total disaster for the Congress last year. Again after becoming the President of the party, she led it to

a stunning victory in the Assembly elections, and the Congress even seemed to be retrieving some lost ground in the U.P. But then she continued to keep away from the media, operate through a clique and thus erected a wall between herself and the outside world. She seems to have fashioned herself after her mother-in-law even though her leadership credentials are still suspect. Such a style inevitably upset those regional Congress leaders with some mass base for themselves like Sharad Pawar who finally broke off, fearing that they might be sidelined by the coterie around Sonia. Even Moopanar is wary of going back to the Congress since he is not sure of the kind of treatment he and his followers will get under the Sonia dispensation.

Net result Sonia has lost a splendid opportunity to cash in on the blunders of the Shiv Sena-BJP coalition in Maharashtra or to revive its base in Tamil Nadu. She herself had to flee to Karnataka in search of a safe seat. She is now contesting from Bellary which has returned the Congress and only the Congress time and again since 1952. Though she is opposed by the colourful Suhsma Swaraj of the BJP, Sonia's victory appears certain. But that is of little consolation since the Congress itself could be pipped at the post in the Karnataka Assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

It is not as if all is lost already. Though the Vajpayee government did finally win the Kargil war, it cannot escape the criticism of having allowed things to drift resulting in considerable loss of Indian lives.

The minorities are almost solidly behind the Congress. In places like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh could still be on the come-back trail. Sonia draws good crowds. With the right mix of appropriate candidates and sensible strategies, perhaps the Congress could still make a fight of it. The foreigner label sought to be affixed on Sonia does not seem to have much of an impact on the people at large. All the same it is the saffron brigade which seems poised to tighten its grip over the Red Fort at New Delhi. ●

Dalits Challenge Dravidian Hegemony in Tamil Nadu

Ramesh Gopalakrishnan

That Dravidian hegemony is the prevalent idiom of the public sphere is an unchallenged issue in Tamil Nadu politics. However, with this election, everything seems to have changed and Dalits, or Harijans and Adi Dravidars, as they are known as in the previous avatars of nomenclature, have finally arrived to challenge the Dravidian parties lock, stock and barrel. Egged on by G K Moopanar's Tamil Maanila Congress which itself is an incredible phenomenon, Dalit politics has entered with a big bang in Tamil Nadu, at last.

In the eye of the storm are two outfits which have had only a marginal presence in the political firmament so far: Pudhiya Tamilagam of Dr K Krishnaswamy and Dalit Liberation Panthers or Viduthalai Siruthaigal of R Tirumavalavan. Both parties have latched on to Moopanar's party and giving it a yet-unknown-strength, possibly set to upset the caste calculations of the mainstream Dravidian parties like the DMK, AIADMK and the Marumalchi DMK of V Gopalsamy. Dr Krishnaswamy has been a legislator since 1996, gaining in popularity ever since the police-led attack on Dalits in Kodiyankulam village in Tirunelveli district. However, no political party was willing to go into an alliance with him so far. The case of Dalit Panthers is only slightly different. Starting with a small base in Madurai, Tirumavalavan has expanded his organisation securing it a few pockets of influence in Chidambaram and Cuddalore after a series of agitations to secure civic rights for Dalits. Now, he is together with Moopanar, giving the latter a much-needed grassroots presence.

The challenge from the Dalits has come at a most inopportune moment for the Dravidian parties, which have found it expedient to align with the Bharatiya Janata Party, representing their polar opposite in the ideological spectrum! A few political observers outside Tamil Nadu have ascribed it to the de-ideologization of the Dravidian parties over

the years, but the Kazhagams, nevertheless, are engaged among themselves in a bitter battle for supremacy in which ideology cannot be given a go-by all the same.

The late eighties and the ninties witnessed, in Tamil Nadu, the growth of a peculiar political climate: the watershed effect of the Mandal Commission report, seeking to give a share of power for the intermediate castes in the centre, heightened the importance of the Dravidian parties and their historic role in favour of the intermediate castes in Tamil Nadu. At the same time, the reaction against the Mandal Commission report in north India necessitated, in the long run, the need for Dravidian parties to come to terms with the aggressive Hindutva of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Hence, as the BJP grew in stature and spread, the Kazhagams found it imperative to do business with it. It was true that the DMK had worked closely with the Jana Sangh, the earlier avatar of the BJP, during the resistance to Mrs Indira Gandhi's Emergency. However, the Mandal watershed had divided the two parties so much that it was left to the AIADMK to get closer to the BJP. AIADMK supremo J Jayalalitha, who is always dictated by realpolitik, used her connections well to tacitly support the BJP's disastrous kar seva at Ayodhya which ultimately resulted in the Babri Masjid demolition drive.

Of course, the BJP had already found a chord of sympathy with the forward castes of Tamil Nadu, especially the Brahmins. The AIADMK-BJP honeymoon culminated in the 1998 victory for the alliance.

In the meantime, both the Dravidian parties had inevitably moved away from the Dalits. The AIADMK's total identification with the Mukkulathors during its five-year-long tenure under Jayalalitha had antagonised the Pallar caste, who voted as a bloc for the DMK-led front in the 1996 polls. However, they had to be disappointed in DMK chief Karunanidhi's regime, which has

had very few tangible measures to offer to them in terms of protection of their civic rights. The DMK and Karunanidhi had never wanted to antagonise the Mukkulathors beyond a point and were wary of empowering the Pallars of southern Tamil Nadu. This drove the Pallars to the Pudhiya Tamilagam of Dr Krishnaswamy who has been trying his luck at the Lok Sabha polls since 1996.

The case of Dalits living in northern and parts of central Tamil Nadu is somewhat different. Called as Parayars, they have been at loggerheads for over decades with the Vanniars, who constitute the strongest intermediate caste in terms of numbers. The hostility between the two castes came out in the open in a sharp manner during several clashes and riots, especially when the Vanniar Sangam, which went on to become the Pattali Makkal Katchi, had held a week-long road block stir of northern Tamil Nadu during 1987. PMK founder-leader Dr S Ramadoss, for a while, had tried to mediate between the two castes and bring about a reconciliation, but he later succumbed to the dictates of caste politics and held the pro-Vanniar line. The Parayars, obviously, could not go along with the DMK en bloc during the 1996 and 1998 polls, as that party had an image of being the "true representative" of the intermediate castes and was engaged in a war for supremacy with the PMK. Hence, the Parayars, by and large, stuck to their traditional line of supporting the AIADMK. This policy paid rich dividends for the AIADMK-led front in the 1998 elections. Interestingly, the AIADMK had roped in the PMK as well in the front led by it that year.

Alas, this year, the alliances changed and the DMK and the PMK find themselves on the same side of the fence. This has led to the consolidation of the Vanniar votes on the one side and the Parayars, sensing the entry of the Dalit Panthers, have decided to cast their lot with Tirumavalavan. With the result that the DMK and PMK have become jittery and started resorting to booth-capturing and rigging, in the style of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. This election has been the first time such incidents on a massive scale have occurred in Tamil Nadu. The incidents, which took place at Chidambaram constituency, where Tirumavalavan is a candidate, culminated in attacks against Dalits, which according to the People's Union for Civil Liberties, have been

actively aided and abetted by the DMK-PMK leaders including the state's backward classes welfare minister Panneerselvam.

All this has ensured that Pudhiya Tamilagam and Dalit Panthers will be able to expand their base in the near future. However, it is still difficult to say whether the two major Dravidian parties and the Marumalarchi DMK would feel threatened by the Dalit surge that much. Caught in the vortex of politics, they have very little time for ensuring social reforms in favour of the Dalits. Also, their new-found proximity with the BJP leaves them with very little or no elbow room for getting closer to the Dalits. The BJP has already started describing the Dalit organisations as violent, extremist outfits!

Interestingly, both Pudhiya Tamilagam and the Dalit Panthers have several persons in their ranks who have been cadres or sympathisers of the extremist left in the past. Dr Krishnaswamy himself was an extremist sympathiser in the late seventies before he joined the DMK and once fought the Lok Sabha polls on a party ticket. He later went on to found the Devendra Kula Vellalar Sangam and merged sev-

eral such caste associations of the Pallars into a federation which ultimately became the Pudhiya Tamilagam.

On the other hand, both the PMK and the Dalit Liberation Panthers had benefited from the disintegration of several left extremist groups operating in northern Tamil Nadu till very recently. The relentless police crackdown and the caste polarisation took the Vanniar youths to the PMK and the Dalit youths to the Dalit Panthers. Dr Ramadoss' initial bravado of forging an alliance of intermediate castes, Dalits and the minorities had attracted a large number of extremist sympathisers towards voting for the PMK, but his decision to back only the Vanniars and align with the BJP in 1998 had left them in the lurch. Some of them, like Dalit R Ezhilmalai, nevertheless stayed on. Ezhilmalai even got a berth in the union council of ministers led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee! However, as things became too hot for them to take, Ezhilmalai and his supporters quit the PMK and have recently joined the AIADMK. He could not have gone to Moopanar's front as he and Tirumavallan are bitter rivals!

All this indicates the arrival of former extremists into the electoral arena under various Dalit banners in direct conflict with the intermediate castes - a phenomenon not very much anticipated by a number of the social commentators of Tamil Nadu who have been obsessed with the Dravidian ideology and its purity during the last decade. The last ten years, on the other hand, have witnessed a splurge of books on the history or pre-history of the Dravidian movement, starting with the one written by DMK ideologue Murali Maran. The other significant work was co-authored by S V Rajadurai and V Geetha, titled Towards a Non-Brahmin Millenium. Rajadurai also wrote an analysis on the Hindi, Hindu, Hindutva ideological framework, from within a purist Dravidian ideological standpoint. Dr MSS Pandian, a well-known social critic, also contributed several articles highlighting the success of the Dravidian movement and its ideology in uplifting the intermediate castes.

Interestingly, all the above works failed to anticipate the two-pronged crisis facing the Dravidian ideology

(continued on next page)

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DMK Success Expected in Tamil Nadu

T.N.Gopalan

It has been a roller-coaster ride for the septuagenarian Muthuvel Karunanidhi. He has never again been able to scale the commanding heights of success he had achieved in 1971.

If it was a clean sweep for the Indira Gandhi-Karunanidhi combine in 1971, in the Assembly elections held simultaneously the Congress-O, led by no less a person than Kamaraj himself, was routed and had to be content with just 15 seats.

Soon thereafter though MGR walked out, and Karunanidhi's popularity plummeted. For thirteen long years he was in the wilderness. Though in 1980 the DMK-Cong-I front swept the Lok Sabha polls, the victory was attributed to Mrs. Gandhi's appeal, and the drubbing the same combine received in the Assembly elections that followed only reinforced such a perception.

In 1989, after MGR passed away, Karunanidhi did stage a brief comeback only to have his government derailed barely two years later by a determined Jayalalitha. The woman in a hurry, though, virtually destroyed herself, making it easier for the DMK chief to return to power with a thumping majority. But his elation proved short-lived. Again two years later in the Lok Sabha elections, the DMK-TMC combine was badly mauled, raising the prospect of the dismissal of the Karunanidhi government.

Such has been his track-record, and now again Karunanidhi seems to be facing the electorate on some confident note. He is now heading an alliance comprising the the BJP, the PMK and the MDMK, with the Thamizhaga Rajiv Congress of Vazhapadi Ramamurthy,

MGRADMK of Thriunavukkarasu and MGR Kazhagam of R.M. Veerappan bringing up the rear.

And the alliance is tipped to walk away with at least a majority of the 40 seats at stake in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, if not sweep the polls altogether.

Not only, like in 1980, he is in the company of a party expected to be voted to power at the Centre, even by his own performance in the last three years, he is not rated too very badly. Since 1969 when he became the Chief Minister, he has not been able to complete his term of office even once. He could reverse the trend now.

But to the extent the BJP, his ally, is likely to make it to New Delhi, he can rest assured that he would complete the full five-year term undisturbed and perhaps pass on the baton to his son Stalin, though it is still a moot point whether the latter has it in him to keep the party together and steer it through troubled times as his father did. That apart, his not-so-sullied image vis a vis that of Jayalalitha's own, Vajpayee's own popularity and the Pattali Makkal Katchi's clout among the Vanniars, all these put together, are expected to work in favour of the DMK-BJP alliance.

The MDMK is tying itself in all sorts of knots. First it wanted seven seats for itself. When the PMK had been given that many, why not for us too? They argued. It was difficult for Vai.Ko's followers to accept the bitter fact that while the PMK has a proven base, the MDMK's own, assuming there is any such, is much more tenuous. After some protracted wrangling, Vai.Ko. did agree to take the five seats offered. Again there was a hitch. There was no meeting of minds between the DMK and the MDMK on the choice of constituencies to be allotted to the MDMK. Vai.Ko. had to accept one constituency he did not like, but he had very few options before him.

The MDMK hassle apart, the DMK-BJP front is said to be well-placed as mentioned earlier. But then such assessments tend to underestimate

Jayalalitha's own potential. One can never write her off. Many did last year only to receive the jolt of their lives when the results came. Nobody had expected her to achieve such a stunning victory for her front. There could have been many factors behind the success, the Coimbatore blasts, Vajpayee's own image and the Vanniar support for the PMK. Still it was unquestionably Jayalalitha who had galvanised the opposition and carried the day. Even now when it looks like she is fighting with her back to the wall, when she is believed to have attracted the odium of pulling down a government unnecessarily and paving the way for fresh elections within a year, she does not seem to have lost none of her known charisma. She keeps attracting large crowds wherever she visits, and her audience lustily cheer her. While the more discerning should be able to see through her litany of complaints against both Vajpayee and Karunanidhi as thoroughly motivated - not withstanding the modicum of truth involved - it is difficult to see whether the large rural masses care to figure out how much of whatever she says is true and how much of it is vilification.

There are those who are willing to believe anything of Karunanidhi and forgive anything of Jayalalitha, that strong anti-Karunanidhi constituency which MGR had assiduously fostered seems to have been recaptured by his protege. Besides she has been able to revive the alliance with the Congress. The Tamils do seem to have some special love and affection for the Nehru dynasty, and so the Sonia effect too could fetch Jayalalitha some more votes, though the Congress itself is nearly moribund in the state.

Add to these factors the more or less complete alienation of both the Muslims and the Dalits of every segment from the DMK, the situation could be exploited to the hilt by any determined opponent. And Jayalalitha is nothing if not determined.

But there are problems too. The way she chose to snub Sonia by boycotting a meeting to have been addressed jointly by them at Villupuram off Madras, for reasons not very clear, has certainly angered those who would have liked to vote for the Cong-I-AIADMK front out of their love for the Nehru family. Perhaps Jayalalitha was taking it out on Sonia for keeping her on tenterhooks in the aftermath of the

(Continued from page 25)

today, due to the Dravidian parties' inevitable association with the BJP and the spiralling Dalit-intermediate caste conflict occurring in different forms. What form and shape all this would take is anybody's guess and history, as ever, has proved its cunning ability to surprise the ideologues and commentators!●

fall of the Vajpayee regime, even refusing to give her an appointment. Or she could have been angry over an interview in which senior Congress leader Dr. Manmohan Singh was quoted as saying Jayalalitha or Laloo Prasad Yadav, none could escape the law if found guilty. She subsequently tried to mend fences with the Congress and came out with some vapid explanation as to her absence. But the damage has been done.

And the way she upbraided veteran R. Thamaraiyani because he had failed to mobilise impressive crowds for her at Sivakasi - she later expelled him too from the party - seemed to have alienated the Nadar community. (The veteran is a nadar.)

Though this correspondent who has been touring the state can vouch for the fact that Jayalalitha's charisma has remained intact in rural areas by and large, she has been steadily hacking at her own vote-bank by such ill-considered gestures as noted above.

Further there is a Third Front too in the fray. Saying that he is steering clear of both corruption and communalism, Govindasamy Karuppiyah Moopanar has fashioned a new alliance comprising essentially a number of Dalit organisations besides the rootless Janata Dal and the Indian Union Muslim League. He had tried his best to win over Sonia to his view point. Unlike the other erstwhile dissidents like Mamata Banerjee and Sharad Pawar, he still swears by the Congress and is very proud of his Congress lineage. And till the time Sonia decided to overrule him and go in for an alliance with the AIADMK, he sought to make out that he was a Sonia-loyalist too. And even now the question whether his Tamil Maanila Congress would support a Congress-led coalition backed by Jayalalitha remains wide open. He makes it clear that his opposition is confined to Jayalalitha and none else and that he would support any secular formation at

the Centre.

Never since 1980 the Congress has fought on its own in the state. By severing the Dravidian umbilical chord as it were, Moopanar seems to have taken a big risk. Nobody expects the TMC-led front to make much of an impact, though Moopanar's own stature among the middle classes has gone up thanks to his principled stand. If the TMC-led front puts up a good show even if it fails to win more than a handful of seats, that would go to prove that Moopanar is a political force to reckon with, and many more smaller parties could veer around him. The PMK and the MDMK themselves could accept the TMC's leadership. For while Karunanidhi would never share power with them, Moopanar could opt to, and hence the possible temptation - if he proves his electoral base now, that is. He had always been against riding piggy-back on the Dravidian parties. Both in 1977 and again in 1989 when he was the president of the Tamil Nadu unit of the Congress, he managed to convince the Congress leadership at the Centre, first under Mrs. Gandhi and then under her son, to fight the Assembly polls on their own.

The party did fare badly on both occasions. Still it was not a no-show on both the occasions. It did win more than 25 seats, but neither Mrs. Gandhi nor Rajiv had the patience to build up the party from thereon, and Moopanar himself got busy with the goings-on in New Delhi. There was none of commitment and dedication left in Tamil Nadu to revive the party. On the other hand there were strong anti-Moopanar sections like the ones led by Vazhapadi Ramamurthy who sought to use such defeats as an excuse to crush him politically. Besides the central leadership itself was more concerned with how many seats Tamil Nadu could bring in to its kitty than about strengthening the party's base in the state. Having broken away from his mother-party and

tasted some success in the company of the DMK, Moopanar would like to see whether the people, tired of the Dravidian rule for three decades, would care to plump for a third alternative. If he succeeds, even to a very limited extent, nothing like that. Otherwise his political future would be finished. Still he is giving it a serious try.

Apparently he is betting on the possibility that his front would take away enough anti-BJP and anti-DMK votes to ensure Jayalalitha's debacle and that in the Assembly elections to follow a chunk of the AIADMK's votes would shift to the TMC. One has to wait and see whether he is skating on thin ice.

The gory incident in Tirunelveli in July when as many as 17 Dalits fleeing a brutal police lathi-charge were drowned in the Thamiravaruni river, the rise of the Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam in the wake of the anti-Muslim riots, the blasts and the repeated raids on Muslim localities and the DMK's shedding all its inhibitions to join hands with a party like the BJP have all added a new dimension to Tamil Nadu politics. One has to wait and see whether the results bear out such a reading or the people are still under the Kargil-Vajpayee spell.

The latest opinion polls seem to confirm that the DMK-led front would tot up more than 25 out of the 40 seats at stake in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry and that the TMC would be wiped out.

What the marriage between the Dravidian stream and the Hindutva sections and a drubbing for Jayalalitha mean for Tamil Nadu remain to be seen.

PL. ADD TO THE STORY ON THE ALL INDIA SCENARIO AT THE PLACE WHERE I TALK OF HER SHIFTING TO BELLARY.

Such is the uncertainty haunting the Congress camp after Pawar's revolt, they would not even project Sonia as their prime ministerial candidate and this could also damage the party's chances at the hustings.

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Yogendra Duraiswamy A GREAT PATRIOT

Yogendra Duraiswamy, who passed away recently in Colombo at the age of seventy five was born into an aristocratic family in Jaffna which was steeped in political, social, religious and legal traditions stretching back several generations. His father Sir Waithilingam Duraiswamy was born in Velanai, an island west of Jaffna peninsula and his grandfather Ayampillai Waithilingam was an engineer who spent his life in Malaya. Sir Waithilingam Duraiswamy founded the Hindu Board of Education and was the secretary of the Hindu Board which was responsible for establishing a series of schools. In fact, he was elected as the first speaker in the Legislative Council on account of his remarkable service to the nation and popularity.

Yogendra Duraiswamy was educated at Jaffna Central College, Jaffna Hindu College and later at Royal College, Colombo, from where he entered the university college and had a brilliant career. This was then fittingly crowned by an equally brilliant career in the foreign diplomatic service. He had served in Italy, China, the Philippines, Burma, Australia, India, Iraq, the USA and the United Nations, representing Sri Lanka in various high positions as ambassador and high commissioner.

His academic brilliance, his persuasive eloquence, his missionary spirit, his amazing mastery over the intricacies of finance and administration as a diplomat and District Secretary/ Government Agent, Jaffna made him a unique person. His sense of responsibility was unscrupulous and behaviour was modest. He adorned what he touched. He made outstanding whatever he did. Whether addressing the assemblies of the United Nations or discharging diplomatic responsibilities or presiding over literary or religious conferences, the benevolent power of Yogendra Duraiswamy's personality permeated all his endeavours and gave them a noble meaning.

He was consistently pragmatic in his approach and willing to seek out and accept solutions where they could be

found. This made him to be trusted and respected by all. Though he was mindful of the Tamil community, he was equally mindful of national concerns. He possessed a national vision and a Hindu outlook that embraced everyone irrespective of race, creed and religion. He rose above narrow parochialism, communalism, regionalism and sectarianism.

Throughout his career, he sought mutual accommodation with other communities, so that the larger interest of the country did not suffer. He knew that the interests of one ethnic group could not be achieved without the well-being of the entire people of the country. Furthermore, he also knew that the interests of the country could not be achieved by ignoring or neglecting or denying the interests of any particular group. This should be an important lesson for us living in a turbulent, violent, critical and crucial period in the recent history of our country. Besides, he was of the firm opinion that political solution to the ethnic problem could be found only through a power-sharing arrangement in a united Sri Lanka.

Yogendra Duraiswamy, as President of the Hindu Council of Sri Lanka rendered yeoman service for the promotion, propagation and development of Hindu religion and culture. He took all efforts to make Hindus conscious of their rich cultural heritage and he wanted them to comprehend that their civilisation and culture had certain gems which were unique and everlasting.

He was also a tireless crusader against social injustice, blind beliefs and false religious practices. Reforming the old crumbling social order and erecting a new attractive super structure from the remnants of Hindu culture and civilisation was the stupendous task he undertook to himself.

His lofty ideal as President of Hindu Council of Sri Lanka and Vice-President of World Hindu Federation was "Live and Let Live." His thirst for religious knowledge remained unquenched, although he had profound knowledge

in Tamil literature, Hindu religion and Hindu culture. He believed in the wholeness of life. To him the ideal of human civilisation did not lie in the freedom alone, but in the bonds of brotherhood of all the people of the world, where all nations co-operated with one another in all spheres of development.

Yogendra Duraiswamy's life reminds us of philosopher PLATO'S embodiment of the complete man. Undoubtedly, he was a man of many parts. No field of human endeavour was left untouched by the sawing amplitude of his imagination, the encompassing sweep of his thoughts, the indefatigable zeal of his actions. His life was an inspiring saga of service. He vitalised every cause he espoused - social, religious, cultural and even political. Undoubtedly, he was well known for his impartiality, indomitable courage and unstinted patriotism.

There is another feature of his life that must be mentioned. Not many persons in this sad world of conflict can claim to have happy personal and domestic lives. But Yogendra Duraiswamy was pre-eminently successful as a family man. In his wife, Sivanandini Duraiswamy he had a most constant and wonderful comrade. Incidentally, she is the co-ordinating secretary on Hindu Affairs to the Minister of Buddha Sasana, Cultural and Religious Affairs, Lakshman Jayakody. She is also the President of the Saiva Mangaiyar Kalamgam, the premier Hindu Women's Organisation in Sri Lanka working in the educational, cultural and social fields. Yogendra Duraiswamy himself was closely associated with the Ministry of Culture and rendered yeoman service in the fields of art and culture. His only son is distinguishing himself in his profession in the World Bank.

It is very often said, "Lives of great men all remind us that we can make our lives sublime and when departing leave behind us footprints on the sands of time." Indeed, Yogendra Duraiswamy's life and career should serve to inspire present and future generations to be constructive in the forward march towards progress and to instil in them a spirit of unity and dauntlessness for attaining the cherished goals. ●

- Chelvathamby Manicavasagar

R R Sivalingam - An Appreciation

P.Krishnaswamy

Death has removed from our midst R.R.Sivalingam a fine soul, a devoted friend and above all one dedicated to the cause of the people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka and that of the expatriates from that Island nation to India under the two agreements between Delhi and Colombo. Sivalingam who hailed from the tea plantations of Central Sri Lanka was a brilliant student exposing his intellectual capacity even while a student at high school. Moved by the writings of Anna, Karunanidhi and others, he was an ardent follower of Periyar. For a brief period he was also involved in left politics.

Having completed his education at Highlands College, Hatton, he was for a brief period teaching at a college in Kandy, when he won a Government of India scholarship and completed his master's degree at Christian College, Tambaram. On his return to Sri Lanka, he secured the post of Principal at the very school where he was educated. As one who was determined to change the socio-economic profile of the youth of the plantations, Sivalingam devoted himself to his crusade relinquishing his academic career opting for social politics. He passed his law examination and practised as an attorney with eminence. Youth in the plantations rallied round him and Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party lured Sivalingam into her fold for campaigning and when she became Prime Minister appointed him as Deputy Director of Education in charge of plantation schools.

Sivalingam was too committed a personality to be fettered by bureaucratic plumes. He resigned his post, when he found that the post he held was only ornamental and that he will not be

able to reshape the educational policy vis a vis estate schools for the upliftment of the plantation children and devoted himself fully to the cause of plantation workers and worked along with like minded men.

Following the communal holocaust of 1983, he along with many other intellectuals from the plantation Tamil community, migrated to Tamil Nadu as refugees. Moved by the plight of plantation workers who had come to Tamil Nadu as repatriates, he along with some of his friends formed an organisation to look after the interests of these workers who employed mainly in the plantations in Ooty. His activities were too much for the bureaucracy to stomach and he was arrested and held as a detenu in Chengalpattu prison along with Sri Lankan Tamil militants. When he fell ill while in detention he was sent to the Government hospital in Chennai where

he was held in chains. This treatment of Sivalingam by the then government of Tamil Nadu earned for him the sobriquet 'Nelson Mandela' of the plantation workers of Sri Lanka.

Sivalingam was a rare individual, a unique intellectual among the handful of intellectuals from that community. An eloquent speaker in both Tamil and English he had the ability to keep his audience spell bound. He was equally facile with his pen. A peerless personality, who had read and digested great works, he was a towering figure among the leaders of Plantation workers, leaders who tried to dwarf him but failed miserably. Had he had his way, the plantation Tamils would have been released from their bondage long years ago and lived as equals along with other communities of Sri Lanka. Here was a colossus among men, intellectually and eruditionally who had been felled by disease, but the contribution that he had made for changing the profile of the plantation Tamils will earn a permanent niche in the hearts of all men and women of his community, there is little doubt.

"Tamilnayam 2000"

In the first-ever, Government-assisted event for the promotion of Tamil since it attained independence, Sri Lanka will host "Tamilnayam 2000," the third international conference on the use of Tamil in Information Technology (IT). The theme of the event, to be held in the island nation on March 13 and 14 next year, will be "Empowerment through Tamil Information Technology".

The conference, which is a sequel to "TamilNet 99" held in Chennai by the Tamil Nadu Government in February, will be inaugurated by President Chandrika Kumaratunga. The Sri Lankan Government will grant Rs. 2 million to finance the conference.

Speaking to reporters in Chennai

Mr. S. Thondaman, Minister for Livestock Development and Estate infrastructure, Sri Lanka said that instead of speaking in different forms, his country and Tamil Nadu had come forward to standardise the language for use in computers. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, would be one of the key participants from the Tamil speaking parts of the world. The organisers would like Ms. Kumaratunga to invite Mr. Karunanidhi.

Mr. Thondaman said the Sri Lankan Government would soon launch a programme to spread the use of computers. The plan was to source used computers from countries like Singapore and dispatch them to all corners of the country.



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Jaffna Hindu parents seek professional bride for son, 28, 5'3", British citizen, B.Sc. Economics & Mathematics, M.Sc. Investment Management working for International American Investment Bank. Send horoscope, details, M 1132 c/o Tamil Times.

Lady Doctor in UK, 37, divorcee seeks suitable partner, Send details. M 1133 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu sister seeks for bachelor brother, 38, medical doctor in USA; preferably doctor or professional, good looking, willing to migrate, horoscope unnecessary, can send horoscope, photograph. Send photograph, details. M 1134 c/o Tamil Times.

Jaffna Hindu parents seek for graduate son, 39, employed as Senior Social Worker, London Council; educated bride in UK, preferably 30-35, good looking. Send horoscope, details. Lingam, 74 High Worple, Harrow HA2 9SZ,

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent weddings.

Inpachelvan son of the late Prof. & Mrs. Vithiananthan of 'Thamilaham', Tellipallai, Sri Lanka and **Parvatha Lakshmi**

daughter of Mr. & Mrs. K.Thanga-Raja (Kokuvil East) presently of Gaborone, Botswana on 21.8.99 at Ryde Civic Centre, New South Wales, Australia.

Jeyabal son of late Dr K.Sivaloganathan and Mrs M. Sivaloganathan of 18 Eton Avenue, New Malden, Surrey KT3 5AZ and **Senthiru** daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Sundaralingam of 163/15B Mihinthu Mawatte, Dehiwela, Sri Lanka on 29.8.99 at Tooting Muthumari Amman Temple Wedding Hall, London SW17.

Sivakumaran son of Mr. & Mrs. K.Kumaravel of 6 Holme Close, Hatfield, Herts AL10 9LQ and **Rathika** daughter of Dr. V. & Mrs. M.Balasegaram of 'Annai Illam', 54 Marlborough Road, Clayhall, Essex IG5 0JW on 29.8.99 at Thurrock Civic Hall, Grays, Essex.

Maxwell son of Mrs. T.R. Emmanuel and late Mr B.R. Emmanuel of 84 Canterbury Road, West Croydon, Surrey CR0 3HA and **Shakila** daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Sivagnanasundaram of 93 Links Road, Tooting, London SW17 9EJ on 4.9.99 at St. Teresa's Catholic Church, Morden, Surrey.

Pranavakumar son of Mr. & Mrs. S. Punniamoorthy of 6514, 154th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98052, USA and **Vaithegi** daughter of Mr. & Mrs. S.Thanikasalam of 26 Ron Scott Circuit, Greenacre, NSW 2190, Australia on 6.9.99 at Town Hall, Alexandra Street, NSW, Australia.

Jothy daughter of Mr. & Mrs. K.Gunaratnam of 6 Prince Road, South Norwood, London SE25 6NN and **Michael** son of Mr. & Mrs. G. Harvey of 22 Meadowfield, Bradford-on-Avon Wilts BA15 1PL on 11.9.99 at Kelsey Park School Hall, Manor Way, Beckenham, Kent.

Indrakumar son of Mr. & Mrs. K. Selvaratnam of 16 Impasse

Marett de Guillerval, 91000 Evry, France and **Sathyabama** daughter of Mr. & Mrs. P. Velauthar of 52 Manor Park, London SE13 5RL on 12.9.99 at Sri Muththumari Amman Wedding Hall, Tooting, London SW17.

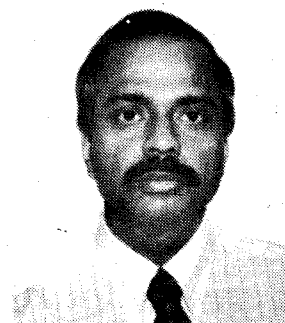
Narenthiran son of Dr. & Mrs. Nadesan of 116 Hulfitsdorf Street, Colombo 12 and **Nandhini** daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ramachandran of 28, 36th Lane, Colombo 6 on 12.9.99 at Sri Batharakali Amman Kalyana Mandapam, Mayura Place, Colombo 6.

OBITUARY



Mrs. Parvathy Duraisingham of V.M. Road, Point Pedro; Wife of late R. Duraisingham (Engineer, RVDB Amparai); Sister of Miss V. Kandasamy (Sri Lanka); mother of Jayasingam (Canada), Dr Gunavathy (Batticaloa), late Thilagavathy Sripathy Balasingam (UK), Selvavathy (UK), Umavathy (UK) and Rajasingam New Zealand; mother-in-law of Sridchadevi (Canada), Dr Vivekanandara-jah (Batticaloa), Sripathy (Moratuwa University), Jagajanani (UK), Dr Sri Vidhyadharsan (UK) and Pathmasini (New Zealand); grandmother of Vytheeki, Vasuki, Parthiban, Devaki, Pratheeban, Shamugi, Svethaki, Anjenna, Sri Sai Rakshan, Mhiran, Branavie and Kabithran, great grandmother Shambhavi, Kabilash and Vaishnavi passed away on 24.8.99. The members of her family thank all relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent messages of sympathy and provided support in several ways during their time of loss. Contact Balasingam, 'Annappurna', 107 Wheelers Lane, Birmingham B13 0SX, 0121 444 5558 (UK), 416 747 1204 (Canada), 43874546 (NZ).

IN MEMORIAM



In loving memory of **Pararajasingham Vasanthakumar**, FCA (Sri Lanka), CPA (USA) on the first Anniversary of his passing away on 24th September 1998.

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by his grieving wife Savitri and children Prasanthi and Ashwini; father-in-law Dr. P. Sivasothy and mother-in-law Mrs. S. Sivasothy, brothers Thirugnanam, Thambipillai and Gnanasivam; sisters Sivayogawathy and Sivagnanawathy; brothers-in-law Natkunasingham, Sivapathasundaram and Sivakumar and sisters-in-law Indra, Gowri, Saraswathi and Ramani. - 5038 Heritage Hills Blvd., Mississauga, Ontario L5R 1V5, Canada.



Francis Thomas Entered Glory 11th September 98

'Precious are the memories of you

In silence and in prayer we remember you'

Sadly missed by his wife Grace and children Ravi, Shalini, Indhi, Yoga, Mahilini and Juvi; father-in-law of Dilshi, Rajakumar, Swintha, Rebecca, Brian and Niro; grandfather of Rishan, Ryan, Rufus, Derek, Bibian, Michelle, Talitha, Dishana, Prashana, Shabeena, Shohana, Teromi,

Continued on page 31

Continued from page 30

Breyoni, Jessica and Samantha.

*In Ever Loving Memory of
Our Dearly Beloved Daddy*

T. J. Rajaratnam

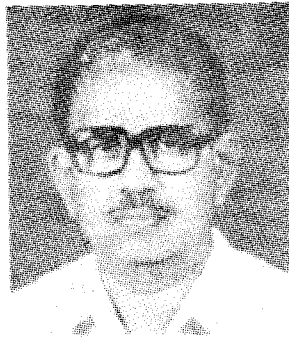
(Retired High Court Judge)



Called to rest 15.9.81

No length of time can
Take away
Our thoughts of you
From day to day
What ever we fail to do
We never fail to think of you.
Will always love and Remember you.
You are all ways in our
thoughts
And for ever in our hearts.

Fondly remembered and
sadly missed by your loving
wife Arul; children Rohini,
Renuka, Rajiv; sons-in-law
Vijayan, Sriharan; grand-children Vasi, Ravi, Prathi, Jayanthi and Ajit.



*In loving memory of Deva
Rajan N., FSI., Licensed Surveyor,
Leveller & Valuer of 257
Arasady Road, Kanthar-
madam, Yarpnam.*

Fondly remembered on the
eighth anniversary of his passing
away on 11.9.91 by his
beloved wife Padma; brother
Punjaksharam; sister Mrs.
Saraswathy Panchadcharam;
children Sujithan, Siva
Kumaran, Rajam, Jeyaraman,
Rengan and Raj Iswari; sons-
in-law Theventhiran and
Nirthanakumaran; daughters-
in-law Jeyadevi, Suhanya,
Thangalogini and Helen;
grandchildren Jamuna, Karthika,
Bharathan, Uththami, Lux-
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Pavithran and Dhurka, sisters-
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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Oct 1 Feast of St Teresa.

Oct 2 Purattashi Sani (3);
Feast of Guardian Angels.

Oct 5 Eekathasi.

Oct 6 Pirathosam; Feast of
St Bruno.

Oct 7 Feast of Our Lady of
the Rosary.

Oct 8 Amavasai

Oct 9 Purattashi Sani (4);
South London Tamil Welfare
Group (SLTWG) Drop in.
Tel: 0181 542 3285.

Oct 10 Navaraththiri Festival
commences.

Oct 13 Sathurthi; Luxmy
Pooja starts.

Oct 14 Feast of St Callistus.

Oct 15 Shashti.

Oct 16 Purattashi Sani (5 &
last); Saraswathy Pooja starts;
SLTWG Navaraththiri Celebrations
at Merton Hall, Kingston
Road, London SW19 Tel: 0181
542 3285.

Oct 18 Saraswathi Pooja;
Feast of St Luke.

Oct 19 Vijathasami.

Oct 20 Eekathasi.

Oct 22 Pirathosam.

Oct 23 SLTWG drop in. Tel:
0181 542 3285; 6.30pm
Kingston Institute of Tamil Culture
presents Cultural Evening
at Tolworth Girls School Hall,
Fullers Way North, Surbiton,
Surrey. Tel: 0181 949 3012.

Oct 24 Full Moon; Feast of St
Antony Claret,

Oct 26 Karthigai.

Oct 27 Sankadakara Sathurthi;
SLTWG Women's Front
meets. Tel: 0181 542 3285.

Oct 30 Medical Institute of
Tamils (UK) presents its 4th
Tear Drops programme of
Music, Drama, Dances and
Speeches by young artistes at
Thurrock Civic Hall, Black-
shotts Lane, Grays, Essex.
Tel: 01277 632749.

IN MEMORIAM



*Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone afar away into the silent land;
Remember me when no more day by day
You can hold me by the hand;
Just Remember Me.*

*Yet if you should forget me for a while,
And afterwards remember, do not grieve;
Better by far you should forget and smile,
Than that you should remember and be sad.*

(By Christina Rossetti)

Dear Appa, in our mind ... a constant thought, in our heart ... a silent sorrow; but always remembered with love and pride, especially on this the fifth anniversary of your passing away on the 24th September 1994.

Mr. Ponnudurai Narendranathan, most dearly beloved and adoring husband of Gnanambal; dearest loving and proud Appa to your children, Dr. Thrinayani Jegathambal, Dr. Mrs. Sowmya Wijayambal, Mrs. Sobhana Meenambal, Dr. Mrs. Priyadarsani Brahathambal, Adhithya Thirilocharan, Mrs. Vasutharini Girijambal, Agasthya Ponnambalam and Ambika Dhakshayani; father-in-law of Dr. P. Arulampalam, S. Raveendran, T. Ilangoan, R. Srikanthan and Dr. Mrs. Meera Narendranathan; darling dearest Thaththa to your grandchildren, Abhirami Janani Raveendran, Amarnath Thirumadhavan Raveendran, Nirmala Arulampalam, Janaki Saruhasini Srikanthan, Janarthanan Ragavan Ilangoan, Dhivya Saraswathy Ilangoan and Divani Krithika Narendranathan.

A man of great courage, integrity, humour, wit and wisdom; and whose kindness and generosity knew no bounds, you are greatly missed but never forgotten; always in the thoughts of your family and friends. God Bless. (Address: 53 Crossways, South Croydon, Surrey, CR2 8JQ.

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Oct 1 7.30pm Kathak -
Sunayana Hazarilal.

Oct 17 6pm Karnatic Vocal by
Neela Ramgopal from India.

Oct 20 & Oct 21 6.30-8.30 pm
Bharatanatyam Workshop by
Malavika Sarukkai.

Oct 28 7.30 East West Impro-
visation - Viram Jasani (Sitar)
& Charles Alexander (Guitar).

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AUSTRALIAN NEWSLETTER

Tamil Information Session: A very successful Tamil Information Session was held on 23.5.99 at the Homebush Public School Hall in Sydney. The main focus of this session was the launching of a book on 'Murugan, God of the Tamils' by Dr A. Kandiah.

The evening's proceedings commenced with a song in praise of 'Tamil Mother' by Mrs Kala Gnani and after the lighting of the traditional oil lamp, Dr A. Balasubramaniam, the Chairman who also heads the Hindu Council of Australia and 'Abayakaram' congratulated Dr Kandiah on the launching of the book and the elaborate arrangements for the information session.

The Guest of Honour, the Hon. John Murphy, Federal M.P. for Lowe delivering the opening address, congratulated the Tamil community for the remarkable contribution, they were making towards life in multicultural Australia. He promised to highlight the plight of the Tamils in the north and East of Sri Lanka in the Federal Parliament of Australia. He made an important announcement that Tamil would be one of the languages examined at the NSW HSC examination from the year 2000. The presentation of Research paper by scholars in their respective fields followed.

Mr M. Thayanithy's research paper on 'Saiva religious contributions to Tamil' traced the history of Saiva literature from the Sangam period and the Saiva Bhakti literature as found in Panpadal, Thirumukuratruppadai and Thevarem. He discussed the poetry of the Saiva Nayanmar as well as saints like Arunagirinathar and Ramalinga Adigal and concluded with a reference to the Saiva Tamil literature of the 19th century.

Mrs Savitri Devi Balasubramaniam who presented the paper on 'Vaishnava Religious Contributions to Tamil', explained the significance of Maha Vishnu as a deity in temples and briefly discussed the philosophy of Vaishnavism. She referred to the divine poetry of the Alvars who lived between the 6th and 10th century A.D. Special emphasis was placed on Andal and Nammalvar as well as Sri Natha Muni who collected and codified the poems of the twelve Alvars.

Dr V.E. Packianathan presented the paper on 'Contributions of Christians to Tamil Studies'. He traced the history of Christian Tamil Literature from the Portuguese period to Dr Robert Caldwell and then to the American and British missionaries. He referred to those famous in Jaffna like Dr. Daniel Poor, Dr Samuel Fish Green, Father Gnanaprakasara and Father Thaninayagam.

Mr K. Vallal presenting the paper on 'Muslim Contribution to Tamil' traced the history of Tamil Islamic literature from the 17th century when Umarup Pulawar wrote 'Seerap Puranam' - a history of Prophet

Mohamed. This was an epic that followed the style of Tamil Hindu epics. He referred to the various literary forms that were exclusive to Islamic literature and Suji literature of the 19th and 20th centuries.

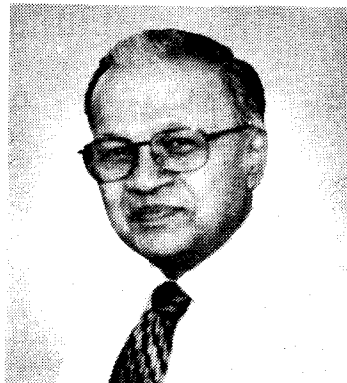
The research papers were followed by the launch of the book 'Murugan, God of the Tamils' by Prof S. Vigneswaran Dr. Kalpana Ram reviewed it. On this occasion 1000 books were donated to Tamil libraries in Sydney, most of the donors hailing from Tamil Nadu and Singapore. Mr K. Satchithanathan, Proprietor of Kanthalakam Publishing House in Chennai donated 600 books in memory of his late father. The function concluded with a recital of a variety of dance items presented by the pupils of Mrs Jayalakshmy Kandiah, Director of Natanalaya School of Dancing which was greatly appreciated and dinner.

The Mahakumbhabhishekam of Sydney Murugan Temple took place on 17th June 1999. That day was preceded by several days of poojas and homams. Priests from South India, UK and other parts of Australia participated in the ceremony. The ceremony was attended by very large crowds of devotees. It was followed by 40 days of Mandala poojas.

The famous Shri Pathmanathan group of Nathaswaram musicians, who arrived in Sydney especially for this temple consecration ceremony were appreciated by the vast crowds present. They also performed at the Sri Venkateswara Temple in Sydney and at various other locations always drawing large appreciative audiences.

The Tamil Senior Citizen's Association, Sydney held its Annual Election of Office-bearers on 28th August 1999. The following were elected:- **President:** Col. V. Ramanathan, **Vice-President:** Dr. P. Poologasingam, **Secretary:** Mr S. Tharmapalan, **Asst. Secretary:** Mr. R. Naganathan, **Treasurer:** Mr. N. Murugesu, **Asst Treasurer:** Mrs I. Satkunananda. **Committee:** Mr. V. Gunaratnam, Mr. S. Janakiraman, Mr. K. Nadarajah, Mr. K. Puvanapooshanam, Mr. C. S. Sebaratnam, Mrs S. Sivasubramaniam, Dr. T. Somasundaram, and Mr. K. Thisairasa.

Senior Lawyer Passes Away



Singaporeans were shocked and saddened by the passing away of a father figure Mr. M. Coomaraswamy, a senior

lawyer, after fracturing his spine in a fall at his home in Oxley Mansions. He was 74 and the Coomaraswamys had celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in April this year.

Mr. Coomaraswamy was called to the bar in Lincoln's Inn, London in 1956, returned to Singapore, served as a state counsel, magistrate and district judge between 1957 and 1961. He went into private practice and later set up Cooma, Lau and Loh in 1977. He retired in 1991 but 'found that retirement meant having too much time on his hands' and joined Wang & Woo. In July '98 he set up Cooma & Rai.

He was Deputy Chairman of the Housing Board from 1969 to 1975 and was Chairman of the National Maritime Board for 23 years. He was awarded the Public Service Star Medal in recognition of his services to the community.

He leaves behind his beloved wife Ruby, children William Mahenthiran and Shantha (both of Melbourne, Australia), daughter-in-law Ramola, grandchildren Kristian and Tarryn and a host of relatives and friends.

Uma's Veena Arangetram



Thirteen year old Kumari Uma daughter of Saratha and Kumarasingham of Maidstone, Kent had her Veena Arangetram at Walthamstow Assembly Hall on 28th August 1999. Uma had training in Veena since she was seven and staged her arangetram in a very grand style with Sri-nathi Geetha Ramanathan Bennet from the USA as the Chief Guest.

She started with 'Ganapathiyey Varuvai' followed by the Ada Thala Varnam. Uma presented two compositions by Swami Thiyagarajar 'Entharo' Sri) and 'Niravathi Sugatha' (Ravi Chandrika). She had also carefully chosen three popular melodies, 'Saravanabava' by Papanasam Sivan, 'Kuzhal oothy manam ellam' and the ever green song of the seventies played a million times over on Sri Lanka Radio 'Katpavalli un potpatham' composed by Jaffna's Veeramani Iyer. Incidentally the song 'Bavapiye Bavani' appears to have found its way into Uma's list, because it was composed by Professor S. Ramanathan, the very famous father of the Chief Guest.

The final two items played by little Uma still linger on in the ears of many like me,

Continued on page 33

Continued from page 32

One was a folk song. Uma was able to mimic the male and female voices by her handling of the Veena like a professional. Many music lovers may remember the late Chittibabau and Sri Kunnakudi Vaidhyathan effectively handled their Veena and Violin as 'speaking' instruments! Congratulations to the Guru Malini.

The next piece 'Sambo Siva Sanbo', instantly created a mood of devotion in the auditorium. It is our prayer that the forthcoming GCSE and Advanced level grades in the academic life of Uma should only be temporary halts and not permanent full stops to budding stars like Uma.

Well done Uma,

-Wimal Sockanathan.

A Classy Whirl Wind



Over six hundred people had the privilege of attending the Flute Arangetram of Preadeepan on 29th August 1999. I was lucky to be one of them. It is often mentioned at Arangetrams, 'This reminds me of a music festival in Madras' or 'I was wondering whether I was in London or in South India'. However I do not wish to compare him with 'Mali' or 'Dr. Ramani' or the child prodigy Shashank. If I did it would be an injustice to young Preadeepan and to the music.

The moment Preadeepan started the concert with the 'Viriboni' varnam I sensed that there was something not ordinary. As the concert progressed it was getting abundantly clear that it was something extraordinary. The style of play, a brief 'raga alapana' before every piece, the 'Kalapana swarams', his playing of 'Keeravani' all added up to the high expectations. I have often listened to Ramani's tape where he plays Vara Raga Laya in Chenchu Kamboji and Bhajan in Dharban Kanada. Preadeepan's version was not far from the original. In UK, where the opportunity to listen to good quality music is rare and the pressure on students to do well academically is high, the performance of Preadeepan can be described as par excellence.

The Guru, Sri Gnanavarathan should be congratulated for training his disciple to such a high standard, for selecting rare pieces instead of the overplayed ones and above all, for introducing his father's (Kalasoori T.V. Pichappah) composition in

Hamsathwani. The accompanists were Sri Thiruvarur L. Kothandapani on Violin, Sri M. Balachandar on Mridangam and Bangalore Sri R.N. Prakash on Ghatam, the three role models for any young musician.

Praadeepan's sister Thuvaraka with her clear pronunciation, command of the language and above all her superb confidence did a professional job as a compere. Dr. and Dr. (Mrs.) Vetpillai, parents of both children have every reason to be proud of both of them.

Anuradha.

Yet Another String to the Bow



Thiuvavarur L. Kothandapani has introduced another young talent to the world of carnatic music. It was twelve year old Mathan, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ganesu. I had listened to Mathan, when he played solo about three years back and recently when he took part in an orchestra. On those occasions, I saw a young boy playing music, exactly as he was taught. On 4th September, I saw Mathan not playing the violin, but playing with it. It is hard to believe that a young boy could handle a difficult instrument with such ease.

Confidence, communicating with accompanying artistes, having good eye contact with the Guru, pleasantness while playing make a good musician. Mathan has all of them. He was elegant and playing effortlessly and comfortably.

In the Hamsathwani Varnam he played the Poorvangan in Thirsa nadai and at two speeds - a rare treat. 'Nagumomu', St Thiagarajah's composition in the Raga Abheri was well played. The Kalpana Swarams were executed quite effectively. It was evident that Mathan was improvising rather than strictly adhering to the script with a good sense of Sruthi and Thalam. His Shankarabaranam was good and it was interesting to listen to some rare compositions like 'Sri Shangara Guruvaram' in 'Nagasvaravali' and 'Vanchadomune' in Karnarajanani.

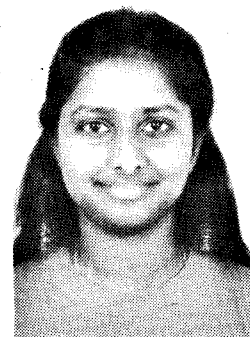
Once again Sri Kothandapani gave the impression that he had confidence in his disciple's ability, gave him a free hand and it richly paid off. The selection of pieces was very appropriate. Sri M. Balachander and Bangalore Sri R.R. Prathap accompanied on Mridangam and Gadam respectively. There were no signs of caution,

when accompanying an inexperienced player. They appeared comfortable and at ease as was evident in their Thani avarthanam.

The Chief Guest, Smt Pushkala Gopal was obviously very pleased with the music from the comments she made. Mr. and Mrs. Ganesu have in Mathan, a son with great potential and is certainly a Maestro in the making, if his talents are nurtured. It is hoped that they and his Guru will continue to guide him.

Anuradha.

Examination Success



Priya Sivagnanam only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sivagnanam of Colindale, London and former pupil of Henrietta Barnet Girls School scored 4 A's in the recent G.C.E. (A Level) examinations.

In the G.C.E. (O Level), Priya offered 12 subjects out of which she scored 9 A Stars and 3 A's, a creditable performance. One of these subjects was Tamil Language, which is an achievement for a child born and brought up in the UK.

Apart from her academic prowess, Priya excels in sports and music both eastern and western. She is a brilliant pupil of Dr. Lakshmi Jayan, her carnatic violin Guru and had her Samarpanam at the London Murugan Temple, where her performance was applauded by a packed audience.

Priya has gained admission to Imperial College, London to do medicine. We wish her every success in her chosen career and all her future endeavours.

Tamil Schools Sports Association

Badminton Tournament 1999

The above tournament will be conducted at Willesden Sports Centre, Donnington Road, Willesden, London NW10 on 16th October 1999, commencing at 9.30am. The events are (a) Men Open Team Championship (b) Men (over 40) Team Championship (c) Ladies Open Team Championship (d) Mixed Pair Team Championship.

For entry forms and further particulars please write to TSSA (Badminton), 38 The Highway, Stanmore, Middx HA7 3PN or Telephone 0181 385 7453/0956 949834 (Umachandran) or 0956 110582 (Sathees) or 07970 419832 (Gengatharan).

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