

**S R I L A N K A**

**P R O S P E C T S F O R  
P E A C E**

**A S S O C I A T I O N O F  
T A M I L A M E R I C A N S**

**New burgh  
New York**

**10 June 2001**

# SRI LANKA

## Prospects for Peace

### Introduction.

Despite increasing pressure for peace from several fronts, both domestic and international, the war in Sri Lanka is continuing. The intensity of the battles waxes and wanes, but the war itself is ongoing. There is no direct dialogue between the warring parties. However, there is an intensified effort by the government of Norway to get the parties to talk.

### Current Situation.

Norway was officially inducted as a facilitator in December of 1999, with the acceptance by President Chandrika Kumaratunge. Up to that point Sri Lanka government had been vigorously resisting any foreign assistance in resolving the conflict<sup>1</sup>.



Eric Solheim

This acquiescence came with mounting international criticism over human rights violations, and the multiple defeats in the battlefield suffered by the Sri Lankan army. Criticisms centered on the Chemmani mass graves (found in July 1998) and the subsequent 14-month attempt at concealment, the regular aerial bombardments with large-scale Tamil civilian casualties, and the widely publicized prison massacre of Tamil inmates, etc. The Sri Lankan military losses, which culminated in the fall of the Elephant Pass army camp<sup>2</sup>, were an added compulsion.



Mr. V. Pirabakaran

The LTTE, which had been pushing for peace talks, with a third party involvement, for several years<sup>3</sup>, had previously accepted Norway as facilitator/mediator.

Having entered the process reluctantly, the Sri Lankan government tried to scuttle the process with numerous delays, contradictory statements and attempts to provoke the LTTE into rejecting talks.

On Christmas Eve 2000, LTTE declared a unilateral ceasefire initially for one month, and renewed it monthly for four months<sup>4</sup>,

in an attempt to jump-start the failing peace process. During this period, the LTTE also made several goodwill gestures, such as releasing prisoners of war<sup>5</sup>. The government refused to reciprocate<sup>6</sup> and launched a number of military operations aimed at provoking the LTTE into abandoning the ceasefire<sup>7</sup>. Finally, after four months of self-restraint, on 23 April 2001, LTTE withdrew the ceasefire<sup>8</sup>.

Norway's special envoy Eric Solheim, however, has continued to shuttle between Colombo, Vanni, London, Delhi and Washington, trying to move the process forward.

### **Prospects.**

The push for peace, both within Sri Lanka as well as internationally, does not have adequate impetus for the process to move forward. In fact, within Sri Lanka the push for war is greater. Internationally, interest and enthusiasm is lukewarm at best. Although India, the UK and the US (the 'big three') have shown greater interest, recent actions by some countries have actually been negative.



**Mrs. C. Kumaratunge**

### **Sri Lanka:**

Systemically, the Sinhala constituency in Sri Lanka is incapable of recognizing or accommodating the rights of the Tamil-speaking people. This is due mainly to the entrenched religious (Buddhist) fundamentalism and fanaticism entwined with nationalism. This attitude is often referred to as the 'Mahavamsa-mindset.'



Mahavamsa, a 6<sup>th</sup> century AD chronicle written by a Buddhist monk (Mahanama), has become both the history and the bible of the Sinhala people [APPENDIX II]. This book claims the entire island to be Sinhala-Buddhist, and refers to all others as sub-human ('Nagas' or serpents and 'Yakkas' or devils). For example, the Mahavamsa describes the story of a Sinhala king who be-

came remorseful after he had killed thousands of Tamils in a battle, and the Buddhist priests consoled him that he had not killed humans<sup>9</sup>. Sinhala children are taught the Mahavamsa.

Buddhism is the state religion of Sri Lanka. The *Maha Sangha* (the Supreme Council of Buddhist Priests) has a strong influence on governmental affairs. The current practice is for the President and Cabinet Ministers to consult the Maha Sangha on important state affairs. The military seeks and receives the blessings of the Maha Sangha before major military operations.

The draft proposal for the new constitution seeks to entrench this practice of consulting with the ‘Supreme Council’ into the constitution [APPENDIX I].

The Maha Sangha is opposed to any accommodation of Tamil rights. They believe that Sri Lanka is Sinhala-Buddhist country, and if this notion is accepted the ‘minorities’ have their permission to live there. They deny the existence of a Tamil homeland in the northeast of the island.

In 1957, the Prime Minister Mr. Bandaranaike (current president’s father) withdrew a pact with the Tamil leadership (B-C Pact) at the urging of the Maha Sangha. He was assassinated by a Buddhist monk in 1959 for his continued efforts to work with the Tamils.

In 1965, Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake let another pact with the Tamils expire due to pressure from the Maha Sangha.



Sinhala Buddhist Priests Demonstrate in streets of Colombo, August 2000



Monks burn Norwegian Flag

In August 2000, President Kumaratunge faced with opposition from the Maha Sangha and the ultra-nationalists, withdrew a Reform Bill aimed at devolution of power to the Tamils.<sup>10</sup>

The Maha Sangha has been demanding that Mr. Eric Solheim be declared *persona non grata* and expelled from the country, and according to latest news he is being slowly edged out.

The Maha Sangha influence on the Sinhala society is such that, at independence (1948) several Sinhala leaders had to convert to Buddhism to be elected to office. Former Prime Ministers, Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike (current president's father), Sirimavo Bandaranaike (current president's mother), Dudley Senanayake, and former president Junius Richard Jayewardene, among others were Christians who underwent religious conversion in order to be elected to public office.

Subsequent Sinhala leaders educated in the Mahavamsa tradition from childhood are comfortable with the dictates of the Maha Sangha. For example, the current president, Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunge, carries out Maha Sangha agenda with apparent conviction. Recent actions of President Kumaratunge bears ample testimony.

1. Her government has been dragging its feet on the subject of setting a date for direct talks with the LTTE, despite a concerted effort by Mr. Solheim.
2. At the same time, her government started a campaign to urge other countries (E.g. UK) to ban the LTTE<sup>11</sup>. This action casts serious doubt on her willingness to negotiate peace with the LTTE.
3. Her government not only failed to reciprocate the unilateral LTTE ceasefire, but also went on the offensive, to publicly ridicule the ceasefire. It also launched several military offensives during the 4-month LTTE ceasefire, trying to provoke the LTTE into resuming war.
4. Public pronouncements by the different arms of her government have been conflicting. While the President's public announcements<sup>12</sup> are for peace, her Prime Minister<sup>13</sup>, Foreign Minister and the army commanders<sup>14</sup> are pushing a hard-line agenda.
5. The government has also sharply escalated military expenditure, with a large-scale purchase of heavy weapons. The military budget this year was increased by 20%. The actual spending last year was almost double the budgetary allocation<sup>15</sup>.

The Maha Sangha's stranglehold on the Sinhala society, and its leadership, will not allow a negotiated solution to the Sinhala-Tamil conflict. Some leaders act out of fear of a Maha Sangha instigated Sinhala backlash, but most work out of conviction of the Mahavamsa teachings. The net effect is that no Sinhala leader will agree to accommodation of Tamil rights in Sri Lanka.

The press in Sri Lanka also falls in line with the Maha Sangha dictate. A good number of the published materials promote war. Some are disparaging not only of the Tamil leadership, but also of others who speak for Tamil rights.

When the British Junior Foreign Minister Peter Hain suggested self-determination for Tamils, there was massive condemnation<sup>16</sup>. US congressmen Benjamin Gilman and Brad Sherman, British parliamentarians Jeremy Corbin MP, Simon Hughes MP, and European parliamentarian Robert Evans have also come under criticism, somewhat mildly. The current invectives against Norway's special envoy Eric Solheim are much more severe and plentiful<sup>17</sup>.

Several Sinhala-Buddhist ultranationalist groups (Sinhala Urumaya, Sinhala Veera Vidhanaya, NMAT, etc.) function in conjunction with the Maha Sangha, protesting the peace efforts<sup>18</sup>.



**Sinhala Ultranationalist  
Demonstration in Colombo**

### **The United Kingdom:**

Britain as a colonial power was primarily responsible for the current conflict. It brought together two disparate nationalities living on the island as separate kingdoms into one administration in 1833, and left it as one-state in 1948, with inadequate safeguards for the smaller nation.

Although, Ceylon became independent in 1948, Britain continued to have judicial authority<sup>19</sup> over it till 1972. Appeals by Tamils to the Privy Council against discriminatory actions, some in clear violation of the constitution, received scant justice.

In recent times a few British politicians have called for recognition of Tamil rights<sup>20</sup>.

This year, however, in the midst of an international effort for peace negotiations, Britain banned the LTTE, making the Norwegian efforts considerably more difficult.

**India:**

India, which attempted and failed to play broker (1987-1990) has been vacillating about support for a negotiated solution and foreign mediation. India with its own ethnic conflicts is leery of foreign involvement in what it considers its 'own backyard'<sup>21</sup>. A Sri Lankan claim that India lobbied to have LTTE banned in Britain is perplexing and problematic<sup>22</sup>

**The United States:**

The US policy has been contradictory and unhelpful.

The US State Department reports on human rights for the last few years have been severely critical of the Sri Lankan record. However, the administration has continued to provide military assistance<sup>23</sup> to the very same armed forces it has accused of the human rights violations.

Further, the inclusion of the LTTE in the US list of foreign terrorist organizations has had a serious negative impact on the peace process. This has emboldened Sri Lankan government to continue with its failed policies, with devastating effect on the human rights situation. Simultaneously, the US has lost its ability to constructively engage the LTTE, in advancing the peace process.

**CONCLUSION:** The Norwegian initiative is unlikely to make progress in the near term without more vigorous efforts by the international community. Clear and unambiguous policies that would promote the peace process are urgently needed.



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## References:

### <sup>1</sup> SRI LANKAN RESISTANCE TO FOREIGN HELP.

**AFP [Nov 4 1998]**- Visiting British parliamentarians Wednesday offered their “good offices” to try to end the political deadlock and resolve Sri Lanka’s Tamil separatist conflict which has claimed more than 55,000 lives...

**AFP [Dec 27 1998]** - Dec 27 AFP - Sri Lanka has rejected an offer by a British legislator to mediate a settlement to the drawn out Tamil separatist war ... The British MP, Simon Hughes of the Liberal Democratic Party, has been told Colombo will not assist him if he goes ahead with his planned visit to Sri Lanka in the New Year... “The government has said that no ministers will meet the British MP and denied his request to go to the Wanni (to meet the LTTE),” the newspaper reported, adding: “It has made it clear that it will not accept mediation from any individual”...

**AFP [Nov 6 1999]** - Visiting South African diplomats Friday said President Nelson Mandela has been asked to mediate a settlement to Sri Lanka’s Tamil separatist war...

**Note:** Sri Lanka nixed this by accusing the South African government of harboring the LTTE. **The AFP reported, [15 Nov 1999]** ‘The foreign ministry said earlier this month that it believed the LTTE was shifting its operations from London to South Africa’ (later proven untrue). With this Nelson Mandela stopped trying to mediate.

### <sup>2</sup> RECENT MILITARY HISTORY.

Sri Lanka commenced a major military operation codenamed Operation Jayasikurui in May 1997 to capture areas held by the LTTE. After 18 months of considerable progress, this was abandoned in the face of stiff LTTE resistance. The government gains were not only rolled back, but the LTTE advanced further and captured new territory, including large army bases in Kilinochchi & Paranthan (October 1998) and the Elephant Pass (21 December 1999)...

### <sup>3</sup> LTTE’S REPEATED CALLS FOR PEACE TALKS.

**AFP [Sept 6 1998]** - Sri Lanka’s Tamil Tiger rebels slammed the government for prolonging the country’s ethnic conflict and offered to resume peace talks through third-party mediation... “The present impasse is such that it is an independent third party that has nothing to do with this war that can effectively build up trust and confidence between the two parties,” the LTTE’s political wing leader Tamilchelvan said...

**AFP [Sept 9 1998]** - Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga flatly rejected unconditional peace talks with Tamil Tiger rebels... The president told

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ruling party supporters “she would never have unconditional talks with the LTTE.”...

**AFP [Nov 27 1998]** - Sri Lanka's top Tamil rebel leader on Friday proposed talks to end decades of ethnic bloodletting in the country and said he favoured third-party intervention to open political negotiations. Velupillai Prabhakaran, the head of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), said they had “not closed the door for peace” and called for the “creation of a climate of peace and goodwill to hold peace talks.”...

**AFP [Nov 27 1999]** - Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger leader Monday offered “unconditional talks” with the government aimed at ending the country's ethnic bloodshed...

**AFP [Nov 27 2000]** - Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger guerrillas Saturday offered third party-mediated talks with the government while expressing “grave doubts” of a peaceful end to the separatist war...

#### **<sup>4</sup> LTTE's UNILATERAL CEASEFIRE**

**AFP [Dec 25 2000]** - The LTTE had announced a unilateral one-month ceasefire and asked the government to reciprocate it in an effort to start peace talks. The government maintains that a truce cannot be called until talks begin. The LTTE said it hoped the Sri Lankan government will reconsider its position on the truce and clear the way for direct negotiations...

**AFP [Jan 23 2001]** - Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers extended their unilateral truce by one month as fighting raged Tuesday in the northern peninsula of Jaffna. The rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said they decided to prolong the Christmas ceasefire to pave the way for Norway's bid to broker peace in the island

**TamilNet, [February 22, 2001]** The Liberation Tigers said Thursday they would extend their unilateral ceasefire by another month, and called on the international community, particularly the United States, Britain, the European Union and India to persuade the Sri Lanka government to reciprocate favourably...

**TamilNet [March 22, 2001]** The Liberation Tigers Thursday extended their unilateral cease-fire for another month, till April 24, but warned they would resume armed operations if the Sri Lankan government refused to reciprocate and continued military operations against the LTTE. Pointing out that it has not launched any offensive operations either in the north-east or the southern provinces or capital, Colombo, during the three months of its unilateral cease-fire, the LTTE said in a statement that 133 of its fighters had been killed in attacks by the Sri Lankan military in the same period...

#### **<sup>5</sup> LTTE's GOODWILL GESTURES**

**TamilNet [April 07, 2001]** The Liberation Tigers on Saturday released four prisoners of war who had been held by them for many years. They were handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross in the northern

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Vanni main land ICRC spokesman Harasha Gunawardene told TamilNet. LTTE sources said the POWs were released to show organisation's support for the Norwegian facilitated peace talks and as a demonstration of its commitment to future peace talks...

**[TamilNet, March 02, 2001]** The Liberation Tigers on Friday morning released two Sinhalese fishermen who had been in their custody since last December and handed them over to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) at Mallavi in the northern Vanni.

#### **<sup>6</sup> GOVERNMENT REFUSAL TO RECIPROCATE**

**TamilNet, [December 23, 2000]** The Sri Lankan government Saturday rejected the Liberation Tigers offer Thursday of a month-long "goodwill" cease-fire, asserting that military operations by the armed forces will continue. A statement issued by the Presidential Secretariat also said that "further gestures of goodwill are unnecessary [before negotiations]," rejecting the LTTE's call to de-escalate the conflict for negotiations to take place in conditions of normalcy.

**AFP [Jan 25, 2001]** - Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake Thursday rejected reciprocating a truce offered by Tamil Tigers and vowed military pressure... Wickremanayake also appealed to Sri Lankan youth to join the armed forces for a three-year period to escalate the military offensive against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

#### **<sup>7</sup> GOVERNMENT PROVOCATIONS**

**AFP [Dec 22, 2000]** - Sri Lanka launched a fresh military offensive Friday despite a unilateral Christmas truce offered by the Tamil Tiger rebels aimed at reviving a Norwegian-backed peace drive, officials said...

**AFP Dec 30 2000** - Security forces backed by tanks, artillery, aircraft and gun boats mounted the drive at dawn to capture the Navatkuli bridge and open a vital section of the A-9 road that links Jaffna town to Chavakachcheri, the second largest town in the peninsula, defence ministry spokesman Sanath Karunaratne said.

**TamilNet, [January 17, 2001]** Airstrikes and heavy exchanges or artillery rocked the Jaffna peninsula Wednesday as the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) continued to face determined resistance from the Liberation Tigers, sources close to the LTTE said. Over 100 SLA troops and 70 Tigers have been killed in the past two days, sources close to the LTTE said Thursday evening.

**TamilNet, [January 22, 2001]** Sri Lanka Air Force jets bombed four villages about 8 km. south of Trincomalee around 5.30 p.m. Monday.

**TamilNet, [March 16, 2001]** Sri Lanka Air Force jets bombed several villages in the Vanni this afternoon. A refugee was wounded when bombs hit the village of Kombavil

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**TamilNet, [March 22, 2001]** Sri Lanka Air Force jets carried out an hour-long air raid on the eastern remote villages of Miyankalkulam and Kudumbimalao (Thoppikale)...

**TamilNet, [April 21, 2001]** The Sri Lanka Army launched an intense artillery and aerial attack Saturday on the positions of the Liberation Tigers...

**<sup>8</sup> LTTE WITHDRAWS CEASEFIRE**

**AFP [April 23 2001]** - Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels Monday said they would end their one-sided ceasefire from Tuesday and accused government forces of killing 160 of their fighters during the unilateral truce.

**<sup>9</sup> THE MAHAVAMSA STORY...**

“And again thereon the king said again to them: ‘how shall there be any comfort for me, O venerable sirs, since by me was caused the slaughter of a great host numbering millions? ‘From this deed arises no hindrance in thy way to heaven. Only one and a half human beings have been slain here by thee, O lord of men. The one had come unto the (three) refuges, the other had taken on himself the five precepts. Unbelievers and men of evil were the rest, not more to be esteemed than beasts. But as for thee, thou wilt bring glory to the doctrine of Buddha in manifold ways’...” [The Mahavamsa; Translated by Wilelm Geiger; Asian Educational Services (1993) p 178]

**<sup>10</sup> MAHA SANGHA OPPOSES; GOVERNMENT WITHDRAWS.**

**AFP [Aug 9, 2000]** - Sri Lanka's influential Buddhist clergy Wednesday stepped up calls for the government to scrap a draft bill aimed at ending the country's bloody Tamil separatist conflict. Sri Lanka's four most senior Buddhist monks have written to legislators of all parties calling for them to press President Chandrika Kumaratunga to drop her draft constitution bill.

**AFP [Aug 22, 2000]** - Sri Lanka's influential Buddhist clergy Wednesday issued a “final warning” to the government to completely withdraw a draft bill aimed at ending the country's bloody Tamil separatist conflict.

**TamilNet, [August 08, 2000]** The Sri Lankan government abandoned Tuesday its effort to introduce a new constitution. Mr.Ratnasiri Wickremanayaka, Minister for Public Administration and Plantations, informed the party leaders' meeting in Parliament today that the new constitution bill will not be further debated nor put to vote...

**<sup>11</sup> SRI LANKA DEMANDS UK TO BAN LTTE**

**AFP [Jan 21 2001]** - Sri Lanka has escalated its diplomatic offensive to have Tamil Tiger separatists banned in line with new anti-terrorism laws in Britain even as Norway tries to broker peace, press reports said Sunday. Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar in interviews with the state-run Sunday Observer and the private Sunday Times here stressed that failure by Sri Lanka's former colonial master to ban the Tigers would be an unfriendly act. “The failure of the British government to act against the LTTE (Liberation Tigers

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of Tamil Eelam) would be an unfriendly act imposing considerable strain on our relations,” the minister told the Sunday Observer...

**<sup>12</sup> PRESIDENT TALKS PEACE...**

**AFP [Jan 9 2001]** - President Chandrika Kumaratunga has accused Tamil rebels of refusing to enter Norwegian-backed political talks and vowed to press ahead with a controversial peace plan, a state-run daily said Tuesday...

**AFP [BERLIN, March 13 2001]** - Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga said Tuesday on a visit to Germany that she was confident her country's bloody conflict with separatist guerrillas could be resolved...

**<sup>13</sup> AND, THE PRIME MINISTER TALKS WAR...**

**AFP [Jan 25, 2001]** - Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake Thursday rejected reciprocating a truce offered by Tamil Tigers and vowed military pressure until the rebels entered Norwegian-backed peace talks...

**<sup>14</sup> THE ARMY ALSO WANTS WAR...**

**TamilNet, [January 05, 2001]** The Army declared that “there will be no negotiations with the Tigers. They will be completely wiped out” and warned “no protests will be tolerated”...

**<sup>15</sup> WAR EXPENDITURE INCREASED.**

**AFP [March 7 2001]** - Sri Lanka is to announce new tax measures Thursday in another war budget that has set aside an unprecedented 63.39 billion rupees (745 million dollars) for defence, officials here said... Figures tabled in parliament last month show defence spending in 2001 is 63.39 billion rupees, compared to an estimated figure of 52.43 billion rupees last year. However, last year's actual defence spending overshot the original budgetary allocation to hit anything between 83 to 85 billion rupees (just over one billion dollars), officials said...

**AFP [April 1 2001]**- Sri Lanka's air force has taken delivery of six Chinese-built K-8 trainer aircraft to boost its strike power against separatist Tamil Tiger rebels, officials said Sunday... The Sunday Island newspaper said the air force had earlier this year taken delivery of Chinese PT-6 trainer aircraft last month. The air force announced it had bought 50 aircraft within a year. Air force chief Jayalath Weerakkody said in a statement that the force had bought Israeli-built Kfir jets, swing-wing MiG-27 ground attack aircraft, Bell 412 VIP transport helicopters and C-130 transport planes. “All told, over 50 aircraft were inducted in the year 2000/1,” he said...

**AFP [April 16, 2001]** - Sri Lanka Monday received fresh supplies of multi-barrel rocket launchers and tanks in a bid to boost its fire power against Tamil Tiger guerrillas, official sources here said...

**<sup>16</sup> OPPOSITION TO FOREIGNERS.**

**AFP [Dec 14 2000]** - “The LTTE, like the IRA, need to acknowledge that, whilst a Tamil kingdom constitutionally split from the rest of the island will

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not receive recognition by Europe, the USA or indeed India, the principle of self-determination would be supported by the international community,” Hain said at the time. But Kadirgamar hit back hard, saying... “I take rather strong exception to that statement (of Hain) because self-determination could very well mean the right to secession...”

<sup>17</sup> **MEDIA INVECTIVES AGAINST ERIC SOLHEIM**

**The Island Editorial - [23 May 2001]** “Norwegian peace broker Eric Solheim is reported to have flown to Washington on Monday to hold talks with US officials... Mr. Solheim – whether he has obtained permission of the Sri Lankan government to hold such talks with US officials or not – is clearly exceeding his brief...”

**The Island; Midweek Review [23 May 2001]** “Solheim who came back from Mawla after meeting with Tamilchelvam has gone back. We do not know whether the Tamil terrorists served him masala thosai for breakfast...”

**AFP [Jan 12 2001]** Right-wing Sihala Urumaya, or national heritage party, legislator Tilak Karunaratne said they opposed foreign intervention in the Sri Lankan conflict which has claimed the lives of over 60,000 people. “We are opposed to any intervention by any foreign party, and more so in the case of Solheim,” Karunaratne said in parliament. “He is a playboy who has admitted being with prostitutes in the Czech republic.”...

**AFP [June 8 2001]** - A top Norwegian envoy who has been trying to broker an end to Sri Lanka’s ethnic bloodshed was left out of the latest talks amid a deadlock in the Oslo initiative, diplomats said Friday...

<sup>18</sup> **SINHALA EXTREMISTS...**

**AFP [Nov 22 2000]** - Dozens of Sri Lankan nationalists demonstrated outside the British Council library in Colombo Wednesday protesting a visit by Britain’s junior foreign minister Peter Hain, police said...

**AFP [Nov 16 2000]** - Sri Lankan nationalists demonstrated outside the Norwegian embassy here Thursday to protest Oslo’s attempts to bring the island’s warring Tamil rebels and the government together to negotiate peace...

**AFP [May 24 2000]** - A bomb exploded outside the Norwegian embassy here Wednesday hours after Norway’s Deputy Foreign Minister Raymond Johansen left Sri Lanka amid diplomatic moves to end the island’s separatist bloodshed...

<sup>19</sup> **CEYLON - A BRITISH DOMINION (1948-1972)**

Sri Lanka (Ceylon) was a dominion of the British crown until 1972. Until then the Privy Council of UK was the ultimate court of appeal for the country.

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<sup>20</sup> **BRITISH SENTIMENTS.**

**AFP [23 November 2000]** Hain said it was not realistic to expect the LTTE to abandon their main objective of a separate state called Eelam, but the guerrillas had to accept that there was no international support for such a move. Sri Lanka's minority Tamils would be better off with greater autonomy and the right to self-determination...

<sup>21</sup> **INDIA'S REACTION...**

**PTI [6th January 2001]** Colombo Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga and Indian premier A.B. Vajpayee, during their recent talks at Delhi, expressed their aversion to third-party mediation between Colombo and the LTTE...

**AFP [Feb 18, 2001]** - Norway's peace attempts in Sri Lanka have run into fresh trouble over the composition of an international panel to monitor a truce between government troops and Tiger rebels, a press report said Sunday. The newspaper, quoting unidentified Western sources said India had objected to Britain and Japan being included in the team that could give them a larger role in a South Asian issue. "India wants to avoid the setting up of any precedent that may in the future encourage further interference by the West or the East," the Leader said...

**AFP [March 11, 2001]** - Norway's attempt to broker peace in Sri Lanka has come up against new obstacles with neighbouring India raising concerns over foreign intervention in its backyard, a press report here said Sunday...

<sup>22</sup> **AFP [March 2 2001]** - India lobbied Britain to ensure Sri Lanka's separatist Tamil Tiger rebels were banned as an international terrorist organisation, Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar said Friday...

**AFP [March 4 2001]** - "We owe a deep debt of gratitude to India. Unsolicited by us, Jaswant Singh made representations to the British government for the banning of the LTTE."

<sup>23</sup> **US MILITARY ASSISTANCE**

**AFP [April 1 2001]** - The United States has stepped up military training for Sri Lankan security forces who are locked in combat with separatist Tamil Tiger guerrillas, a press report here said Sunday...

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Glossary:

AFP (Agence France Presse): A France based newswire agency

PTI (Press Trust of India): An India based newswire service

TamilNet: A Europe based newswire agency that specializes in Tamil affairs.

[SANGAM RESEARCH]

## APPENDIX I

# Sri Lanka

## Legal Draft of Proposed Constitution

### CHAPTER II

### Buddhism

- 7\*. (1) The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha Sasana, while assuring to all religions the rights granted by Articles 15(1) and 15(2)\*\*
- (2) The State shall consult the Supreme Council in all matters pertaining to the protection and fostering of the Buddha Sasana.
- (3) For the purpose of this Article “Supreme Council” means a Council established by law in consultation with the Maha Sangha.
- Article 7 (formerly Article 6 in the Working Drafts of the New Constitution), shall be an “**entrenched provision**” requiring a 2/3 majority in Parliament **and** the approval of the People at a referendum for amendment.

\*\* Article 15(1) and 15(2) refer to the rights declared in the Chapter on Fundamental Rights in the revised working draft of the Constitution which was published in the media on 21/05/95 (these rights were contained in Articles 10 and 14 (1) (e) of the First Working Draft of the Constitution presented to the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Constitution). The Articles in question will be renumbered.

## APPENDIX II

*Paper presented at the Proceedings of the International Conference on the Conflict in Sri Lanka: Peace with justice, Canberra, Australia*

### **OBSTACLE TO PEACE -POLITICAL BUDDHISM**

By Ana Pararajasingham,  
Secretary, Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations

In 1963, B H Farmer, the British writer, in his book *Ceylon: A Divided Nation*, (issued under the auspices of the British Institute of Race Relations in 1963,) wrote

***“... it is of great consequence that from early times, at least as early as the writing of the Mahavamsa, the Sinhalese have thought of themselves as a unique and specially favoured people.*”**

In August 1957, J R Jayawardne (who was to become Sri Lanka’s head of state twenty years later) began his campaign against the then Prime Minister Bandaranaike, who had entered into a pact with the Tamil leader Chelvanayakam to devolve autonomy to the Tamil regions, by declaring:

***“The time has come for the whole Sinhala race which has existed for 2,500 years, jealously safeguarding their language and religion, to fight without giving any quarter to save their birthright. I will lead the campaign.”***

In July 1981, Mrs Wimala Kanangara M.P. and Minister for Rural Development declared in parliament:

***“If we are governing we must govern, if we are ruling we must rule. Do not give in to the minorities. We are born Sinhalese and Buddhists in this country. Let us rule”***

It is my contention that the phenomena known as “Political Buddhism” is best described by the above quotes. It is also my contention that a major obstacle to a negotiated peace in Sri Lanka is this phenomena variously described as “Political Buddhism”, “the Land, Race and Faith Factor” and the “Mahavamsa Mindset”. It is essentially an attitude deeply influenced by the way in which the Mahavamsa (an ancient chronicle of Sinhala history believed to have been written in the late 6th century AD by an unknown Buddhist monk) has been interpreted by latter day Sinhala nationalists.

Several modern historians who have sought to understand the Sinhala-Tamil divide have found the “Mahavamsa Mindset” to be a significant factor in shaping Sinhala nationalism in such a way as to deny all non-Sinhala people (particularly the Tamils) an equal right to the Island. In his book “Buddhism Betrayed?” Harvard Professor Stanley Tambiah has explored this phenomena in great depth.

The main themes underpinning the ideology born of this attitude has been brilliantly summarised by Kumari Jayawardne, a Sinhalese social scientist, in a 1986 publication by the Colombo based “Centre for Social Analysis”. This publication entitled “Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka” is a revised edition of a series of articles published in the *Sri Lanka Guardian* in the wake of the anti-Tamil pogrom of July 1983. In these articles Kumari Jayawardne has examined the evolution of Sinhala Buddhist political and national consciousness during the colonial and post-colonial period. According to Jayawardne the themes are:

- (a) The doctrine of primacy and superiority of the Sinhala “race” the members of which are claimed to be the original, true inhabitants of the Island. This is based on the myth that the Sinhalese are the descendants of Aryan migrants from Bengal.
- (b) The belief that the Sinhala race has been placed in a special relationship to Buddhism as its protector.

Two powerful myths told by the chronicler of the Mahavamsa form the cornerstone of this ideology. These myths have been eagerly and relentlessly exploited, reinterpreted, and re-told by latter day Sinhala nationalists to advocate an ideology reflecting the themes identified above and implying that only the Sinhala Buddhist inhabitants are the true “sons of the soil” (*Bhumi Putra*) and that the others are interlopers and aliens.

The first tale is about the founding of the Sinhala race and begins by giving the Sinhala people a myth about their origins which, far fetched as it is, has been interpreted to show that the Sinhalese are a people with something special about them. The second is another myth and deals with the question of Sinhala hegemony in respect to the Island.

*The first myth tells of a sexual union between an Indian princess, (daughter of the king of Vanga) and a lion resulting in the birth of twins - a son called Sinhabahu (lion-arm) and a daughter called Sihasivali. The animal-cum-human family live in a cave which the lion blocks with an enormous boulder imprisoning his wife and children while he goes hunting.*

*One day the son removes the boulder and carries his mother and sister to the borderland of the Vanga country. In searching for his lost family, the lion ravages several villages. This is seen by the human population as an animal attack on human settlements. The king of Vanga announces a reward to anyone who rids the land of the rampaging lion.*

*In response, and against the pleading of his mother, Sinhabahu agrees to kill his father on behalf of his grandfather. The lion, full of love for his son, moves unsuspectingly to his death. Sinhabahu cuts off the lion’s head and offers it to his grandfather. In return he is offered the kingdom of Vanga. He refuses the offer and returns to the land of his lion father and after carnal union with his twin sister builds a city (Sihapura) and rules it well.*

*Vijaya, is the elder of twins born out of this incestuous union. Vijaya is of a violent temperament. When he and seven hundred of his followers begin to harass the people, the enraged public demand that Vijaya be put to death. Instead, the king (Sinhabahu) exiles his son along with his followers.*

*The exiled prince and his retinue arrive in Sri Lanka, as the Buddha lay dying in mainland India. However, the Buddha's thoughts are with Vijaya and his followers and he assigns gods to protect them. The protection serves them well in their encounters with the local (aboriginal) population - the Yakkas. Vijaya espouses a female member of the local population called Kuveni and with her help massacres the other Yakkas. Vijaya and his retinue then acquire wives from the neighbouring Indian kingdom of Madura.*

*The chronicle defines the descendants of Vijaya and his followers as Sinhala as they are the direct descendants of the slayer of the lion (Sinha means lion).*

The other powerful story related by the chronicler of the Mahavamsa is that of the confrontation between the Sinhalese king Duttugemunu and the Tamil king Elara (Ellalan).

*Gemunu is introduced in the Mahavamsa as the son of king Kakavana Tissa and queen Viharamahadevi. At the age of twelve when requested by his father not to fight the Tamils (who are portrayed by the mahavamsa to be people of a kingdom somewhere north of Kakavanna Tissa's domain), Gemunu reacts by curling up on his bed and telling his mother, the queen Viharamahadevi, that the reason he is unable to stretch his limbs is that "over there beyond the river are the Tamils; here on this side is the sea; how can I lie with outstretched limbs?" On another occasion, gemunu, angered by what he considered his father's cowardice sends him a female ornament. The father threatens to bind his angry (Duttu) son with a golden chain. Duttugemunu (the angry Gemunu) thereupon flees.*

*On his father's death Duttugemunu has himself crowned as king and declares war on the Tamil king Eelara. The Mahavamsa tells of the killing of thirty-two lesser Tamil kings by Duttugemunu in his march to confront Elara. In the final battle Duttugemunu triumphs by killing Elara and Sri Lanka is united under one royal umbrella.*

*Gemunu's remorse at the killing of so many in his march to victory is dismissed by eight Arrahants (enlightened saints) who tell him that he had only slain one and a half human beings – one who had embraced Buddhism and another who had accepted the five basic precepts of Buddhism. The rest being "unbelievers" were not worthy to be even considered as human beings.*

Both myths have been reactivated and recontextualised by latter day Sinhala nationalists to give shape and inspiration to suit the ideology in a 20th century context.

The myth of Vijaya is interpreted by latter day Sinhalese to “prove” the antiquity of the Sinhala people vis-à-vis the Tamils and more importantly to assert a divine purpose as evidenced by the protection bestowed by the dying Buddha on the first Sinhalese-Vijaya and his retinue. The special relationship between Buddhism and the founding fathers is also asserted by claiming that the Buddha attained *Nibbana* on the very day that Vijaya and his retinue arrived in the Island. Similarly, the legend of Duttugemunu is retold in several formats to assert the basic tenet of Sinhala nationalism which is that the entire Island (including those regions where the Tamils form the dominant population) belongs to the Sinhalese and that the Island needs to be “unified” under Sinhala rule. It is in keeping with this tradition that Sinhala historian K.M de Silva, refers to King Duttugemunu as someone engaged in “a ] *relentless quest for domination of the whole Island*” and that he accomplished what he set out to do, by establishing “*control of the whole Island*”.

The non-human status of the non-Buddhists as related in the Duttugemunu tale is also interpreted to suggest the special status of the Sinhala people.

While legends and myths of the Mahavamsa formed the basis of Sinhala nationalism, the present nationalism is also due to the considerable influence wielded by European thought in the 19th and 20th centuries. This dealt with racial concepts such as “Aryan”.

The notion that the Sinhalese were an Aryan people was not a Mahavamsa inspired myth, but an opinion attributable to European linguists who classified the languages spoken by the Sinhala and Tamil people into two distinct categories. Robert Caldwell, in his “A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian South Indian Family of Languages (1856)” argued that there was no direct affinity between the Sinhalese and Tamil languages, while the German, Max Muller in his “Lectures on the Science of Language (1861)” declared that “*careful and minute comparison*” had led him to “*class the idioms spoken in Iceland and Ceylon as cognate dialects of the Aryan family of languages*”. Contrary views were, however, expressed by others who classed Sinhalese with South Indian languages.

Christian Lassen and James Emmerson Tennent were two who held that the Sinhala language was closely affiliated to South Indian (non Aryan) languages. However, it was the “Aryan Theory” which was to hold sway as several European scholars lent support to this view.

The linguistic classification began to acquire a racial dimension when local and foreign historians began to superimpose a distinct racial origin to the Sinhala people. L.E Blaze in the 1931 edition of his “A history of Ceylon for Schools” mentions that the mythical founder of the Sinhalese, (Vijaya) was]”*believed to be of the Aryan race*”. H.W Codrington in his “History of Ceylon (1926)” accepts the Aryan origin of the Sinhalese, but qualifies it by saying that “*their original Aryan blood had been very much diluted through intermarriage...*” The notion that Vijaya was anxious to find “*a queen of his own Aryan race*” and the view that “*his pride of race revolted*

*at the thought of any but a pure Aryan succeeding to the Government which he had striven so laboriously to found”* were quotes which popular Sinhala historians were to use in their interpretation of history.

These racist theories were based on spurious interpretations by European physical anthropologists who expounded the view that the Sinhalese were in fact a distinct race. These included M.M Kunte who declared that *‘There are, properly speaking, representatives of only two races in Ceylon-the Aryans and the Tamilians, the former being descendants of Indian and Western Aryans’*, adding that he had discovered that the *“formation of the forehead, the cheek bones, the chin, the mouth and lips of Tamilians is distinctly different from the Ceylonese Aryans.”*

Virchow, another anthropologist expressed the view that the *“Sinhalese were either Aryans or a mixed race, derived from the fusion of Aryan and the aboriginal inhabitants of the Island”*

The influence of the Germans in promoting these racist notions was particularly significant. According to Professor Wilson of the University of Brunswick, Canada, *“It is likely that German scholars had a more compelling case in looking for the “cradle” of the Indo-European (which really meant the Aryan) race. The greatest of all students of Sinhalese culture was Wilhelm Greiger, whose German edition and translation of the Mahavamsa was completed in 1908. An English translation was completed in 1912. When he arrived in Ceylon in December 1895, Wilhem Geiger, in an interview with *The Ceylon Independent* stated that the purpose of his visit was to study Sinhala for scientific purposes in order to see if it came under the Aryan category.”*

One of the most effective and articulate exponents of this explosive Mahavamsa-inspired ideology was a man called Anagarika Dharmapala who was active during the early part of the 20th century. Dharmapala was a product of the newly emergent Sinhala petty bourgeoisie of small traders, white-collar workers, vernacular teachers, indigenous (Ayurvedic) physicians and moneylenders, who resented the economic, political and social advantages enjoyed by the westernized elite of the Island. Amongst the westernized elite were a large number of Christians who clearly appeared to enjoy the patronage of the colonial administrators.

Dharmapala, armed with the Mahavamsa-inspired ideology, began by first attacking the Christians whom he regarded as being the cause of a multitude of evils. He was vociferous in his attacks, which were conducted through newspapers, which he edited and through lectures he gave at gatherings of supporters. In 1902, Dharmapala wrote,]

***“This bright and beautiful Island was made into a paradise by Aryan Sinhalese before its destruction was brought about by the barbaric vandals. Christianity and polytheism are responsible for the vulgar practices of killing animals, stealing, prostitution licentiousness, lying and drunkenness...”***

He also pointed to the past glories of the Sinhalese civilization as portrayed by the Mahavamsa as a way of infusing the Sinhalese with a nationalist identity and self-

respect in the face of the humiliation imposed by the British rule and Christian missionary activities. But, of course, in this attempt, he adopted a racist line, which denigrated the non-Sinhala inhabitants and set in motion a vicious pattern, which other Sinhala leaders were to follow. The myth of Duttagemunu was used by Dharmapala to celebrate the. ***“Sinhala Aryans of yore uncontaminated by Semitic and savage ideas”***. In 1915 he directed his attack against the Muslims by calling them ***“an alien people (who) by Shylockian methods have become prosperous like the Jews”***.

By the 1930s the working classes too had become involved in propagating the racist notions advocated by Dharmapala and sections of the Buddhist clergy. These attacks were primarily directed at the “Malayalis” – a group of lately arrived migrants from Kerala (Malayalam) in India. This upsurge in racism in Sri Lanka in the thirties coincided with the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy, and several local newspapers gave sympathetic accounts of the international and foreign policies of Hitler and Mussolini. Many nationalist and labour leaders found the language and rhetoric emanating from Germany and Italy, useful in their own propaganda.

*Viraya*, the Sinhala paper of the Island’s leading trade union, the Ceylon Labour Union was at the forefront of the attack lamenting the fate of the Sinhala people and calling for ***“a leader like Hitler who was implementing policies for saving the Aryan race from degeneration (Viraya, 17 April 1936).***

This theme was developed in a letter (signed B Sirisena), which said (*inter alia*)

***“It was Hitler, the leader of Germany who said that leadership cannot be expected from those who are devoid of Aryan blood. In his country he has therefore prohibited marriage between Aryans and non-Aryans. He has even declared illegal the employment of young Aryan girls as domestics in the houses of non-Aryans... The intention of all these is the creation of a pure Aryan race.***

‘The letter, continuing, suggested that taking inspiration from fascist Germany, the Sinhalese should bestir themselves and prohibit marriages between “Aryan” Sinhalese and Malayalis.

The Mahavamsa was used with great effect by trade unionists, the Buddhist clergy and Buddhist laymen like Dharmapala to attack non-Sinhalese by casting them as aliens and interlopers and in that process infusing the Sinhala people with the notion that to be a Sinhalese Buddhist somehow entitled them to greater claims on the Island in relation to the others. Not surprisingly, the population so infused was easily incited to make violent attacks on non-Sinhalese when the latter (particularly the Tamils) were found to make claims to equal rights or asserted their right to a federal state or their right to secede. According to Ceylonese historian, Ludowyke “a special quality of hostility” could be elicited among the Sinhalese at times of conflict and stress because of what they knew about their history as told by the Mahavamsa and interpreted by laymen and Buddhist monks.

Bruce Kapferer in the book “Legends of People, Myths of State” refers to the responsibility of the Mahavamsa-inspired myths for the violence against Tamils.

***“Most Sinhalese did not participate in the killings of July 1983. Nonetheless, many watched, without acting, while Tamils burned. Compassionate Sinhalese sheltered Tamils in their homes. But, I have heard the very same people state that “they (the Tamils) got what they deserved”.***

The power of these myths is to be also found in the names of the army regiments which since 1956 have carried names such as the “Gemunu Watch”, “Sinha Regiment” and the “Rajarata Rifles”, names filled with mythical significance attributable to the Mahavamsa. Then of course, there are the statements and actions by Sinhala politicians, which point to the extent to which the Sinhala psyche has been influenced by the notions made possible and popular by the way in which the Mahavamsa has been interpreted. For instance in 1985, J. R. Jayewardene, the then President of the Island called himself the 306th head of state in an “unbroken line from Vijaya”. In 1986, Prime Minister Premadasa having published a short novel in Sinhala and English presenting the heroic progress of Duttugemunu, was to claim a role for himself similar to the mythical hero in unifying the Island under the Sinhala UNP Government.

The role of the populist historians and educationalists in perpetrating these myths as historical facts is very significant. The Vijaya and Duttugemunu stories as told in the ancient chronicles are reproduced in school texts and presented as fundamental to Sinhalese identity and to Sinhalese political rights.

Recognizing the stranglehold of the Mahavamsa Mindset, many scholars in recent times have sought to unravel and explode the myths in a way that would help understand the historical realities. R.L H Gunawardne, a leading Sinhala intellectual engaged in this task argues that the Sinhala consciousness is a recent phenomenon, which had emerged well after the period of Duttugemunu. Others have shown the Elara-Duttugemunu confrontation to be a dynastic battle having little to do with the Sinhala or Tamil identities of the adversaries. There are others who have shown that a significant proportion of the present day Sinhalese are in fact descendants of Tamil immigrants from South India who by adopting Buddhism and the Sinhalese language have now become Sinhalese, and hence the irrelevance of the “Aryan Race” theory. Then there are others who have taken the “rationalistic stand by pointing out the “impossibility” of human descent from a lion and dismissing the Vijaya myth as a “pure flight of fancy”. Notwithstanding these attempts, the Mahavamsa Mindset has prevailed.

The explosive power of the “Mahavamsa Mindset”, however, was not immediately grasped by the Sinhalese elite who assumed political power on the departure of the British (the last of the colonial rulers) ending a 450-year old occupation of the Island by various European powers. The first to realize the enormous political gain to be made through tapping the explosive Mahavamsa Mindset was, S.W.R.D Bandaranaike, who ironically, was a member of the elitist Christian Bandaranaike-Obeyasekera clan.

At the General election of 1956, Bandaranaike bulldozed his way into political power by successfully marshalling popular Sinhala support on a chauvinistic

platform. This, however, does not mean that other Sinhala elitist politicians until then were unaware of the power of the “Aryan myth” and the emerging Sinhala consciousness, which by the 1930s had become a formidable social force. It only meant that they had not begun to employ it with the kind of formidable effect that Bandaranaike was able to do in 1956. There is an earlier example of this appeal to chauvinism by a member of the Sinhalese political elite, namely D.S Senanayake, who became the Island’s first Prime Minister in 1948. Nine years earlier, in 1939, addressing a gathering of Sinhalese in his capacity as Minister of Agriculture (in the Pre-independence Government), D.S Senanayake said in tones reminiscent of Hitler’s “Thousand Year Reich”

***“We are one blood and one nation. We are a chosen people. The Buddha said that his religion would last 5,500 years. That means we, as custodians of that religion shall last as long”***

Today, the Buddhist clerical establishment, the chief proponents of the Mahavamsa-inspired chauvinism, continues to be the chief obstacle to a negotiated peace. The recent military set backs suffered by the Tamils have only made these chauvinists even more intransigent.

In a letter dated 10 January 1996, 18 Sinhala Buddhist organizations have urged the Sri Lankan President to pave the way for the families of landless Sri Lankan Army and Police personnel to be settled in the captured Tamil areas. The call was made in the wake of an article in the Sunday Island of 31 December 1995. In this, Professor Abaya Ariyasinghe an academic exponent of “political Buddhism” announced that the historic Nallur Kandaswamy temple was really a monument built over a Buddhist place of worship. He then claimed (quite preposterously) that the name Nallur itself was a corruption of the Pali word Unanaluma. (Pali is the language from which the Sinhala tongue is believed to have originated and in which the Mahavamsa was written) According to the learned Professor “*The very name Nallur echoes the term Unaloma. The meaning of “good village” attributed to Nallur bears no justification. The Pali word Unaloma means the hair grown on the forehead of the Buddha*”

**Conclusion:** “Political Buddhism” is an impediment to peace in the Island of Sri Lanka because it is based on the doctrine of primacy and superiority of the Sinhala “race” and the Buddhist religion. The Sinhala political establishment has promoted and exploited this spurious doctrine to justify and perpetuate the unitary constitution under which political power is vested with the Sinhala nation. Hence, it is this doctrine, which stands in the way of a negotiated settlement reflecting the reality that Sri Lanka is an Island of two nations.