

Forensic Aspects on the 1959 Assassination of an Asian Prime Minister by a Buddhist Physician Monk

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The forensic aspects of the assassination of Ceylon Prime Minister Solomon Bandaranaike on Sept. 25, 1959 and the wounds received by the assassin Buddhist physician monk Somarama Thero is revisited.

Methods: Details presented in a primary source, a book by Lucian G. Weeramantry entitled *Assassination of a Prime Minister: The Bandaranaike Murder Case*, was culled for analysis.

Results: Shot in close range by a pistol, victim's body showed 4 bullet entrance wounds and 3 bullet exit wounds. Organs affected were liver, stomach, spleen, intestines and lungs. The victim died following day morning, due to severe internal hemorrhage. Assassin also received gun-shot wounds from a police sentry who was on duty. Assassin's wounds were in right thigh and scrotum. During operation, one of his testicles was removed.

Conclusion: Assembled empirical data on solo assassins of incumbent Heads of State and Government since 1865, indicates that 22 out of 27 belong to under 40 age group. Somarama Thero was an outlier at the age of 44, when he committed the crime. He survived the wounds suffered during his assassination attempt and following judicial inquiry was executed by hanging on July 6, 1962, for the crime.

KEY WORDS

Buddhist monk, head of State, homicide, incumbent, political murder, Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

Ayurvedic medicine physician Taldue Somarama Thero (born Aug 27, 1915) was executed by hanging on July 6, 1962. (Fig.1)¹⁾ His crime was assassinating the then prime minister of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike (Fig. 2) on Sept. 25, 1959, at 9.45 am. The assassination took place at the Bandaranaike residence - 65, Rosmead Place, Colombo 7. The assault weapon was a .45 caliber revolver. Victim Bandaranaike was sixty years and 8 months old; he was wounded in liver, spleen and left arm. He underwent a five hour operation at the Colombo General Hospital, from 11:15am to 4:15 pm. The following day, on September 26, 1959, he died at 7:45 am. No postmortem was held²⁾.

Bandaranaike-led Sri Lanka Freedom Party, captured power in the April 1956 general election. His success was attributed largely to the support he gained from the marginalized elements in the majority Sinhalese society tagged as *Pancha Maha Bala Vegaya* (Five Great Forces) comprising of Buddhist monks, village school teachers, traditional ayurvedic medicine physicians, workers and farmers³⁾.

What was interesting in this assassination is that the assassin Somarama Thero was a 'Three in one' individual: a Buddhist monk, teacher and traditional ayurvedic medicine physician. He belonged to the Malwatte chapter of the Siamese fraternity (Siam *nikaya*, originating from Thailand). In 1957, he was appointed as a lecturer and eye specialist at the College of Indigenous Medicine in Sri Lanka. His deed in September 1959 shocked the pious Buddhists of Sri Lanka, that in published studies and books which dealt with prime minister Bandaranaike's career in politics, assassin was NOT identified by name and the tragic event is mentioned passingly with descriptions such as 'shot and killed by a', 'assassinated by a', 'death at the hands of a' tagged to an euphemistic phrase 'Buddhist monk' or '*bhikkhu*'⁴⁻¹⁵⁾. Why should

such obfuscation and obliteration of real facts prevail, even after 60 years?

As such, the forensic aspects of the assassination of Bandaranaike and the wounds received by the assassin Buddhist monk are revisited in this report. This is an assassin-focused review, describing the details of wounds he suffered during his assassination attempt on a prime minister and the dilemma faced by him, prior to assassination.

METHOD

A primary source for the forensic details of this assassination is a book by Lucian G. Weeramantry (1923-2007) entitled *Assassination of a Prime Minister: The Bandaranaike Murder Case*¹⁶⁾. It was self published in Geneva, Switzerland, 10 years after the assassination. In the preface to the book, Weeramantry had noted, "The story of the conspiracy and the assassination is one so extraordinary, so gripping and so fantastic, that I felt it should be told to the world in an easy, abbreviated form, which yet preserves its most interesting features. Hence this book." Weeramantry served as the legal counsel for the assassin Somarama Thero, in the assassination trial in front of a jury of seven, held in Colombo, between Feb. 22, 1961 and May 12, 1961.

RESULTS

At the time of shooting by Somarama Thero, there were about 30 - 40 individuals in the verandah of Prime Minister's residence. According to the principal eye witness Ananda Thero, assassin fired four shots at the victim using a pistol. Another eye witness Vedage Piyadasa who had

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Figure 1: Somarama Thero (in handcuffs - center), the assassin of Bandaranaike

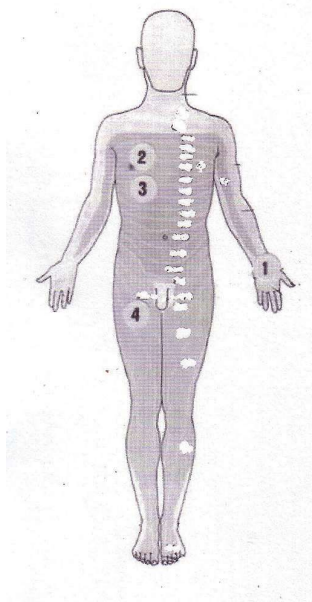


Figure 3: Sketch of bullet entrance wounds (1 to 4) in victim Bandaranaike's body indicated.

accompanied the principal eye witness, had informed the Court, "The Prime Minister went up to Somarama and, bringing his hands together in obeisance to the monk, inquired, 'Reverend Sir, why have you come?' Then Somarama pulled out a pistol from underneath his robes and, holding it with both his hands, fired at the Prime Minister. The shot struck him on the back of his hand. He wrung his hand, crying out 'Aah'. Just then Somarama fired another shot, which struck him somewhere in the region of his chest... The Prime Minister rushed gasping into the house and Somarama followed him, revolver in hand⁽⁶⁾.



Figure 2: S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, aged 60, when he was assassinated on Sept 25, 1959.



Figure 4: prime conspirator Mapitigama Buddhharakkita Thero.

Forensic details presented by Weeramantry⁽⁶⁾ are transcribed and annotated below.

(1) Gun-shot wounds to Bandaranaike

Dr. W.D.L. Fernando, examined Prime Minister Bandaranaike's injuries.

1. A punctured lacerated wound on the back of the left wrist an entrance wound.
2. A punctured lacerated wound on the right side of the chest an entrance wound.
3. A circular punctured wound also on the right side of the chest below injury No. 3 — an entrance wound.
4. A circular punctured lacerated wound on the right hip — an entrance wound.
5. A punctured lacerated wound on the back of the left hand an exit

Table 1: Assassinated Heads of State and Government (since 1865) by a solo assassin-A Select List*

Date of Assassination	Victim	Country	Solo Assassin	Age of Assassin at assassination
Apr 14, 1865	Abraham Lincoln	USA	John W. Booth	27
Jul 2, 1881	James Garfield	USA	Charles J Guiteau	40
Jul 29, 1900	King Umberto I	Italy	Gaetano Bresci	30
Sep 6, 1901	William McKinley	USA	Leon Czolgosz	28
Feb 1, 1908	King Dom Carlos I	Portugal	Mauel Buica	31
Dec 14, 1918	Sidonio da Silva Pais	Portugal	Jose Julio da Costa	25
Nov 4, 1921	Takashi Hara	Japan	Konichi Nakaoka	18
Dec 9, 1922	Gabriel Narutowicz	Poland	Eligiusz Niewiadomski	53
Nov.14, 1930	Osachi Hamaguchi	Japan	Tomeo Sagoya	21
May 7, 1932	Paul Doumer	France	Paul Gorguloff	36
Apr 30, 1933	Luis Sanchez Cerro	Peru	Abelardo Mendoza	19
Nov 8, 1933	Mohammed N Shah	Afghanistan	Abdul Khaliq Hazra	17
Oct 9, 1934	Alexander I	Yugoslavia	Vlado Chernozemski	36
Feb 24, 1945	Ahmad Maher Pasha	Egypt	Mahmoud El Essawy	28
Oct 16, 1951	Liaquat Ali Khan	Pakistan	Said Akbar Khan	29
Sep 21, 1956	Anastasio Somoza	Nicaragua	J.R. Lopez Perez	27
Sep 25, 1959	Solomon Bandaranaike	Ceylon	Somarama Thero	44
Sep 6, 1966	Henrik Verwoerd	South Africa	Dimitri Tsafendas	48
Mar 25, 1975	King Faisal I	Saudi Arabia	Faisal bin Musaid	31
Oct 26, 1979	Park Chung Hee	South Korea	Kim Jae Gyu	53
Oct 6, 1981	Anwar Sadat	Egypt	Khalid as islambouli	26
Jun 29, 1992	Mohamed Boudiaf	Algeria	L. Boumaaraifi	26
May 1, 1993	R. Premadasa	Sri Lanka	K. Veerakumar aka Babu	23
Nov 4, 1995	Yitzhak Rabin	Israel	Yigal Amir	25
Jan 16, 2001	Laurent Kabila	Congo	Rashidi Kasereka	18
Jun 1, 2001	King Birendra	Nepal	Dipendra	29
Mar 12, 2003	Zoran Dindic	Serbia	Zvezdan Jovanovic	37

*limited to incumbent individuals only. Previous holders of office are excluded.

Source: Ref. 19, 20.

Table 2: Somarama Thero assigned according to Clarke's Assassin Categories^{23,24}

Criteria	Clarke's Category of Assassins		Somarama Thero's status
	Type I	Type II	
Emotional distortion	mild	moderate	mild
Cognitive distortion	absent	absent	absent
Hallucinations	absent	absent	absent <i>or marginal</i>
Delusions	absent	absent	absent
Reality contact	clear	clear	clear
Social relations	varied	disturbed	varied
Primary motive	political	personal/ compensatory	personal/ compensatory

wound.

- A punctured lacerated wound on the left side of the chest below the arm pit an exit wound.
- A horizontal punctured lacerated wound on the left lower abdomen the exit wound of No. 4.

For illustrative purposes, Fig 3 indicates the four entrance wounds (1 to 4) in Bandaranaike's body.

Weeramantry continues further:

"Dr. Fernando said that the injuries indicated that three bullets had passed through the body and out of it, including the one that struck the left wrist. One bullet was found embedded near the region of the ninth rib and was removed. There were no marks of burning or singeing anywhere on the skin, which indicated that the muzzle of the weapon had

been well over one foot away from the body.

Internally, he found injuries which corresponded to the external injuries described by him. They were mostly injuries to the liver, stomach, spleen, intestines and lungs. The injuries were necessarily fatal, and he was of opinion that there was nothing whatsoever that could have saved his life.

Cross-examined by counsel for Somarama, Dr. Fernando said that a magistrate or an inquirer had the power to order a postmortem examination, but he did not receive any such order in respect of the death of the prime minister and so no postmortem was held⁽⁶⁾.

The chief surgeon who operated on Bandaranaike was Dr. P.R. Anthonis (1911-2009). Other doctors who assisted Dr. Anthonis were, Dr. C.M. Umagiliya, the anesthetist; Dr. Henry Perera, chest surgeon; Dr. Ponnambalam, another chest surgeon and Drs. Mendis and Yogeswaram, house surgeons. The recorded interactions that transpired between the chief surgeon and the prime minister was as follows:

Chief surgeon: 'Sir, what happened?

Prime Minister: 'Doctor, till I saw that black object emerge from the robe, I did not realize what was happening.

Chief surgeon: 'What robe?

Prime Minister: 'It was a Buddhist monk,

Feeling the victim's pulse and finding it rising rapidly, the chief surgeon opted not to continue further.

After judicial medical officer had examined prime minister's injuries, Dr. Anthonis began the operation. Immediately anesthesia was administered, Mr. Bandaranaike collapsed due to his low condition. His heart stopped beating and for a moment all seemed lost. Losing no time, Dr. Henry Perera, the chest surgeon, stepped in and proceeded to give the lifeless patient a cardiac massage. But soon, to the surprise and relief of all, the heart resumed its beat.

Dr. Anthonis found that there was a very large quantity of free blood inside the abdominal cavity, with the result that only half the normal quantity of blood was in circulation. From the patient's response to anesthesia, it was clear that his condition was very serious and the

object of the operation was no more than to endeavor to prolong life. Had the operation not been performed, Mr. Bandaranaike would have died within half an hour. The operation, which took more than five hours, was over by 4:15 pm, by which time there was an appreciable improvement in his condition. In non-technical language, the nature of the operation was the stoppage of hemorrhage by ligatures and sutures, or, in other words, the repairing of the perforations and lacerations caused by the bullet wounds. There was one bullet embedded close to the ninth rib, which was recovered by Dr. Henry Perera and handed over to the judicial medical officer. The internal hemorrhage was mostly of the liver, pancreas, spleen, omentum and intestines. Of the vital organs, it was only the kidney and the heart that had escaped injury.

After the operation, Dr. Anthonis left the hospital but returned at about 6:30m. He was thereafter almost continuously by the prime minister's bedside till he passed away at 7:45 am on September 26th. Although the operation had succeeded in arresting the bleeding, its immediate object, it had failed to save life.

Cross-examined by counsel for Somarama, Dr. Anthonis said that after the operation the prime minister dictated in his presence a message to be delivered to the nation. He had strongly advised Mr. Bandaranaike against it, but Mr. Bandaranaike was determined to do so and pressed him to consent. 'Then make it very short' he pleaded, giving his consent with the utmost reluctance. 'Doctor, I am noted for long political speeches. Please do not restrict me' was the prompt reply. In the operating theatre stood a man in a surgical mask all ready to take down the message. Mr. Bandaranaike told the man, 'Do not take it down in short-hand. I want you to do so in long hand and read it back to me.' The message, which turned out to be a fairly long one, was accordingly dictated and read back. It was subsequently published in all the newspapers.

Legal Counsel: 'Speaking of his assailant, did the prime minister tell you at any stage, 'He is a foolish man and I do not know why he shot me'

Dr. Anthonis: 'Yes, he said that about four times before he died. He called him a foolish man in robes.'

Justice: 'In other words, the prime minister was not attributing any personal motive to the man who shot him?'

Dr. Anthonis: 'No'

Legal Counsel: 'Was a post mortem held on the prime minister's body?'

Dr. Anthonis: 'No'

Legal Counsel: 'Was his dying deposition recorded?'

Dr. Anthonis: 'No.'

Legal Counsel: 'Would it be correct to say that, as soon as you saw the prime minister being brought in by car, it struck you that his dying declaration was important?'

Dr. Anthonis: 'Yes, it struck me that it was important.'

Legal Counsel: 'Whatever the physical condition of the prime minister may have been at that stage, he was in full possession of his mental faculties?'

Dr. Anthonis: 'Yes'

Justice: 'In fact, he was cracking jokes in the operating theatre?'

Dr. Anthonis: 'Yes'

Legal Counsel: 'Did he once say, when you requested him to put his tongue out, 'It is a long tongue. We politicians are very tough guys and have plenty of guts?'

Dr. Anthonis: 'Yes, that was after the operation.'

Dr. Anthonis emphasized once more that, although there was an improvement in Mr. Bandaranaike's condition after the operation, he did not think that he could have survived. He did not take steps to have his dying deposition recorded, because any chance of recovery would have been lost had he been allowed to talk. He was, however, in full possession of his mental faculties to the last.

Legal Counsel: Then, why did you not insist that he should not dictate this message to the nation?

Dr. Anthonis: 'I did insist many times, but he said, 'Doctor, please allow me to do this.' It was only humane for me to permit him to do so in the circumstances.'

Dr. Anthonis attributed the cause of death to surgical shock and hemorrhage due to multiple gunshot injuries."

(2) Gun-shot wounds to assassin Somarama Thero

It should not be forgotten that the assassin Somarama Thero also suffered gun-shot wounds. He was shot by the police sentry (constable Samarakone, aged 54) who was on duty at the entrance of Bandaranaike

residence between 9:00am and 12:00 noon on September 25, 1959. The description provided by Weeramantry, is as follows:

"Constable Samarakone said that at about 9:45 am he heard two shots from the direction of the house. He first mistook the sound for that of bursting firecrackers. As he turned towards the house, he heard two or three more shots. He heard all these shots in the space of a minute. He immediately loaded his rifle and ran in the direction of the verandah. He had not reached the verandah, when an elderly gentleman came running up to him and told him that the prime minister was being shot. As he stepped on to the verandah, he saw a Buddhist monk in the corridor.

Legal Counsel: 'The elderly gentleman pointed out the monk to you?'

Samarakone: 'Yes'

Legal Counsel: 'And told you something?'

Samarakone: 'Yes'

Legal Counsel: 'What happened then?'

Samarakone: 'The monk turned towards me and attempted to run in my direction. I feared that I too might be shot.'

Justice: 'Did you see a revolver or any other weapon in his hands?'

Samarakone: 'I did not.'

...The monk had his outer robe raised. His hands were concealed and I did not notice him having a revolver. But fearing that he may be armed and may shoot me, I fired at him with my rifle and he was injured. I identify the monk I shot at as Somarama, the fourth accused."⁽⁶⁾

According to the descriptions presented by Weeramantry, assassin Somarama Thero was examined by forensic doctor W.D.L. Fernando, after the death of prime minister at 1 pm on September 26th. He was operated by Dr. Austin. To quote Weeramantry:

"Somarama was in the operating theatre adjoining that of the prime minister. The following were the details of his gunshot wounds:

1. Circular punctured lacerated wound on the back of the right side of the right thigh.
2. Lacerated wound on the back of the inner side of the right thigh, slightly higher than injury 1.
3. Laceration of the scrotum with injury to the right testicle.
4. Lacerated wound on the inner side of the back of the right thigh at the same level as the injury to the scrotum.

Injury 1 was an entrance wound and 2 was the corresponding exit wound. Injury 1 was consistent with an injury caused by a rifle bullet. Its position indicated that the fourth accused was shot from a side. Injuries 3 and 4 were caused by the same bullet which caused injuries 1 and 2. That meant that the bullet, having entered through the back of the right thigh on the outer side, would have emerged from the inner side, grazing the scrotum and the left thigh when making its exit.

Legal Counsel: 'Could these injuries have been caused if the assailant stooped down and shot at the injured man while he lay fallen?'

Samarakone: 'Yes, if the assailant and the injured man had both been on the same level at the time of firing.'

In addition to these injuries, Somarama had a lacerated wound on his forehead suggestive of a fall or an assault with a rough object, contusions on his head and face suggestive of fist blows, contusions on his chest suggestive of blows with clubs, and a bite mark on his back which turned out to be a grievous injury.

Dr. Austin, who operated on Somarama, found it necessary to remove one of his testicles."⁽⁶⁾

DISCUSSION

Political assassinations are not so uncommon in history among many cultures⁽⁷⁾. Many reasons can be cited. Few include, (1) political enemies seeking revenge, (2) 'targeted killings' arranged by other nations, (3) favor seeking friends turned foes, (4) faulty decisions made by the victims, while in power. Pyenson *et al.*⁽⁸⁾ affiliated to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of USA, defined a Head of State as a country's principal decision maker, exercising final authority for formulation and execution of national government policies. The position he or she hold includes being monarch, president, prime minister, party secretary or chairman, supreme religious authority or head of junta. Data compiled by Pyenson *et al.*⁽⁸⁾ indicated that between Jan 1, 1965 and Dec 31,

1996, among 261 Heads of State, 45 (17%) were assassinated. Thus, assassination is indeed a professional risk for this cohort of individuals.

Solo assassins of Incumbent Head of States

Due to multiple layers of security protection guarding an incumbent Head of State, assassinating such an individual single handedly is not an easy task. As such, for achieving the objective of the leader's death, many such attempts were carried out by a group of individuals. Previously, Jones and Olken⁽⁹⁾ had provided a table of 59 successful assassinations of primary national leaders since 1875. However, this table was victim focused, without any details on assassins. Also, no distinction was made by Jones and Olken⁽⁹⁾ among solo assassin, group assassins and cases where identity of assassin were unclear (such as car bomb, military coup d' etat).

For an empirical analysis on the age of solo assassins, I set the year 1865 as a convenient cut-off date, for three reasons: (1) Birth year records of assassins, prior to 1865 are difficult to ascertain, due to lack or accessibility of primary source records. In many instances, assassins were also killed by security guards or onlookers, within few days. (2) Easily concealed firearms came to be used as the primary instrument of assassination, after the killing of American president Abraham Lincoln in 1865. (3) Abetted by the firearm designs patented by John Moses Browning (1855-1926), US gun manufacturers came to promote the power of gunslingers.

Differing from the table presented by Jones and Olken⁽⁹⁾, I present Table 1 which is assassin focused, providing name and age⁽²⁰⁾. Empirical data of assassinated Heads of State and Government (since 1865) by a solo assassin⁽²⁰⁾ is presented in Table 1. Majority of solo assassins falls in the under 40 age group. Only 5 among the 27 solo assassins were aged 40 and above, at the time of they committed homicide. As Somarama Thero committed the crime at the age of 44, he happens to be an outlier. It should be mentioned that quite a number of incumbent Heads of State victims have to be omitted from Table 1, because their assassins were more than one. Two examples can be mentioned; (1) 11 Imperial Navy cadets who assassinated Japanese prime minister Tsuyoshi Inukai (1955-1932) on May 15, 1932 were in their early 20s. (2) Indira Gandhi (1917-1984) was assassinated on Oct. 31, 1984 by her two body guards Beant Singh and Satwant Singh, both of whom were in their twenties when they committed the crime.

On the lexical confusion relating to the use of English words priest or monk to the Buddhist terms *Bhikku* and *Thero*, some clarification is needed. According to Wriggins, "*Bhikkhu* or *Bhikkshu* is the Pali word for 'monk', 'recluse' or 'religieux'. The word *bhikkhu* is sometimes rendered in English as priest, but the *bhikkhu* claims no priestly powers. The use of the term monk is not accurate either, for it implies obedience to the rules of an order. *Bhikkhus* do not yield obedience to an organization or a human superior in this sense, though they do follow the Vinaya rules of discipline to the Buddha's 'way'⁽²¹⁾. At the time of the assassination, assassin Somarama's social title was '*Thero*' (literally, elder) in the Theravada Buddhism practiced in Sri Lanka. In 1959, among a total population of 9.5 million, 7.5 million were Buddhists⁽²²⁾. They were religiously tended by the *bhikkhu* population estimated to be in the range of 15,000-18,000⁽²³⁾. Following the assassination, monks were abused and manhandled by the public, despite by the special plea from the widow Sirimavo that they 'Be allowed to participate freely in the various ceremonies'⁽²⁴⁾.

Victim Bandaranaike telling jokes in the operating theater, that he had 'a long tongue and plenty of guts', suggested his composure and sense of humor, while he faced a life threatening crisis. Even the fact that he insisted on delivering a public message to the nation revealed his positive presence of mind. From the empirical data that two life threatening gun-shot wounds to Bandaranaike were on his right side (thus missing the heart), and none were above the neck, it may be postulated that his assassin might have been misdirected by the movement of his target or that he simply misjudged the right from the left.

The identified gun-shot wounds in assassin Somarama Thero's body indicates that constable Samarakone had primarily aimed at the below-waist region to immobilize his threatening target.

It should also be noted that in this particular assassination, the conspiracy to kill Bandaranaike was hatched by the 'most powerful political *bhikkhu* of the day, who had contributed greatly to Bandaranaike's triumph in 1956⁽⁹⁾. He was the first accused in the assassination trial, a vice president of Bandaranaike's political party and his name was Mapitigama Buddhakatta Thero (1921-1967; Fig. 4)^(6,7,14,16).

Dilemma faced by Somarama Thero prior to the assassination deed

During the assassination trial, it was revealed that Somarama Thero suffered from incurable hemorrhoids, had used narcotic drug opium on medical advice and consequently had become an addict. He was also a smoker. During the assassination trial, Somarama Thero made a statement to the Court. Excerpts:

"I was born in Talduwa and received my early education at the Buddhist Mixed School, Dehiowita. At the Talduwa temple in the year 1929 I was ordained a Buddhist monk. I then entered the Vidyalankara Pirivena (seminary), where I continued my studies for five years. In 1935 I gained admission to the Vidyodaya Pirivena. In the following year I received my higher ordination at the Malwatte temple, but continued my studies at the Vidyodaya Pirivena till 1940. From 1940-43 I was a resident monk at the Ihala Talduwa (Upper Talduwa) temple. In 1943 I moved to another temple to study the treatment of eye diseases and was a student there for a period of five years. For some months in 1948 I treated free a number of eye patients at the Hendela Leper Asylum as a service to suffering humanity....

"Like many other monks who were concerned with the country's future, I now began to interest myself in politics. In 1952 I participated in a number of election meetings held in support of Mrs. Wimala Wijewardene, who was a contestant for the Kelaniya seat in the House of Representatives. On some days I presided at as many as seven or eight meetings which were held in different parts of the constituency. Mr. Bandaranaike himself spoke at many of those meetings. In 1953 I interested myself in building a home for the aged and had the first accused elected patron of the society formed for the purpose. I did so as he was a person actively interested in public service. Mr. Bandaranaike himself was elected a lay patron of the society after he had sent me a letter consenting to his election. I eventually had a leaflet distributed giving the names of the office-bearers of the society and setting out its objectives.

"Towards the end of 1957, I was appointed a lecturer and eye specialist at the College of Indigenous Medicine for the year 1958. The certificates given to me by the principal of Vidyalankara Pirivena and by my tutor in ophthalmology helped me to secure this appointment. A year after my appointment I was requested by my patients and some other physicians to seek reappointment for the following year. I agreed and was reappointed.

"Early in September 1959, some nurses at the Indigenous Hospital staged a fast by way of protest against certain injustices they complained of. They fasted for a whole day, but could not get their grievances redressed. I was in sympathy with their demands and went along with some of their relatives to meet the Prime Minister. With his help the nurses had their grievances redressed. I then became aware that a move was afoot to dispense with their services. Once again some other physicians and I made representations to the Prime Minister. The representations related not only to the moves against the nurses, but to several other problems and anomalies at the College of Indigenous Medicine as well as at the hospital⁽¹⁶⁾."

Although political assassins have become figures of enduring fascination due to media coverage, studies focusing primarily on the pre-assassination life and events following assassination of assassins are fewer in comparison to those of their victims. To the best of my knowledge, this report is the first one on an educated Buddhist monk who became an assassin. It appears that personal grievances he had on his victim were taken advantage of by the prime conspirator Buddhakatta Thero. Studies on the American presidential assassins by Clarke^(23, 24) presented four grades of motivational patterns held by assassins when they committed the crimes. These were,

Type I: political extremism

Types II and III: various degrees of emotional disturbance

Type IV: severely mentally disordered

Seven distinguishing criteria to separate these four types were: emotional distortion, cognitive distortion, hallucinations, delusions, reality contact, social relations and primary motive. Based on this Clarke's criteria, I place assassin Somarama Thero between Type I and Type II, as presented in Table 2. Among the 7 criteria, devoid of confirmatory medical evidence, I'm tempted to assign 'marginal' grade in preference to 'absent' grade for the hallucinations category, based on the court evidence that Somarama Thero had become an addict of opium drug.

CONCLUSION

In fatal assassination incidents involving incumbent Heads of State, assassin being a stranger to the victim is the normal pattern. But during the assassination trial of prime minister Bandaranaike, it was revealed that the assassin Somarama Thero and victim had known each other for at least 7 years. Majority of solo assassins falls in the under 40 age group. Only 5 among the 27 solo assassins were aged 40 and above, at the time they committed homicide. At the age of 44, Somarama Thero happens to be an outlier.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I dedicate this paper to the memory of my maternal grandfather Arumugam Thiyagarajah (1910-1982). As a six year old, I was living at his house, when this assassination occurred, and he was the one who introduced me the names of assassin Somarama Thero and the victim Bandaranaike.

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