

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

Sachi Sri Kantha

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SACHI SRI KANTHA

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Lively COMET Press
Gifu City

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PIRABHAKARAN PHENOMENON

Sri Kantha, Sachi 1953-
Biography

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Dedicated to the Memory of

*17,701 young Tamil fighters [13,928 men and
3,773 women] of Eelam, who believed in the
message and magic of Pirabhakaran*

and

*M. G. Ramachandran (MGR), the legendary
movie star cum political leader of Tamil Nadu,
who also believed in the objectives of
Pirabhakaran.*

Preface

‘If [a person’s] achievements amount to 70 percent of the whole and his shortcomings to only 30 percent then his work should in the main be approved’.

— MAO ZE DONG, ON LEADERSHIP. ¹

Despite all the accusations peddled against him by the pompous and non-Tamil commentators like Dayan Jayatilleka, H. L. D. Mahindapala and Gamini Weerakoon (editor, Colombo’s *Island* newspaper), majority among the Tamils would agree that Velupillai Pirabhakaran passes the Mao’s scale of leadership approval. Like Mao, he has an incomparable 25 year-long track record as a guerrilla leader of repute. Nevertheless, Jayatillekas, Mahindapalas and Weerakoons continue to squeal the ‘sour grape’ tune loudly in the Colombo media like the paranoid Aesopian foxes.

In relative terms, none among the more than one billion people living in South Asia now can parallel Pirabhakaran’s achievement in competence to be tagged as a second successor of Mao in military affairs, after the Vietnamese General Vo Nguen Giap. This is not an exaggeration. Tamils have produced in the 20th century — hundreds of eminent lawyers, scientists, businessmen, musicians, sportsmen, actors and writers of international acclaim; but a military hero — none, until Pirabhakaran appeared on the scene. It is preposterously funny that those Sri Lankan army men who pitted against him and lost fair and square (Gen. Denzil Kobbekaduwa and Brigadier Wijaya Wimalaratne were killed in August 1992) or those who retired for safer pastures without completing the assignment in hand (Gen. Janaka Perera) are being propped as ‘military greats’ by the Sinhala press of Colombo. This phenomenon is illustrated by the well known Tamil proverb, *Aalai illa oorukku illuppai poo sarkarai*. [literal English translation: ‘In a village without a sugar mill, the flower of Indian butter tree is the black sugar’.] *Illuppai* plant’s botanical name is *Bassia longifolia* and is used in the traditional medicine of Tamil culture.

The first sentence in chapter 1, written on May 2, 2001, stated: “It’s time that the Pirabhakaran phenomenon be studied somewhat in depth.” When I wrote that sentence, I was under the impression that I would write a two-part or three-part sketch on the unforgotten facts of Pirabhakaran’s past, and move on to another topic for my weekly column I volunteered for the *Tamil Nation*² website, maintained by Nadesan Satyendra.

¹ cited in Edgar Snow: *The Other Side of the River — Red China Today* (1962), p.114.

² www.tamilnation.org

I was pushed to reconsider my decision of concluding my three-part feature on Pirabhakaran, by one particular offending piece which appeared in the *Island* (Colombo) newspaper on May 16, 2001 under the caption ‘Palavering with Prabhakaran’ and signed with a pseudonym, Leo Panthera. This critic presented a hostile tirade on “a few ‘psychoactive’ characteristics that profile the man and his method.” There is something in stuffy Colombo’s hot air which breeds spineless, anonymous critics like malarial mosquitoes proliferating from bad air. This particular analyst with the pseudonym Leo Panthera, knowingly or unknowingly had scribed as his fifth point, the very two words I had chosen to caption my commentary for the Tamil Nation website. To repeat his words,

“The cult of the ‘cyanide capsule’ is an astonishing by-product of the Pirabhakaran Phenomenon. If the man is a blood-thirsty crank how can he have this willing army of human robots prepared to die for the cause?”

This particular commentary by Leo Panthera made me to convert my three-part commentary on Pirabhakaran into a full-length biography of the leader of LTTE. Instinctively since 1990, I had felt that Pirabhakaran deserved an extensive biography as a military leader who had commanded the interests of the Asian region and beyond since 1978.

Initially I checked my own merits and disadvantages of authoring such a laborious endeavor. Merits, I had a few. Disadvantages were equally bothersome, especially the lack of proximity to the subject of my focus. Three motives which propelled me to write this biography are as follows:

(1) A Thanksgiving: As disadvantaged as I am to the lack of proximity to the subject, I mourn the loss of two opportunities in the past which would have placed me at the University of Jaffna. But both opportunities were compounded with ‘once in a life-time’ chances so that I couldn’t reject the alternate choice of not being in Jaffna. First came in April 1981, when I was chosen for the permanent assistant lecturer position at the Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna. Simultaneously, I had an offer for postgraduate studies at the University of Illinois, with a graduate research assistantship stipend. It was an ‘Either This or That’ option. My attempt to negotiate a solution to the dilemma I faced with Prof. S. Vithiananthan, the then Vice Chancellor for the University of Jaffna, was not fruitful. As I had labored as a temporary assistant lecturer at the Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya for more than two years, I was eager to grasp the University of Illinois stipend and did so.

Five years later, in November 1986, when I visited Jaffna, after completing my Ph.D., my mentor at the University of Colombo, Prof. K. Balasubra-

maniam (who was then the Head of the Department of Biochemistry, at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna) invited me to join the department as a lecturer. Again, I was placed in an ‘either this or that’ situation and for selfish reasons was keen on continuing the postdoctoral research at the University of Tokyo, to climb the professional ladder. Thus, with heavy heart I had to chose against joining the University of Jaffna. If I would have returned to Jaffna then, that would have coincided with Pirabhakaran’s return to Eelam from Tamil Nadu.

Thus, I consider that writing this biography on Pirabhakaran is my thanks-giving to the sacrifices of more than 17,700 youths who had believed in his leadership. These young men and women were no ‘human robots prepared to die for the cause’ as the mean-spirited Leo Panthera had tagged them. They were intelligent and courageous human beings who stayed in the island to fight against state oppression and eco-vandalism of pristine Tamil homeland. Among them would have been talented tacticians, technicians, teachers, musicians, engineers and artists. Though their voices have been stilled, I felt that I had to write on their behalf.

(2) Inspiration from a Bargain Book: For me, the inspiration to write a biography on Pirabhakaran was first kindled as a small flame when he was in the middle of Indo-LTTE war, and his premature obituary had appeared in the *Hindu* newspaper [see, chapter 1] In the fall of 1989, when I was living in Philadelphia, I visited New York for a weekend. At the bargain pit of the Koch & Brentano’s Bookstore, I picked up an unusual book, *War Zones: Voices from the Worlds Killing Grounds* (1988) by Jon Lee Anderson and Scott Anderson for \$2.98, originally priced at \$21.95. It contained a chapter on Sri Lanka.

The sibling authors, of whom Jon Lee Anderson had turned out to be a recognized war correspondent lately, had traveled for an year in 1986 to gather material for this book in the then five war zones of the globe: Northern Ireland, El Salvador, Uganda, Sri Lanka and Israel. The Sri Lankan chapter carried 42 snippets of interviews (undoubtedly mangled versions). The 42 individuals whose interviews had appeared in this book covered a wide spectrum; some well known and some unknown; some aged as high as 79 and one not even a teen and all others in between; some Sinhalese, some Tamils, one Muslim and even one British mercenary; some Buddhist priests and one Christian priest; some who met untimely deaths before the end of the 1980s and some who are still living.

For me, the material presented by Anderson brothers was appealing and important, but ‘just raw meat’. Can anyone feast and feel contented on raw meat and uncooked rice, however appealing it is to the eyes? Jon Lee Ander-

son may be a ranking war correspondent, but fact-checking appeared not his forte, from the manner he reported the death of Kumarappa. Nevertheless, the work of Anderson brothers inspired me to collect as much as information on Pirabhakaran and his army.

(3) Rejections and Wanton Omissions by the Print Media Editors: In the early 1990s, I was also an ardent letter writer to journals like *Lanka Guardian*, *Tamil Times* and *Asiaweek* on topics related to LTTE and Eelam. While quite a number of what I sent were published in these journals, an equal number went unpublished, or were mangled in print, though I kept the letters brief to the point of not exceeding 250–300 words. To prick the partisanship and pomposity of the print editors, sometimes I used sarcasm (and infrequently ‘shock phrases’ also) in these letters, relating to Pirabhakaran and his environs. An example is given below:

As a response to a particularly slimy editorial on terrorism and truth by the *Asiaweek* magazine in late 1994, in which Pirabhakaran was particularly named as a ‘terrorist’ along with Yasser Arafat and Gerry Adams, a mangled letter of mine, appeared in print in the *Asiaweek* magazine. Complete text of the printed letter stated:

“In my opinion your sermon ‘In the War against Terrorists, Truth is the Best Weapon’ belongs to the world of fairies and angels [‘Keeping the Lid On’, Editorial, Nov.30]. I live in a real world where the truth is always hidden or restrained from revealing its naked beauty.

Truth is massaged and masked by the media in many countries. Truth is also decorated by almost every practising politician on this globe according to his or her fancy. It is an open secret that the intelligence services of many countries manufacture or clone truths according to their whims. So you have the alphabet soup of CIA, (formerly the) KGB, MI6, Mossad, RAW and ISI working overtime to manipulate the political, ethnic and religious frictions prevailing in many countries. I find it perplexing that in your sermon, you have not bothered to mention these creators of ‘cloned truths’.”[*Asiaweek*, Hongkong, Jan.6, 1995]

However the following passages, presented in my original letter, were deleted in the version which appeared in the *Asiaweek* of Jan.6, 1995.

“Truth is massaged and masked by the media in many countries, of which Singapore is an extreme example. To sell a thousand copies in Singapore, many competing international journals would compromise real truth for ‘mas-saged truth’. Have you forgotten that recently your sister magazine, Time, received a reprimand and apologized for shading the truth in its depiction of football great O. J. Simpson in its cover. Even *Asiaweek* sometimes twists

the truth to suit its stand. For example, in a foot-note to my [previously] published letter (Letters, Nov.23, 1994), you have stated that you did not include the name of JVP leader Rohana Wijeweera in the list of Sri Lanka’s prominent assassination victims, because that list was ‘confined to political, civic and military leaders’. The massaged truth in your explanation is easily recognizable to all Sri Lankans, since Rohana Wijeweera was a politician and he even contested the 1982 Presidential election.

Show me a politician who trumpets the truth in its naked beauty and I will show you a saint. Even the reputation of a living saint like Mother Teresa has come under attack recently due to her past cozying with politicians who have had a penchant for truths of dubious variety.

You have identified Yasser Arafat, Gerry Adams and Velupillai Prabhakaran as representatives of ‘terrorists’. But why have you not written a word about the types of truths the CIA and Mossad had spread in the past about Mr. Arafat, or how the truth-manufacturing department of MI6 works round the clock to slander the IRA or how the RAW released a truth about the violent death of Prabhakaran in the jungles of Vanni five years ago. If you have a sincere campaign to abolish all the Intelligence agencies in the world to save the real truths from their ‘cloned creations of truths’, you can count on me to raise my hand.”

This type of rejection and wanton omissions instilled in me a conviction that my views should reach the audience via a medium which can by-pass the peevish editors of print newsmedia. By providence, Pirabhakaran and I share the same Tamil heritage, same native locality in *Vadamarachchy* region of Jaffna and same generational match up. I’m only 18 months older than him. Due to lack of proximity, as of now, I haven’t interviewed him; but I have gathered assiduously documentary materials (for the past 20 years) generated by those who have interviewed him in person. I also have gathered arduously materials scribed by his adversaries and critics. Thus, it need not be stressed that the views presented in this book are those of the author; no endorsement by the subject of this biography or his organization LTTE has been given or should be inferred. It should also be mentioned that five print journals [*Lanka Guardian* (Colombo), *Asiaweek* (Hongkong), *Tamil Nation* (London), *Hot Spring* (London) and *Mainichi Daily News* (Tokyo)] where I regularly contributed quite a number of short letters defending the LTTE and Pirabhakaran since 1986 have become defunct in the 21st century. The *Tamil Times* (London), is still in print; but, regrettably it has stopped accepting my contributions.

As I scan the existing works on the LTTE leader, two stand out. Adele Balasingham’s *The Will to Freedom* (2001) was an autobiography with noticeable snippets on Pirabhakaran’s mind. J. N. Dixit’s *Assignment Colombo*

(1998) was a crude type of acquaintance biography on Pirabhakaran. In contrast to these works, I have chosen to write an analytical biography on Pirabhakaran, which is a cross between Erik Erikson’s *Gandhi’s Truth* (1969) and any of James Michener’s non-fiction work. **Of the 54 chapters which constitute this book, first 51 were serialized in two websites (Tamil Nation website, UK) and Illangai Tamil Sangam website (USA) for two years from May 2, 2001 to February 19, 2003. Thus, this work has a legitimate claim to be the first biography on Pirabhakaran. It appeared in the electronic medium, which had gained a global foothold in the 21st century.** However, when Indian journalist M. R. Narayan Swamy’s biography on Pirabhakaran [*Inside an Elusive Mind*] appeared in late 2003, it was hyped in Indian and Sri Lankan press — for promotional purposes by its publisher — as the first biography on the LTTE leader. This hype is only partially accurate, if qualified as the first print biography. I have added the final three chapters for this book in June 2004.

Sachi Sri Kantha
Gifu City
Japan
October 2004

A NOTE ON TAMIL NAMES AND USAGE

Vernacular names and nicknames have been spelled idiosyncratically in English by non-Tamil academics and non-Tamil journalists. In the main text, I have used the orthodox English spelling commonly used by the Tamils, but I have retained the idiosyncratic versions in the cited texts without correcting them for conformity with my text.

In English, the name of LTTE leader Velupillai Pirabhakaran has appeared in the literature in multiple variants, the most common being, Velupillai Prabhakaran. Other recorded variants include, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, Velupillai Pirabhakaran, Vellupillai Pirubhakaran and Vilupillai Prabhakaran. Since in the tongues of Tamils, the orthodox pronunciation appear as Pirabhakaran, I have preferred this form in the text. However, when the cited sources spell the same name differently, I have not altered them for conformity with the main text.

Similarly, Mahattaya — the nickname of one time deputy leader of LTTE Mahendrarajah — has appeared in the literature variably as Mahatiya, Mahatya, Mahathya, Mahathiah, Mahattaya, Mathaya, Mathiah and Mathiasri.

In addition, other notable names which have been spelled in the published literature in more than one form include, Kittu (also as Kiddu), Pottu Amman (also as Pottu Aman and Pottu Omman), Sivarasan (also as Sivarajan, Shivarajan, Shivraj Master), Dhanu (also as Thanu) and Subah (also as Suba).

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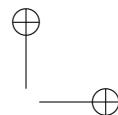
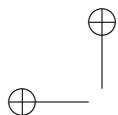
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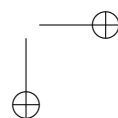
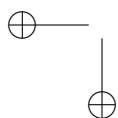
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1

Premature Obituary in the Madras *Hindu*

INTRODUCTION

IT'S TIME that Pirabhakaran phenomenon be studied somewhat in depth. His adversaries from India and Sri Lanka have called him names — a Hitler, a Pol Pot, a megalomaniac and a mass murderer. The problem with these self-serving outbursts is that, 20th century Indian subcontinent had not seen a leader like him. In ideals and action, the closest one who can be identified with Pirabhakaran is Subhas Chandra Bose (1897–1945), though there are noticeable differences in the lives between both. Thus, the critics of Pirabhakaran had groped in the dark to pigeonhole him into slots with which they are familiar. In this exercise, they fail miserably because, Pirabhakaran is a trend-setter (aligned in the ranks of Mao Ze Dong) and couldn't be fit into pre-conceived slots. Thus, the only reference his critics (which include some prominent Tamils as well) make is to depict him as a tyrant. Their behavior is like the cry-babies who scream when what they had in their hands does not work according to their whims.

Nevertheless, a couple of commentators and journalists who are knowledgeable had identified Pirabhakaran as an unusual brand of leader — in contrast to the tub-thumping variety of politicians in the Indian subcontinent who are dozen a dime in every decade. Mervyn de Silva, in selecting Pirabhakaran as the 'Man of the Decade' in 1990, wrote,

“As we look back to the 1980s, and study the decade as a whole, we are inclined to concede primacy to the Tamil threat to the unity, and indirectly, the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. In that struggle, there is one commanding personality, the LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran, regarded by many western experts as leader of one of the toughest guerrilla organisations in the world, and by military analysts as a ‘genius’ in the theory of unconventional warfare.”¹

Hitler's rule could last only 12 years. Pol Pot's dictum couldn't fly more than 4 years. But Pirabhakaran had set the political agenda for nearly two decades now in Sri Lanka and India. An interesting, thoughtful comment

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which appeared in the internet web page under the name Sam Sloan (Ishi Press International, USA) following the verdict on Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial by the Indian Court is worth a look. Under the caption, ‘Who really killed Rajiv Gandhi?’, Sloan wrote:

“For nearly two decades, probably more people have seriously been trying to kill Velupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, than any other person in the world. On Wednesday, an Indian court sentenced Velupillai Prabhakaran to death in absentia, just for the little thing of killing Rajiv Gandhi. Ha! Ha! Ha!

The judge in the Indian court came to the ridiculous conclusion that the only person who wanted Rajiv dead was Prabhakaran, and therefore he must be guilty, without any evidence linking him to Dhanu. I am no admirer of Prabhakaran, but I know for a fact that there were 16 million other Sri Lankans who wanted to kill Rajiv Gandhi, plus a number of Indians as well. . . .”

2

PIRABHAKARAN’S PREMATURE OBITUARY IN THE MADRAS *Hindu*

Before Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in 1991, the motley brand of spies belonging to India’s Intelligence Agencies had plotted to kill Pirabhakaran. Among my collection of *Pirabhakaranalia*, nothing beats the following news item, which appeared in the *Hindu* (Madras) newspaper of July 24, 1989. The caption was, “Prabhakaran reported killed in LTTE shootout”. The text in full, was as follows.

“Madras, July 23

The top leader of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Mr. V. Prabhakaran, was killed in a shoot-out by the Mahatiya faction of the LTTE a few days ago, according to political sources in the North-Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. Mr. Mahatiya was the deputy leader of the LTTE. His body is reportedly at a village called Ananthaperiyakulam 20 km north-east of Vavuniya town. Various political sections in the North-Eastern Province of Sri Lanka have been talking about this over the last two days. Another indication is that a video-cassette is being circulated in which Mr. Mahatiya has proclaimed himself the leader of the LTTE. Mr. Mahatiya is also reported to be wounded in one version. When contacted in London, an LTTE representative, while not willing to credit the reports, declined to issue a formal denial.

LTTE watchers say that the basic difference between Mr. Prabhakaran and Mr. Mahatiya was that Mr. Prabhakaran opposed the line of talking with the Sri Lankan Government and collaborating openly with it against India and the other Tamil organizations. Mr. Prabhakaran was also against lining up with the Sri Lankan President R. Premadasa, in the course leading to a confrontation with India as he took the position that Sinhalese politicians

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could never be trusted. Besides, he was reportedly opposed to killing the TULF leaders, A. Amirthalingam and V. Yogeswaran, as he felt it would alienate the Tamil people of Sri Lanka and the people of India from the LTTE.

Mr. Mahatiya has, over the past two years, been the key figure in the military structure of the LTTE. He had become co-equal with Mr. Prabhakaran, if not the main leader in the military there while Mr. Prabhakaran remained the apparent political leader. Various political elements in the North-Eastern Province had become aware of a situation of dual power at the top in the organization which has gone on an extremely violent course over the past year and more.

In the last ten days starting from July 13 the top political leaders of the Eelam movement have been eliminated violently — the outstanding moderate political figure, the veteran A. Amirthalingam, his colleague, V. Yogeswaran and the leader of PLOT, Uma Maheswaran, who earlier lost to Prabhakaran in the violent struggle for supremacy in the militant movement.

Kittu also killed?

According to Sri Lankan Tamil sources here, Mr. Krishnakumar alias Kittu, lieutenant of Mr. Prabhakaran, was also feared killed in the shoot-out. The rival groups clashed in the Vavuniya jungles, from where Prabhakaran and others were driven out before being shot. Some other prominent LTTE leaders were also understood to have been killed or grievously injured. The sources said their information was based on a message the LTTE groups were passing among themselves, which was intercepted at Koriakulam village near Vavuniya. The sources added that people at Ananthaperiyakulam village had been paying homage to Mr. Prabhakaran by garlanding his portraits during the past two days.

LTTE denial

However, in Colombo, an LTTE spokesman dismissed as ‘baseless rumours being spread by interested parties’ that Mr. Prabhakaran was killed in a shootout. He said there was no truth in the reports doing the rounds in Colombo that two senior LTTE leaders had heated arguments with Prabhakaran over the killings of two senior TULF leaders in the Colombo residence last week.”³

This news item was an example to the sneaky designs of India’s spies who attempted to eliminate Pirabhakaran and install a pliable person at the helm of LTTE. It is to the credit of Pirabhakaran that he out-smarted the Indian manipulators. The TULF leader Amirthalingam was ruined by the India’s Intelligence operatives because he surrendered his individuality to them. Pirabhakaran did not make this mistake.

I checked four books⁴⁻⁷ which describe the events of 1989 in Sri Lanka, and strangely not a single one mentions or comments about this bizarre news

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item of the Madras *Hindu*. This tells something about the quality (or lack of) these Pirabhakaran-watchers. However, two sentences by Rajesh Kadian, specifically attracted my attention. “At a public meeting on 1 June 1989, a jubilant Premadasa echoed the LTTE’s demand that the IPKF be withdrawn. He even fixed a day — 29 July 1989 — the second anniversary of the now visibly tattered accord.”⁸

Kindly check the dates once more. Is it a coincidence, that between these two dates, Amirthalingam was assassinated on July 13, 1989? Four days later, Uma Maheswaran was assassinated, and on July 23, “Pirabhakaran (was) reported killed in LTTE shootout”, according to the *Hindu* newspaper. Something fishy indeed. The same news item in the *Hindu* also mentioned that, Pirabhakaran “was reportedly opposed to killing the TULF leaders, A. Amirthalingam and V. Yogeswaran, as he felt it would alienate the Tamil people of Sri Lanka and the people of India from the LTTE.” It may not be wrong to infer that India’s Intelligence operators had planned assiduously to eliminate the then three leading figures among Eelam, viz, Amirthalingam, Uma Maheswaran and Pirabhakaran between June 1, 1989 and July 29, 1989. Pirabhakaran somehow escaped from this trap.

The hatred of the House of *Hindu* publishers also largely derives from this impenetrability of Pirabhakaran. His impenetrability was a virtue for the Eelam Tamils’ campaign. He never allowed himself to be compromised. Thus, the only thing his adversaries could do was to throw mud and project him as a tyrant.

Time MAGAZINE INTERVIEW

To the dismay of India’s court jesters of espionage, Pirabhakaran survived and less than an year later gave an interview to the *Time* magazine’s correspondent Anita Pratap, from Mullaitivu in 1990. Excerpts:

Question: What made you confront India?

Pirabhakaran: India claimed to have intervened in Sri Lanka to secure Tamil interests. In actual fact, India came to secure its own interests. There was never any genuine attempt to understand and solve our problems. India deliberately aggravated Sri Lanka’s ethnic crisis. It destabilized Sri Lanka [by training and arming Tamil militants, including the Tigers] so that it could play a dominant role in bringing Sri Lanka within its sphere of influence. What I can’t forgive is the way India claimed to have intervened to protect the Tamils and then launched this war against our people. On the third day after the war started, I sent an appeal to India to stop the attack because of the civilian casualties. But India mistook it as a sign of weakness and pressed ahead with the offensive, thinking they could crush us.

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Q: But isn’t it true that India has consistently stood for a united Sri Lanka?

Pirabhakaran: India used this excuse to impress the world that it was the protector of Sri Lanka. By adopting this line, India ensured that other powers were excluded from interfering in this region.

Q: You knew India was using the Sri Lankan problem to pursue its interests, but didn’t you also use India by taking advantage of Indian training and arms?

Pirabhakaran: Yes, we also used India. We were aware of India’s strategy but made use of the opportunity to strengthen ourselves militarily.

Q: What gave you the courage to take on the world’s third largest army?

Pirabhakaran: India failed to secure the release of twelve of my area commanders who were arrested by the Sri Lankan security forces. [When the captives later swallowed cyanide] their suicides made me determined to confront the Indian army. Some of my top colleagues cautioned me against it and wondered how long the LTTE could hold out. I gave them the Vietnam example — a small nation can fight a superpower with determination and dedication. When I was deciding to fight, the thought of winning or losing didn’t bother me. What you have to assess is whether you have the will to fight. People cannot give up their cause, their rights, for fear of defeat.

Q: Is there a lesson in this for India?

Pirabhakaran: That however formidable a military power you may be, you cannot impose upon a people anything against their will.

Q: What did you consider were the Indian army’s main strengths and weaknesses?

Pirabhakaran: Their strength — and their weakness — was their huge manpower. It created difficulties for us. It restricted our mobility. But because they came in large numbers, they suffered many casualties. Also, they wasted a lot of time, energy and money on providing logistical support. Another major weakness was that the Indian army was not motivated. The soldiers didn’t know why they were fighting. They were confused. They came to protect Tamils, and then they had to kill them.

Q: And what in your judgment were the LTTE’s own strengths and weaknesses?

Pirabhakaran: Our strength — and our weakness — was our overconfidence. Sometimes our cadres took impossible risks, like ambushing an Indian patrol at a point where there were no escape routes. This cost us casualties. We were sometimes careless. But also because of our overconfidence, our boys carried out some amazingly brave attacks.

Q: Some 6,000 Tamil civilians were killed in the war with the Indian army. Was it worth it?

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

Pirabhakaran: Yes. We have proved that we will not allow any force to interfere with the freedom and independence of our people.

Q: But what have you gained?

Pirabhakaran: I have gained self confidence, courage and the support of my people.

Q: Have you given up the demand for an independent Eelam?

Pirabhakaran: We have not.”⁹

MAHATHAYA AFFAIR

If Pirabhakaran’s will couldn’t be broken, the spies and their political handlers had tried in vain by character assassination and smear campaign to make him an ‘unacceptable person’ among Tamils. They had failed in this as well. As a last resort, India’s spooks had plotted penetration into his movement to eliminate him physically. Until now, all efforts have failed miserably.

In the aftermath of Mahathaya affair, the *India Today* magazine carried a feature by Rahul Pathak and P. Jayaram in 1994. Excerpts:

“...In the span of a single year, Pirabhakaran has lost three of his closest lieutenants. Kittu, the party’s spokesman, was killed on January 16 last year, when the LTTE ship *MV Ahat* was overpowered by the Indian Coast Guard. An upset Pirabhakaran accused his two deputies, Mahatya and Yogi Yogaratnam, of leaking information to Indian intelligence agencies. He had them arrested, interrogated and was all set to have Mahathya eliminated when he suddenly decided to backtrack. His followers say it was a tactical move. His detractors insist it was a growing awareness of Mahathya’s power. ...

In 1989–90, during negotiations with the Sri Lankan Government, Mahathya favoured a political solution to the Tamil problem against Pirabhakaran’s conviction that only military might could win Eelam for them. The differences simmered further after the disastrous battle at Elephant Pass. Pirabhakaran blamed Mahathya for converting a certain victory into a crushing defeat. In May 1992, he divested his deputy of all his posts and things have been going wrong for the LTTE ever since.

Pirabhakaran’s own hide-out near Jaffna hospital was bombed in November 1992. His current favourite, the LTTE intelligence chief Pottu Aman, was attacked and his body guard killed on January 7, 1993. And on January 16, Kittu was drawn into a trap. Pirabhakaran saw Mahataya’s hand behind all this. Mahathya’s old friend Manickavasagar, known as the Engineer, was picked up and grilled by Pottu Aman. On the basis of his ‘confessions’, Mahathya, along with 120 supporters, was arrested on August 2, 1993. An LTTE court tried one of its most illustrious members. Its verdict, delivered on December 19 last year, was that Mahathya was guilty of not only luring

Chapter 1. Premature Obituary in the Madras Hindu

Kittu to his death, but also of conspiring to kill Pirabhakaran and of being a RAW agent?

Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan Government has announced civic elections in the Eastern Province early in March. For Pirabhakaran, who had ensured the cessation of all political activity in his domain for the past four years, even a moderate turnout would be a major disaster. The Sri Lankans think he will weather the storm while Indian intelligence agencies are convinced he is facing his toughest test yet. But if Mahathya was indeed a RAW asset, there might be more to the Mahathya mystery.”¹⁰

MAHATHAYA — A MOLE OF RAW

The last two sentences in this *India Today* report somewhat intriguing for me. How come Indian intelligence agencies were “convinced” that Pirabhakaran was “facing his toughest test yet”, unless they were pulling the strings and praying to the God, that Pirabhakaran would be clipped by their designs. And now, we know who ate crow in this sordid episode. Also, the first part of last sentence, “But if Mahathya was indeed a RAW asset” had lot to hide than reveal about RAW’s treacherous attempt to trip Pirabhakaran.

Initially, I was unconvinced that Mahathaya could have been a traitor to the LTTE. But the accusation that Mahathaya had become a mole of Indian intelligence agency gained credence, when he was left out in the charge-sheet released by the India’s law enforcement officials in May 1992, for the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial. One should note that Mahathaya served as the nominal number 2 of LTTE during Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination in 1992, before the rift between Pirabhakaran and him came into open.

Also, by fitting the information planted by the Indian sleuths in the now-discredited 1989 news item in the *Hindu* newspaper (presented above) with the hints provided in the 1994 *India Today* feature, ‘No Longer Supreme’, one should infer that Pirabhakaran should be given the benefit of doubt in how he handled the Mahathaya affair.

2

What is Leadership?

EMORY BORGADUS (1882–1973) was an eminent American sociologist, who has been eponymized by the ‘Bogardus social distance scale’, he devised in the 1920s–1930s. In 1929, he also published an essay entitled, *Leadership and Attitudes*. Bogardus began his essay by stating,

“Leadership is the special influence that one person exercises over other persons. [A leader is a person (1) who surpasses his fellows in achieving in some particular plane of activity, and (2) whose achievement is recognized by his fellows as being superior.] It is manifested when one human being arouses the dormant attitudes of other persons, changes the attitudes of others, or arouses new attitudes in others. In each of these type-situations, the ‘other persons’ are as important factors as the leader, and the process by which one person succeeds in affecting the attitudes of others is most important of all. In other words, there is always a social situation matrix wherein a leader and leadership operate. It is within this organic social unity that we must look if we would discern the meaning of leadership.”¹

Then, Bogardus proceeded to categorize the leaders into three types.

“If the leader is one who arouses, changes, or creates new attitudes in the lives of other persons, then the study of leadership must deal with the attitudes of these ‘other persons’. In fact they become one of the chief sources of leadership. The natural history of all these attitudes and of the antecedent experiences which account for them is needed. These attitudes, experiences, and life organizations, and how they have been aroused, changed, or created anew, tend to become the main objects for leadership study, as much as the leader himself. They are what the leader himself usually studies.

It is often the potential followers who influence the leaders as much as the leader influences the followers. It was Simmel who was one of the first to point out how the leader is subservient to the followers, how the followers may ‘walk out’ on their leader, how they may refuse to respond or to be led, how they may choose imprisonment rather than obey the orders of some autocratic leader, and how the leader fears any negative or antagonistic responses that will lower his own status. The well-established and relatively permanent behavior patterns, the urge for status, and the innumerable attitudes of the potential followers, are all dynamic and powerful forces that any would-be leader must treat respectfully. None of these may be wantonly violated.

Chapter 2. What is Leadership?

Type 1 Leader To arouse the dormant attitudes of one’s fellows and become a leader is relatively easy. By being enthusiastic along traditional lines of activity, by ballyhooing, by raising the cry of ‘danger’, and by the use of other cheap devices, a member of a group may shoot up into the rank of leader without much difficulty.

Type 2 Leader To change human attitudes requires greater skill. The use of indirect suggestion, the setting of new, appropriate, and attractive examples, the creation of a pleasing atmosphere favorable to the desired change, the changing of the followers’ environmental conditions in ways to arouse pleasant feelings regarding the proposed changes — these are some of the techniques that create leadership of a higher order than is represented by the standpatter or ballyhoo type of leader.

Type 3 Leader To arouse entirely new attitudes and a new creative type of followers is the supreme height of leadership. To arouse unsuspected possibilities and originalities in other persons makes for the greatest leadership. The techniques are often those of the superior teacher, case-worker, parent, who challenge and give heavy responsibilities, who set forth unique opportunities, who make the impossible seem possible, who by deed or word arouse their followers to superhuman effort.

It may be noted here that the three types of leadership discussed in the preceding paragraphs represent an ascending scale of difficulty but a descending scale of recognition.”²

Bogardus wrote the conclusion, as follows:

“Every age develops leaders that bespeak its fears, its longings, its creative urges. Established culture values represent in a peculiar way the groundwork of leadership. Social momentum or social stagnation are equally important desiderata. As a social process, leadership is that social interstimulation which causes a number of people to set out toward an old goal with new zest or a new goal with hopeful courage, — with different persons keeping indifferent paces. The foremost is the leader, but without the others he never would have started, or having started he would not be a leader. Without the antecedent as well as the ever-continuing interstimulation, there would be no leadership. The interplay of attitudes is the dynamic heart of leadership.”³

Now, where can one place Pirabhakaran in the Bogardus rating of leadership scale? I present my case. In the past two centuries, among Tamils in India, Eelam, Malaysia, Singapore and elsewhere, there have been thousands who raised capital, and worked that capital to financial fortunes. They belong to the Type 1 leaders of Bogardus category — “those enthusiastic along traditional lines of activity.”

Then, Type 2 leaders of Bogardus category are those handful of Tamils who raised a political party and led that party to success. C. N. Annadurai

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and M. G. Ramachandran in India are two leaders. Rajaji raised his Swatantra Party in 1959, but it couldn't produce success. Kamarajar or Karunanidhi or Jayalalitha cannot claim that they 'raised' a political party; rather, they inherited the parties they led, from their founders. E. V. Ramasamay Naicker (Periyar) qualifies partially in this category, as a founder-leaders of the Dravida Kazhagam — a new, self-respect, social movement (which he refrained from transforming into a political party) for Tamils. In Eelam, G. G. Ponnambalam, S. J. V. Chelvanayakam and S. Thondaman are the three leaders who qualify in this category. Amirthalingam and Kumar Ponnambalam do not qualify, since they inherited the parties they led, from their founders. These Type 2 leaders, according to Bogardus, were successful in “the changing of the followers' environmental conditions in ways to arouse pleasant feelings regarding the proposed changes.”

Then, in a class of their own, are the Type 3 leaders. Only Pirabhakaran among the Tamils of the past two centuries can claim that he raised an army and led his followers to success. His equals in India were only Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose. While Gandhi was a successful leader of his non-violent army, Bose's army, tagged as Indian National Army (INA), couldn't produce success. In the words of Bogardus, the achievement of Type 3 leaders is “to arouse entirely new attitudes and a new creative type of followers.... who challenge and give heavy responsibilities, who set forth unique opportunities, who make the impossible seem possible, who by deed or word arouse their followers to superhuman effort.” In this Type 3 category, Pirabhakaran is in the league with Mao Ze Dong and Fidel Castro. His interview to the *Time* magazine in 1990, presented in chapter 1 shows how he qualifies for the criterion of Type 3 leadership, as categorized by Bogardus. Of course, Pirabhakaran is criticised for many of his actions by some Tamils and non-Tamils. The Tamil proverb, '*Kaayaa marathukku kal eri vizhuma?*' [literal English translation: Does the barren tree gets bombarded with stones?] may explain partly why he is the target of criticism.

INTELLIGENT AND 'SEMI-LITERATE'

One of the wisecracks used to ridicule Pirabhakaran, repeated *ad-nauseam* in the partisan press in Sri Lanka, is that he is a 'semi-literate'; thus, incapable of leadership. Literacy is a much misused and misunderstood word. Many equate the meaning of 'literate' to 'intelligent', which in reality is as different from chalk and cheese. Let me explain the difference. The dictionary defines the word 'literate' as (1). able to read and write. (2). educated, cultured. (derived from the Latin root, *litteratus* < *littera* = *letter*).

The same dictionary defines the word 'intelligent' as (1). having an ac-

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tive, able mind; acute. (2). marked or characterized by intelligence. (3). endowed with intellect or understanding; reasoning. (derived from the Latin root *intelligere* = *to understand*).

Literate people need not be intelligent. Similarly, intelligent people need not be literate. I will mention some well known examples. Henry Kissinger and Bill Clinton are literate than Muhammad Ali, but Ali is more intelligent than either Kissinger or Clinton. One’s literacy doesn’t provide any immunity for foul-ups in leadership. Kissinger’s or Clinton’s problems in leadership attest to this. Compared to these two, Muhammad Ali was able to project a successful leadership in sports and social activism due to his innate intelligence. In India, Subramanian Swamy is literate but not intelligent. Contrastingly, Kamarajar and M. G. Ramachandran (MGR) were more intelligent than Swamy. Thus, it is more or less a rule that to become a successful leader and hold the affection of his or her followers, one need to be intelligent rather than being literate only.

Among the Tamils living now, there are tens of thousands who are more literate than Pirabhakaran. For instance, Lakshman Kadirgamar is literate, but not intelligent. So, he is devoid of any followers. But, as viewed from the criteria set by Bogardus for leadership, Pirabhakaran qualifies ably than the hundreds of literate Tamils, because he is more intelligent than others. A simple example of his innate intelligence was his choice of tiger as the symbol of his rebel group.

FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

With affluence, contacts and luck, one can enter the portals of Oxford or Harvard universities to become literate. But that does not assure attainment of intelligence. On the contrary, one can achieve intelligence and the acclaim as a genius, by proper blessing of genes as well as by hard work and use of common sense. This is what Thomas Edison prescribed.

“When I want to discover something, I begin by reading up everything that has been done along that line in the past — that’s what all the books in the library are for. I see what has been accomplished at great labor and expense in the past. I gather the data of many thousands of experiments as a starting point and then I make thousands more. The three essentials to achieve anything worthwhile are, first, hard work; second, stick-to-it-iveness; third, common sense.”

Though he has not entered any university in a nominal sense, those who had met Pirabhakaran have recorded that he is ‘well read’. The difference between Pirabhakaran and his competitors for Eelam Tamil leadership (in-

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cluding the Tamil United Liberation Front — TULF) lies in these three criteria presented by Edison. The TULF leaders and other rebel groups (TELO, PLOTE, EPRLF and later EPDP) all had ‘liberation of Eelam’ as their prime motto in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Because they lacked common sense to a higher degree, they allowed themselves to be manipulatable puppets of the Indian Intelligence-*wallahs*. Also, due to lack of intelligence, they came to forfeit the much-vaunted ‘stick-to-it-iveness’ attitude which Pirabhakaran showed in abundance. Pirabhakaran also endeared himself to his followers, by the third ingredient in Edison’s formula for success — hard work. As is evident for anyone, ‘hard work’ cannot be purchased like military hardware in global arms bazaar or granted like a degree certificate by any university following payment of tuition fees and completing the course work.

Like Edison, Pirabhakaran was (and still is) an innovator par excellence, as one could see from the battles he had fought so far. Like Mao Ze Dong, he also has grasped the skill of when to retreat and when to attack for maximum gain. He has been a thinker and tinkerer in military tactics. Raising an army from zero point and continuing to maul his opponent who outspends his outfit by 25 to 40-fold, demands intelligence of exceptional caliber. Pirabhakaran’s adversaries may boast of training from Sandhurst (UK), West Point (USA), India, Pakistan, Malaysia and Israel. But one should marvel, how he is adopting to changing circumstances by using adventurous plans. “No plan survives the first five minutes encounter with the enemy” is a well known military dictum of Prussian field-marshal Helmuth von Moltke (1800–1891). But the success rate of Pirabhakaran’s plans are higher than his adversaries. Like great military minds, he also possesses the ability to learn from mis-steps and defeats.

3

Learning from Mistakes

IF THERE IS one attribute which consistently has helped Pirabhakaran in his climb to success, one can say that he possesses the sixth sense in learning from the mistakes of self and rivals, so as to switch them into benefits for his group. Legendary chess champions and other great sportsmen like Muhammad Ali and Michael Jordan were blessed with this skill. There is no disagreement that during the past two decades, Pirabhakaran has made a few mistakes. He himself has acknowledged openly to a couple of these. Before I present Pirabhakaran’s acknowledged mistake, some general thoughts on mistakes are not irrelevant.

No sane human can brag that he or she is immune from mistake in his or her life. This is particularly true for leaders. A true military leader learns from his mistakes before it becomes costlier in terms of lives and limbs. This learning from the mistake is what contributes to the resilience and what makes or breaks a leader’s hold on his followers. On mistakes and leadership, the view of Isoroku Yamamoto, the legendary Admiral who led Japan to her early military successes in the Second World War, is worth to ponder.

“A man of real purpose puts his faith in himself always. Sometimes he refuses even to put his faith in the gods. So from time to time he falls into error. This was often true of Lincoln. But that doesn’t detract from his greatness. A man isn’t a god. Committing errors is part of his attraction as a human being; it inspires a feeling of warmth toward him, and so admiration and devotion are aroused. In this sense, Lincoln was a very human man. Without this quality, one can’t lead others. Only if people have this quality can they forgive each other’s mistakes and help each other.”¹

At least three causes can be attributed to any mistake; namely, inexperience, incompetence and vanity. Also, self protection (or in the case of a leader, protection of his group from adversaries) can be a fourth vital cause for mistakes. Children and teenagers make mistakes mainly due to inexperience. That’s why they receive guidance from elders (parents and teachers) in the society. Adults make mistakes mainly due to incompetence and vanity.

A leader whose mistakes result from vanity can be expected to lose his or her leadership status sooner than later. Amirthalingam’s tactical mistakes between 1977 and 1983 in his deals with the then ruling UNP, as well as

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India’s Intelligence operatives, propelled the next generation of Eelam Tamils into the leadership stakes. Here is an example of how Pirabhakaran gained from the mistakes of his rivals (Uma Maheswaran and Sri Sabaratnam) for the Eelam leadership in mid 1980s, while living in Madras. This was in relation to the bond he came to develop with MGR, who was then the popular and powerful Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. According to Narayan Swamy,

“...Nobody could surmise what their relationship was like. ‘It was some chemistry’, said Panrutti S. Ramachandran, MGR’s hatchet man on Sri Lanka. And the relationship lasted almost until MGR’s death in December 1987, even after the IPKF cracked down on the LTTE. Others in Madras thought MGR saw in Prabhakaran the replica of the big screen hero that he himself was, fighting for a just cause. But there were two other factors to the MGR-Prabhakaran bonhomie. And they had to do with TELO supremo Sri Sabarattinam and PLOT’s Uma.”

“Sri, in contrast to Prabhakaran, moved close to Karunanidhi, hailing him and privately rebuking MGR. His belief that TELO was New Delhi’s favourite and so could get away with murder possibly led him to commit this political sacrilege. It was also at Sri’s initiative that he, Pathmanabha and Balakumar called on Karunanidhi after the formation of the ENLF in April 1984.”

“Uma, on the other hand, began as a MGR favourite. They were so close at one point after the 1983 riots that MGR would publicly put his arms over Uma’s shoulders while talking to him, as if they were long lost chums. But Uma fell out because of his close links with S. D. Somasundaram, an AIADMK leader who by the middle of 1984 had rebelled against MGR. Uma disregarded advice from colleagues that he should avoid getting involved in Tamil Nadu politics and maintain a distance from Karunanidhi. Uma’s aversion to Mohan Das, the police officer, also proved to be his undoing. The Tamil Nadu police naturally turned against Uma. The eclipse of Sabarattinam and Uma eventually helped Prabhakaran to become MGR’s favourite.”

2

One can infer a couple of salient facts. In mid-1980s, Pirabhakaran was on par with Uma Maheswaran and Sri Sabaratnam for the leadership contest among Tamil rebels. The ‘make or break point’ came from how each of these three aspirants for Eelam leadership projected their personalities to MGR. The mistakes made by Uma Maheswaran and Sri Sabaratnam were that they were hastily tilting towards S. D. Somasundaram (then a senior leader of AIADMK who was becoming a thorn to MGR) and Karunanidhi respectively. In 1984, MGR suffered a serious, debilitating stroke, and in hindsight one can note that Uma Maheswaran and Sri Sabaratnam were framing their plans for the post-MGR scenario. Opposingly, Pirabhakaran was more closer in MGR’s orbit. Luck and providence made MGR to live for another three years, while holding

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the rank of the chief ministership, which permitted growth and sustenance for LTTE. Thus, incompetence resulting from lack of intelligence (as proved by their servile reliance on India’s Intelligence operatives) and vanity cost much to Uma Maheswaran and Sri Sabaratnam, and they lost the battle of Eelam leadership to Pirabhakaran. Now, to Pirabhakaran’s acknowledged mistake — the 1991 Battle of Elephant Pass.

1991 BATTLE OF ELEPHANT PASS

The seeds for the success of capturing the Elephant Pass by LTTE in 2000 were sown in the 1991 Battle of Elephant Pass. Edward Desmond covering the outcome of this battle for the *Time* magazine had observed:

“Elephant Pass may one day be remembered as the key battle in the long-running war of the Tamil Tigers to gain an independent homeland in Sri Lanka. But for which side? After 24 days of fighting, last July, government troops carried the day, but the Tigers’ defeat only hardened support among the island’s Tamils for the fanatical guerrilla fighters who refuse to give up the struggle. If nothing else, the battle of Elephant Pass marked a new level of fury in a war that has already claimed 18,000 lives and is likely to take many more.

For eight years the Tigers had kept the armies of Sri Lanka — and, between 1987 and 1990, India — at bay with the classic guerrilla tactics of ambush and evasion. Two months ago, they tried something new: a conventional assault on a well-entrenched army of detachment at the head of Elephant Pass, a narrow *2km* stretch of dunes and marsh that connects the Sri Lankan mainland to the Jaffna Peninsula, a Tiger homeland. The guerrillas intended to overrun the base and regain control of the causeway, a decision that gave the army a rare opportunity to fight the elusive Tigers in the open, where its artillery and attack helicopters could be better used.

The battle lasted more than three weeks. Despite months of preparation, the Tigers failed to capture the army base. In the end they withdrew; at least 564 of them had died. Nearly 200 government troops were also killed. . . . The Tigers prepared meticulously for the assault on Elephant Pass. For nearly a year, under cover of darkness, they dug trenches leading up to the barbed wire-encircled compound. They dotted the surrounding landscape with bunkers built of railroad ties and sandbags to shield themselves against artillery fire, even set up some fake outposts complete with uniformed dummies. Facing the formidable challenge of crossing the open terrain, the guerrillas turned bulldozers and tractors into armored cars by covering them with steel plates. They deployed antiaircraft guns, mortars and a homemade rocket system that could hurl a *50kg* device *1000m*. . . . When the assault began on July 10, nearly 3,000 Tiger fighters, including 500 women, surged through the trenches, firing their AK-47s and rocket-propelled grenades at the base;

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though outgunned, the besieged soldiers fought back. Heavy Tiger anti-aircraft fire prevented helicopters from landing in the camp to drop supplies and take away the wounded; a sergeant major turned surgeon, amputating the limbs of injured troopers by following radioed instructions.

The garrison was losing ground when the government made a daring decision. Naval units landed 8,000 fresh troops on a beachhead 10 km from the base. Under fire from the moment it hit the beach, the relief column sometimes covered less than 500 m a day as the Tigers tried desperately to stop it by mounting headlong charges. ‘It was amazing how they came at us in waves’, recalls Brigadier Vijaya Wimalaratne, an officer with the amphibious force. After 24 days the relief troops reached the camp and broke the siege.”³

According to Desmond,

“Vilupillai Prabhakaran, the leader of the Tigers, told *TIME* that his assault failed because his forces could not move food and ammunition to the front owing to heavy strafing by helicopter gunships and fixed-wing planes. The Tigers’ armored bulldozers proved too slow or bogged down in the sand. Key commanders were lost early on. Prabhakaran admitted he failed to anticipate the amphibious landing but claimed that the Tigers had won a moral victory. ‘We have shown the world that we have evolved from a guerrilla force to one that can fight a conventional war with a modern army’, he said. ‘We learned the logistical problems of conventional war. Now we can fight future battles better’.”⁴

In chapter 2, the view of Emory Bogardus emphasizing the importance of followers in strengthening the leadership was presented. How the followers react to a mistake by the leader also can topple a weak leader. But Pirabhakaran’s strength lies in moulding strong followers in his group. The lack of success in the 1991 Battle of Elephant Pass did not deflate Pirabhakaran’s followers. According to the same *Time* magazine’s report,

“In Jaffna last week, the guerrillas appeared unaffected by the setback. In a hospital ward where 60 young women lay recuperating from wounds, the atmosphere was cheerful. Said Sumathi, 16, who lost her right leg in battle: ‘All I want is to get an artificial leg so that I can get back to the field. If I stay home, how will we get Eelam [the independent Tamil homeland]’.... Says Varadan, 16, a guerrilla recruit: ‘It is better to die fighting than wait in the village to be picked up and tortured to death’.”

Desmond closed his report with a pithy sentence, “The Sri Lankan army may have the momentum, but the war is far from over.” As anticipated by him, the battles which followed the 1991 Battle of Elephant Pass proved that Pirabhakaran learnt from his mistakes. This was no mean achievement.

Chapter 3. Learning from Mistakes

LESSONS FROM THE POWER OF SILENCE

Mahatma Gandhi was a master in using silence as an effective weapon in his freedom campaign against the British imperialism. Not many have realized why Gandhi began his ‘vow of silence’. A study of Dalal’s reference work provides some clues. He notes, under the date 1921 Feb. 7,

“Probably from this day MKG [referring to Mahatma Gandhi by initials] began to observe Monday as silence day, with three exceptions: (a) when he was in mortal danger, and speaking would render aid, (b) when somebody else was in danger and speaking would render aid, and (c) when Viceroy or similar dignitary called speaking was necessary. Silence usually started at 3:00 pm on Sunday and lasted for 24 hours; but time could be altered to suit needs.”⁵

The latter half of the last sentence is thought-provoking; “time could be altered to suit needs.” It is not wrong to infer that Gandhi developed this new method to prevent leaks of his plans to his adversaries via the blabber mouths surrounding him. He was shrewd enough to realize that British rulers were trying to outsmart him by planting spies in various garbs. When one studies the specific dates in Dalal’s chronology of Gandhi’s activities, one can trace a trend that whenever Gandhi was scheduled for campaigns or for some discussions with his lieutenants like Nehru or for negotiations with his adversaries, he had observed his ‘vow of silence’. Of course, he duped the gullible media-vultures by telling some eccentric reasons for his ‘vow of silence’. Developing this ‘wall of impenetrability’ by a simple but eloquent method was Gandhi’s style of tackling the ‘intelligence arm’ of his adversaries.

Pirabhakaran also had grasped the significance of Gandhi’s ‘vow of silence’ in building up his army. He rarely makes himself accessible to media-vultures and gossip mongers. This is another variant which distinguished him from the leadership of Amirthalingam. The TULF leader lost his credibility by ‘opening his mouth’ to literally everyone (UNP leadership, SLFP leadership, ever-present ‘western diplomats’ in Colombo some of whom were operatives of the Intelligence Agencies, media-vultures in India and Sri Lanka, the RAW and other Intelligence operatives of India) thereby compromising the cards he held in the roulette game of politics. Amirthalingam would have thought that by talking, he was carrying out effective propaganda for the Tamil cause. But he was not intelligent enough to realize that those who were listening to him had their own agendas. Contrastingly, Pirabhakaran became a keen student of Gandhi in applying the ‘vow of silence’ to his support his other maneuvers. Thus, he is castigated as ‘reclusive’ by the media-vultures who feast on the verbal muck of publicity-seeking politicians.

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ANTI-ORATORY LEADERSHIP

Pirabhakaran has been called many things by his adversaries, but ‘orator’ is not one. Pirabhakaran is not an orator. Period. This is one of his virtues, which flies on the face of his critics who compare him to Hitler. One of the hallmarks of Hitlerism is mass-manipulating oratory. Chaplin parodied this Hitler behaviorism eloquently in his first talkie, ‘*The Great Dictator*’, showing how microphones curl and dance with every utter and grunt emanating from Hitler’s demoniacal mouth. Those who had this gift of Hitler and who made much political hay in Sri Lankan platforms and parliament were undoubtedly, padre Bandaranaike (in mid-1950s) and Premadasa (from 1970s to early 1990s). These two politicians, in reality, can be cast as Hitler-imitating-types in the 20th century Sri Lanka. Comparisons of the political careers of padre Bandaranaike and Premadasa to that of Hitler deserves some attention and it will be dealt subsequently in a later chapter. In being a non-orator, Pirabhakaran is in league with the calm and composed S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, the venerated Tamil leader for two decades (1956–1977).

Tamils in India and Eelam had enjoyed tub-thumping oratory of their political leaders for decades. Oratory is an important art form, which has value in society. But the downfall of Tamils in political arena came when, politicians came to be praised as leaders solely due to their oratorical skills. Pirabhakaran broke this viscious trend by his silence and reclusive habit. As a consequence, Tamils and non-Tamils came to place much significance in every word he uttered in his annual Heroes Day Speech, delivered in November.

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Humor in anti-Pirabhakaran polemics

DAYAN JAYATILLEKA (the son of journalist Mervyn de Silva), a voluble commentator on Sri Lankan politics, was piqued by Pirabhakaran’s use of ‘flame’ metaphor to pay homage to his fallen followers. In a commentary entitled, ‘The missing pages of the Prabhakaran’s messages’, he commented on the Year 2000 Heroes Day speech of Pirabhakaran, as follows:

“...Any student of Nazism would recognize the hypnotic use of the flame, the torches. *‘When I light the flame in the memory of our heroes, in these burning flames, in the unusual fire dance, I see a vision. Shining like the light thousands of human flames like a river of fire, shedding light, and leading the way...’*. this could have come from a speech of Adolph Hitler at a torch-light parade in Nuremberg — the thousands of ‘human flames’ being Prabhakaran’s original contribution, advertent to the self-immolation by the black Tiger suicide bomber...”¹

Dayan Jayatilleka’s gripe was that, Pirabhakaran has used the words ‘flame’ or ‘torch’ in his Heroes Day speech and thus it reflects his Nazi mentality. Little did he know that the ‘flame’ metaphor is popular in the vocabulary of freedom fighters.

An eminent opponent of Nazism who answered to the name of Charles de Gaulle had used this ‘flame’ metaphor in his famous resistance speech, delivered in the summer of 1940 in London. Gen. de Gaulle, who escaped to Britain to organize the Free French Movement and was sentenced to death in absentia by a French court rallied his fighters with the words,

“...I, General de Gaulle, now in London, call on all French officers and men who are present on British soil, or maybe in the future, with or without their arms; I call on all engineers and skilled workmen from the armaments factories who are at present on British soil, or may be in the future, to get in touch with me. Whatever happens, the flame of French resistance must not and shall not die.”²

Also, Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s freedom fighter, in his memorable August 1947 ‘*A Tryst with Destiny*’ speech, also has used the ‘torch’ metaphor

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eloquently.

“... On this day our first thoughts go to the architect of this freedom, the Father of our Nation (Gandhi), who, embodying the old spirit of India, held aloft the torch of freedom and lighted up the darkness that surrounded us. . . . We shall never allow that torch of freedom to be blown out, however high the wind or stormy the tempest. Our next thoughts must be of the unknown volunteers and soldiers of freedom who, without praise or reward, have served India even unto death. . . .” ³

Not only freedom fighters, even John F. Kennedy , who signaled a youthful generational switch in American leadership used the ‘torch’ metaphor in his 1961 Presidential Inaugural address. Study the following segment of Kennedy’s speech, written by his speech writer Ted Sorenson.

“... We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans, born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage, and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of these human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world. . . .” ⁴

Then, 30 months later, Martin Luther King Jr. began his now-famous ‘I have a Dream’ speech, also with the ‘flame’ metaphor as follows:

“Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity. . . .” ⁵

In sum, the above four examples of notable speeches made by de Gaulle, Nehru, Kennedy and Martin Luther King reveal two facts. One is the bilious and phony scholarship of analysts like Dayan Jayatilleka which pollutes the press in Sri Lanka. Secondly, though Pirabhakaran is not an orator, his use of ‘flame’ metaphor in dedicatory speeches has precedence and nothing to be ashamed of.

For the past few years, projecting Pirabhakaran as a ‘Hitler’ in the Sri Lankan media has become a pastime for Dayan Jayatilleka and other equally vociferous Sinhalese analysts such as H. L. D. Mahindapala and Nalin de Silva. Another excerpt from a Jayatilleka’s published critique entitled, ‘The Tamil National Question Revisited: The Package and Globalisation’ stated as follows:

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“... In science, we draw certain conclusions if an experiment repeatedly failed, with disastrous results. Negotiations were not the answer to Adolf Hitler. Then why should it be the answer to South Asia’s Hitler, Velupillai Prabhakaran?... The convergence of Zionism and Eelamism constitutes a vital link. It was V. Karalasingham in his *‘The Way Out for the Tamil Speaking People’* who first alerted us to this tendency. Twenty years later, the MOSSAD dissident Viktor Ostrovsky unveiled the operational links between the Zionist military/intelligence apparatus and the LTTE. It has often been reported that the Boston’s Tamil Brahmins gained entree to Washington’s Beltway through the good offices of the famed Zionist organization the B’nai Brith...”⁶

That Jayatilleka’s polemics is based on spurious logic is evident by his comparison of Prabhakaran as ‘South Asia’s Hitler’ and simultaneously tagging the Tamils who live beyond the Sri Lankan borders as the ‘Tamil Zionist’ lobby. While Hitler and Zionists were opposed to each other in their goals, the irony of Jayatilleka’s oxymoronic equation revealed promptly his lacunae of the 20th century history. What is humorous about Jayatilleka’s polemics is that, even other Pirabhakaran haters among the Sinhalese do not take his thoughts seriously.

During the 2000 General Election campaign in Sri Lanka, a hilarious expose on Jayatilleka’s career was authored by Malinda Seneviratne of Sihala Urumaya group, with the caption, ‘Some mild thoughts on Dayan Jayatilleka’. Excerpts:

“Being a sycophant of Ranasinghe Premadasa, I suppose Dayan is obliged to say nice things about the man. Premadasa was the architect of the most violent period of our post-independence history. True the JVP is not as innocent as their spokesmen claim. I don’t know from which piece of Marxist literature Dayan found solace (if he was a sincere Marxist) during those times of defending Premadasa, but 60,000 people being tortured and killed during a person’s tenure as head of state is a far cry from a positive experience.... For the record, not a single Sinhalese is contesting from Jaffna from either the PA, the UNP or the JVP. If Prabhakaran proposed and carried out ethnic cleansing in Jaffna, these parties have effectively condoned it! The Sihala Urumaya did not only ‘pop up’ in Jaffna, we also campaigned. Which is a lot more than his old boss Varadarajah Perumal does in those areas, armed and under heavy guard though he is!...”⁷

PIRABHAKARAN — THE ‘POWER BUSTER’

As a country, Ceylon and its transmuted apparition, ‘Sri Lanka, from 1972’ had a lively existence from 1833 to 1983 — a total of 150 years. The currently existing Sri Lanka state was a creation of British colonialism, and the independent Ceylon [and later Sri Lanka] could hold only for 35 years. Since 1983,

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Sri Lanka as a state is in a comatose condition, near death. It is not an exaggeration to say that this comatose condition was the result of inept Sinhala political leadership of the nominal power holders. But Pirabhakaran’s role as a power buster in the nominal post-independent Sri Lanka is nonetheless a marked one.

To comprehend what is meant by me as a ‘power buster’, the concept of power, as analyzed by Bertrand Russell in his 1938 book *Power: A New Social Analysis* will be of help. In the introductory chapter, Bertrand Russell had stated:

“... The fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics. Like energy, power has many forms, such as wealth, armaments, civil authority, influence on opinion. No one of these can be regarded as subordinate to any other, and there is no one form from which the others are derivative. The attempt to treat one form of power, say wealth, in isolation, can only be partially successful, just as the study of one form of energy will be defective at certain points, unless other forms are taken into account. Wealth may result from military power or from influence over opinion, just as either of these may result from wealth. The laws of social dynamics are laws which can only be stated in terms of power, not in terms of this or that form of power.... Power, like energy, must be regarded as continually passing from any one of its forms into any other, and it should be the business of social science to seek the laws of such transformations. The attempt to isolate any one form of power, more especially, in our day, the economic form, has been, and still is, a source of errors of great practical importance...”⁸

After digesting Bertrand Russell’s interpretation of power, I realized that the concept of caste can be (and need to be) looked through the functional paradigm of power. This led to the following thoughts.

CLASSIFICATION OF POWER-BASED CASTEISM

Pirabhakaran remains the only individual to produce a sustained, vehement challenge to the existing power-based casteism of the Sri Lankan society. By casteism, I do not mean the structural caste differentiation of Hindus and Buddhists, as anointed in birth. In 1990s, I have described the functional paradigm of power-based casteism. Excerpts:

“When one views the human society in anthropological terms related to power distribution, it becomes apparent that the division of four *varunas* [the original Hindu term for caste] existed and still exists in all the human societies of five continents. In terms of power distribution, the members of any human society can be categorized under four groups, which are roughly equivalent to the four *varunas* of Hindus. These are,

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1. power holders (royalty in good old days, but heads of state and their coterie)
2. power sharers (military commanders and members of the Intelligence Agency of every nation)
3. power peddlers (bureaucrats, media moguls, chief executive officers of business enterprises and mafia bosses)
4. powerless (ordinary citizens)

These four castes exist in almost all nations, irrespective of the political system (democratic or socialist or dictatorial) that is practised. Even in the so-called ‘classless societies’ promulgated by Lenin and Mao, these four castes existed. The Politbureau members, who owned dachas, were the power holders. The generals representing the armed forces and the top echelon officers of the KGB belonged to the power sharing caste. The editors of the now-disgraced Pravda newspaper represented the power peddling caste. Majority of the peasants represented the powerless caste. Power holders, when pushed from their pedestals (due to palace plotting) become power peddlers. Thatcher and Gorbachev are good examples of this transformed caste, who join the lecture circuit and earn a quick buck by other deals such as syndicated columns and book publishing...”⁹

One can illustrate the functional paradigm of caste classification in Sri Lanka as follows:

POWER-HOLDING CASTE

Taken as a whole, the power-based four caste system has prevailed and still prevails in Sri Lanka. Those who belonged (and belong) to the power-holding caste, which nominally switches between the UNP and SLFP, have come to realize the damage Pirabhakaran has caused as a power buster. Within 15 years, the ‘Sri Lanka’ has been separated into ‘cleared zone’ and ‘non-cleared zone’. Pirabhakaran, by raising an army to challenge the existing *status quo*, has dissected the power base held by the power-holding caste. Now, the writ of the nominal power holder doesn’t float in the ‘non-cleared zone’ of Sri Lanka. For this, the power-holding caste places the blame covertly on the power sharing caste — the military.

POWER-SHARING CASTE

As one would expect, the power-sharing caste (military hierarchy in Sri Lanka) has a professional antipathy to Pirabhakaran. During the past 25 years, the list of Sri Lankan army commanders who have tried to capture Pirabhakaran ‘alive or dead’ is long indeed — D. S. Attygalle, J. E. D. Perera, T. I. Weeratunge, G. D. G. N. Seneviratne, H. Wanasinghe, L. D. C. E. Waidyaratne, G. H. de Silva, R. de S. Daluwatte, C. S. Weerasooriya, and L. P. Balagalle. The tenures of

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each of these honchos at the top military hierarchy have been relatively brief. Why they have failed in their prime mission (as of now) should tell something about the strength of Pirabhakaran.

Being a military tactician, Pirabhakaran also knows that, despite all the outwardly expressed pleasantries, bouquets and medals of honor, the power-holding caste do not trust the power-sharing caste completely. Why? Power is such an aphrodisiac according to Kissinger dictum, that given appropriate inducement and push, the power-sharing caste may try to dislodge the power-holding caste from the throne, *a la* Gen. Zia ul Haq and Gen. Pervez Musharraf. This could be one reason why the retiring generals of the rump Sri Lankan state are continuously being posted to other countries as ambassadors — so that they are kept away from the networks of power in Colombo. The history according to the Sri Lankan army’s website, conveniently hides the unsuccessful army coups attempted by the past uniformed officers in 1962 and 1966. In the Sri Lankan army’s dictionary, unappetizing truths (even if they have become part of island’s history) has to be selective and hidden from exposure.

POWER-PEDDLING CASTE

The role played by the power-peddling caste has been presented by two insiders of this caste, namely Mervyn de Silva and Ajith Samaranayake. Here are their observations.

“... When democratic leaders are in trouble, mavericks, rogue-operators and the covert agencies come into their own. One of their favourite instruments is the media, to whip up passions, to create confusion, to send wrong signals to increase tension. Wittingly or unwittingly, the politician, the journalist and foreign correspondent, the diplomat and the businessman are co-opted...”

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Mervyn de Silva made this observation at the height of the ‘anti-Premadasa plot’ initiated by Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake. While Mervyn de Silva was subtle and protective of his links to power, Ajith Samaranayake commenting on the same phenomenon six years later was more explicit.

“... One of the most striking phenomena of the last two decades has been the emergence of the mass media, not merely in its traditional role as the purveyors of information and opinion, but in its own right as a player in the political arena... Those who once reported on the comings and goings of politicians from behind the foot lights have today come to the centre stage and delight in the narcissistic pleasure of watching their own images in the columns of newspapers and on the tube and hearing their own voices over

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the air. . . . It was for the Wijewardenes and the Gunasenas to engage in the self-indulgence of thinking themselves as the kingmakers. Today, however, at many levels journalists themselves share the same fantasy. . . . The incestuous nature of the Sri Lankan elite is such that these families have interlocking political interests sometimes supported by familial ties. . . .”¹¹

While reading Samaranayake’s description of ‘delight in the narcissistic pleasure of watching their own images’, one could easily think of N. Ram of the Chennai *Hindu* group publishers, as one belonging to this power-peddling caste. In Colombo, Ram’s contemporaries of this caste were Dayan Jayatilaka and Mahindapala, who lost their access to power due to the fall of their power-holding patrons. Once this happens, the members of this caste reposition themselves to prostitute their saleable skill to the new power-holders. Not only journalists, even politicians like M. H. M. Ashraff, Douglas Devananda and Neelan Tiruchelvam can be included in this caste.

POWERLESS CASTE

The *Island* (Colombo) newspaper in May 2001 presented a brief news item with the caption, ‘Kins of missing servicemen hold *satyagraha* tomorrow’. According to this news item, the Association of Relatives of Servicemen Missing in Action is 1,800-member strong. Mr. E. P. Nanayakkara serves as this association’s president. The *Island* stated,

“Nanayakkara revealed that he met the [Norwegian] ambassador and Erik Solheim, responsible for the peace effort. Nanayakkara said that he pleaded with the Norwegians to go ahead with their efforts despite opposition by a small group of people. Those who talk of war and collect signatures demanding an all out military campaign against the LTTE have not sent their loved ones to the front. ‘Some of them have not gone beyond Anuradhapura in the recent past’, he said adding that he has received several invitations from the LTTE to visit Wanni to discuss the fate of the missing. But, the government has not so far given approval for him to meet with the LTTE, he said.”¹²

Mr. Nanayakkara and his group represents the fourth and the last, powerless caste. Among the Sinhalese, quite a segment of the powerless caste do not hold any grudge against Pirabhakaran and LTTE. In fact, they even covertly admire the actions of Pirabhakaran who stands up to the power-holding caste among the Sinhalese. It was a fact that when LTTE fought against the Indian army, quite a number of Sinhalese (including those who occupied lower ranks in the Sri Lankan army) vicariously supported Pirabhakaran, since he and LTTE courageously stood up to the bullying of Indian army.

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A QUANTUM OF TRUTH FROM DAYAN JAYATILLEKA

Infrequently, even Dayan Jayatilleka is capable of presenting vignettes of truth, which can explain some of Pirabhakaran’s actions. Jayatilleka served as a minister in the North-East Provincial Council between December 1988 and June 1989, under Varadaraja Perumal of EPRLF. Ten years later, he presented his impressions on why LTTE went to war with the Indian army. Excerpts:

“... Many writers, Sri Lankan and Indian, have written at length on the resistance to the implementation of the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord of July 1987, and even steps of actual sabotage on the part of the Government of India and the LTTE. This is only a part, perhaps the overwhelmingly larger part of the story, but not the complete one. There were at least three other elements or factors, which contributed to the actual outbreak of war between the LTTE and the IPKF on 10 October 1987. ...

The first was the Peoples Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), which upon re-induction to Sri Lanka following the Accord and the IPKF deployment, initiated a campaign of serial assassinations of Tiger cadres — a course of action that could be termed pre-emptive, if one were charitably inclined. This course of sustained assassinations provided the Tigers with the excuse to re-arm on a significant scale, picking up their recently cached automatic weapons and perhaps more importantly, prompting an influential number of Tamil people to sympathise with the LTTE’s refusal to disarm.

The second element was Varadharajah Perumal, the future Chief Minister of the North-East Provincial Council, whose accurate reading of the fascist character of the LTTE led him to the strategic conclusion that a situation must be created in which the IPKF would fight the LTTE. He was to opt for a strikingly similar strategy later, in relation to the Sri Lankan state and the IPKF. Perumal was not the leader of the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Front (EPRLF), but in the aftermath of the Accord, it was he who represented the organization in Colombo which entailed the all important liaison with the Indian High Commission and the Colombo government-cum-security apparatus.

The next element that contributed, this time unwittingly, to the unraveling of the Accord was the Indian High Commission itself led by the formidable High Commissioner Mani Dixit. . .”¹³

While discarding the anti-LTTE barbs of Jayatilleka, his observations — though open secrets to Eelam Tamils — give credence to some vital decisions made by Pirabhakaran to protect LTTE and defend the morale of Eelam Tamils. Also, his comments about Pirabhakaran’s Sudumalai speech made in August 1987 is worth quoting.

“... Contrary to the views of the prejudiced, Prabhakaran’s speech at Sudumalai was not a declaration of intent to undermine the Accord. It was a

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perfectly positioned, tensely poised statement accurately reflecting the diminished space that the man found himself in, a temporary lack of balance but considerable determination and focus to get out of the trap. . . .”¹⁴

Also, the quantum of truth on the failure of Rajiv Gandhi-Jayewardene Peace Pact of 1987, as presented by Jayatilleka in 1998 (after the deaths of both Rajiv Gandhi, Gamini Dissanayake and J. R. Jayewardene) is revealing.

“Gamini Dissanayake, a senior Cabinet Minister and the strongest supporter of the [Gandhi-Jayewardene] Accord in Sri Lankan politics, was ironically, one of those who helped undermine it. Dissanayake’s sponsorship or patronage of the Welis Oya settlement, on the border between the North Central Province, and the Trincomalee district, in the very aftermath of the signing of the Accord, clearly went against its spirit — though he told this writer in 1988 that it was done after Rajiv Gandhi was informed and without any objections from him. The Welis Oya settlement effectively cut off any territorial link between the Northern and Eastern Province on Sri Lanka’s Eastern coastline. . . .”¹⁵

One has to be impressed by Jayatilleka’s candor [he being a Premadasa protégé!] in accusing Gamini Dissanayake as one of the culprits who undermined the Rajiv Gandhi-Jayewardene Accord of 1987.

PIRABHAKARAN — THE MORALE-BOOSTER

Morale is one ingredient which Pirabhakaran contributed (and still contributes) to Tamil nationalism in abundant proportions. Before presenting my analysis on how Pirabhakaran became the morale-booster for Eelam and Indian Tamils, some generally understood facts about morale from the scholarship of Emory Bogardus is worth a look. Morale — or lack of it by the Sri Lankan armed forces — has been much talked about in the Sri Lankan mass media in the 1990s. But none has referred to the contributions of Bogardus. In his 1941 paper, Bogardus noted two specific examples of what happened in France and China, during the second half of 1930s. Excerpts:

“In war the main aim seems to be to break the morale of the enemy. The crumbling of France in June 1940 is a notorious case in point. France had soldiers, fortifications, munitions; but her morale was shattered, and she surrendered. What was the situation? For years France has had too many opinions, too much partisanship, too many economic and political schisms, and too little national morale. One group of people in power, no matter what group, was always attacked viciously by two or three other groups not in power. . . .

In China the main immediate aim of the Japanese military has been to break the morale of the Chinese. The repeated heavy bombing of Chungking has

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had as its main objective the destruction not of people and buildings so much as that of morale. These persistent bombings with their terrible destruction of life and maiming of human bodies are to be continued until ‘the spirit of resistance is broken’. Likewise, a major aim of the heavy bombing of London which began in September 1940 has been to break the morale of the English...”¹⁶

Pirabhakaran returned to Eelam from Tamil Nadu in January 1987. Only after his return to Eelam from Tamil Nadu, he metamorphosed into a real leader. Until then, he was a leader-apprentice. In a refreshing bid to challenge the power-holding caste which has been throttling the Eelam Tamils since 1956, Pirabhakaran followed the route of two Asian masters — Mao Ze Dong and Vo Nguyen Giap. He actively engaged the power-sharing caste which by 1970s had been converted into a 99 percent Sinhala-Buddhist enterprise. If the Sri Lankan military had reflected the population ratio of the country, Pirabhakaran would have found it difficult to gather his recruits and establish his army. Here again, the insecurity of the power-holding caste following the army coups of 1962 and 1966 turned into costly mistakes which Pirabhakaran was able to exploit as a power buster.

To quote Bogardus again, in relation to the leadership role and morale,

“...National morale is related to the confidence of the people in the nation’s leaders. This confidence depends on the ability of the leaders to achieve for the welfare and glory of the nation. If a leader can add to the nation’s place in the sun, many of his shortcomings will be overlooked.

Confidence in leadership is connected with the leader’s evident honesty and sincerity of purpose. This consideration is especially important in a democratic state. A leader is expected to make some mistakes; but if he tries to cover these up, if he fails repeatedly to admit them, or if he blames them on others, he loses the confidence that the people have placed in him, and national morale is weakened. On the other hand, if he says he will undoubtedly make some mistakes but will try to correct them, he inspires good will and builds morale.”¹⁷

Pirabhakaran’s return to Eelam in January 1987 showed to Tamils his sincerity of purpose towards his professed goal. To explain, how Pirabhakaran lifted the morale of Eelam Tamils during 1987, let me cite four facts recorded by Hoole *et al.* After Pirabhakaran’s return to Eelam,

- 1 “The government resumed aerial bombing of Jaffna on 7th of March.”¹⁸
- 2 “The Sri Lankan government commenced random shelling of the civilian population in Jaffna, together with aerial bombing on 22 April. One could hear shells falling in quick succession in widely separated places, usually around 6:30am and 6:30pm. Most would quickly take their families into the house or into a

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trench if they had one, and say their prayers. The aerial bombing was often off the mark. The Sri Lankan airforce tried four times to bomb an LTTE camp in Point-Pedro situated in the crowded market area, and finally finished the job with a bulldozer a month later, after taking over Vadamaratchi at the end of May. About a hundred civilians were killed upto 26 May as a result of the bombing and shelling.”¹⁹

- 3 “Worse than the ordinary aerial bombing was the use of so-called barrel bombs which were pushed out of Avro transports. These were crude devices which could not be aimed at specific targets, and consisted of a barrel of fuel padded with a rubber-like inflammable substance. On hitting the ground the fuel would explode. The molten padding would fly in all directions and stick to the skin of a victim and burn itself out. A large number of these were dropped on Valvettithurai (48 according to one count). Barrel bombs were also dropped at random in several other parts of the peninsula. One falling Sivan Kovil on K. K. S. Road, Jaffna town, claimed 17 victims. This seemed a sadistic extra without military purpose.”²⁰

- 4 “The Operation Liberation, coordinated by the then Minister of National Security — Lalith Athulathmudali— commenced on May 26, 1987.”²¹

Pirabhakaran’s response to the Operation Liberation campaign was immediately interpreted by his adversaries as one of defeat. But he basically was following the script, written fifty years previously by Mao. The motto song memorized by Mao’s Red Army extolled the logic of mobile warfare:

“Keep men, lose land; Land can be taken again. Keep land, lose men; Land and men both lost.”²²

Also, Pirabhakaran had to boost the morale of Eelam Tamils who were suffering from aerial bombing. The answer was delivered on July 5, 1987.

5

A Brando in the Battle Front

PIRABHAKARAN — A BRANDO IN THE BATTLE FRONT

IN HIS CONFESSIONAL autobiography ‘*One Man Tango*’, Hollywood legend Anthony Quinn had reminisced an anecdote about his talented contemporary Marlon Brando. What Pirabhakaran decided to carry out on July 5, 1987 at the Eelam battle front was in the same league of what Quinn saw in Brando, while acting in Elia Kazan’s drama troupe in New York. First to Quinn’s anecdote:

“Brando was an instant legend among our group. He flouted convention in *Streetcar [named Desire]* and in acting class — and from what I could gather, in the rest of his life as well. His improvisations in our Actors’ Studio sessions were prominent for the way he managed to mock the process and still do provocative work. Once, when he were asked to do a dance and freeze our poses at the clap of the instructor’s hands, Marlon wound up locked in a headstand. We were then supposed to do a bit based on our frozen postures, and when Marlon’s turn came he delivered his premise with deadpan seriousness.

‘I have a stomachache’ he announced to the rest of the class ‘and I’m standing on my head hoping I can pass it out of my mouth’. The others pretended at shock, but I thought the insult was marvelous. . . .”¹

I quote this passage from Anthony Quinn because the words and phrases used by him to describe Brando’s action are apt for Pirabhakaran’s action on July 5, 1987 as well. An ‘**instant legend**’ who ‘**flouted convention**’ ‘in the rest of his life’; ‘improvisation’ by which he ‘managed to mock the process and still do provocative work’ and ‘delivered his premise with deadpan seriousness’. If Pirabhakaran was a Brando, his peers and competing rivals to the Eelam leadership in mid-1980s (Uma Maheswaran, Sri Sabaratnam, Pathmanabha, Varadaraja Perumal and Douglas Devananda) turned out to be Rodney Dangerfields.

SUICIDE BOMBERS: A COUNTER-WEAPON FOR AERIAL TERROR

Hoole *et al.*, the authors of the *Broken Palmyra*, had observed: “During [the first half of] 1987, the Sri Lankan use of airpower had a deliberate vindictive

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purpose. Civilians were expected to get killed. Its main effect was to keep the LTTE shifting houses. . . .”²

One could infer, as pointed by Emory Bogardus [see, chapter 4] citing the examples of Japan’s Imperial Army’s bombing in China and Hitler’s bombing in London, that the main purpose of the aerial terror by the Sri Lankan army was to deplete the morale of Eelam Tamils. Pirabhakaran showed leadership skill to restore the battered morale by incorporating suicide bombing as an unique weapon of his LTTE army. Hoole *et al.* recorded that landmark event in the Eelam liberation war as follows:

“On July 5 [1987] the LTTE launched a suicide attack against the Sri Lankan army camp at Nelliady Central College. . . . Miller, a member of the LTTE’s new Black Tigers drove a van packed with explosives through the school gates into the front building. The government claimed that 20 of its soldiers died. Publicising its action through notice boards as a ‘great achievement’, the LTTE claimed 100 soldiers killed. Other sources said the government figure was much nearer the truth. . . .”³

Even if one accepts the government’s mortality figures, by that single daring penetration into the army camp, LTTE demonstrated that they had in possession one powerful counter weapon to the aerial terror perpetrated by the Sri Lankan army. Commenting on the suicide bomb attack, Hoole *et al.* inferred that, “with many people, the LTTE had redeemed its reputation after running away in the face of Operation Liberation. This again pointed to the fickleness of public opinion in Jaffna. . . .”⁴

One can very well argue whether the public opinion in Jaffna was fickle as painted by the anti-Pirabhakaran propagandists or more appropriately whether Hoole *et al.* lacked basic knowledge on military maneuvers to analyze the strategy adopted by Pirabhakaran. Since 1987, Pirabhakaran’s use of suicide bombers has been a staple for half-baked analyses of journalists, analysts and academics in Sri Lanka and India. Like prostitutes plying the same trade at different locations with varying degrees of make-ups for different customers, few analysts like Rohan Gunaratna earn their living by re-hashing the once written script in umpteen seminars and anti-LTTE pieces to the partisan press in Sri Lanka and India. Regarding the suicide bombers of LTTE, these ‘seminar papers’ are replete with details of ‘what’, ‘when’ and ‘how’. But, they do not describe or analyze ‘why’ the suicide bombers were incorporated in the LTTE army. First, I provide two examples of such analyses on LTTE’s suicide bombers.

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ROHAN GUNARATNA’S VIEW

Rohan Gunaratna told the same story, as provided by the authors of the *Broken Palmyra*, but the description of the motive and the number of casualties reported was 40. Excerpts:

“... The first LTTE suicide operation was conducted on July 5, 1987, to stall the advance of the Sri Lankan military to capture Jaffna town. An LTTE driver Wasanthan alias Captain Millar volunteered to drive a vehicle full of explosives into the makeshift army camp in Nelliady. Although the suicide operation was not the reason to abort the mission to capture Jaffna, the LTTE propaganda claimed that Captain Millar’s success of killing 40 soldiers in Nelliady frustrated the intentions of the government to recapture the heartland of the Tamils. The LTTE did not conduct suicide operations during the IPKF period but initiated a series of suicide attacks with the political assassination of Ranjan Wijeratne and Rajiv Gandhi in March and May 1991. These off the battlefield strikes were developed in Eelam War III, when the LTTE integrated suicide bombers into their land and sea fighting forces.

... The LTTE used suicide bombers to destroy the Joint Operations Command, the nerve centre of the Sri Lankan security forces; the Central Bank; the World Trade Centre; the sacred Temple of the Tooth Relic, the most hallowed Buddhist shrine in the world; and the oil storage installations in Kolonnawa. The LTTE also used suicide bombers to kill the navy chief Admiral Clancy Fernando, a Brigade commander of the Jaffna peninsula Brigadier Larry Wijeratne, and several others at the forefront of counter-insurgency operations. For instance, Chief Inspector Nilabdeen, the head of the anti-terrorism unit, in a suburban police station escaped with injuries, but Razeek, a former Tamil militant integrated to the army, was killed in May 1999...”⁵

Gunaratna, while providing information on ‘*what* (victims)’ and ‘*when*’ components related to the LTTE’s suicide bomb attacks, conveniently hides the ‘*why*’ component in the military story. However, he did concede that, “There are distinctions between the LTTE and Hamas suicide attacks. While all the LTTE suicide attacks were aimed at destroying a political, military, economic or religio-cultural target, the other groups used it as a tool of terror⁶.” Though Gunaratna attributed the assassination of Ranjan Wijeratne to an LTTE suicide bomber, other sources in Colombo and India have expressed differing conclusions. It cannot be denied that even if one agrees with Gunaratna’s opinion, LTTE’s consideration of Ranjan Wijeratne (who was then a ranking member of President Premadasa’s Cabinet) as a legitimate military target was no different from the position held by the American army regarding the elimination of Japan’s Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto in 1943.

Chapter 5. A Brando in the Battle Front

SABIL FRANCIS’S VIEW

Sabil Francis, a research scholar at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, observed:

“... Though the LTTE was founded in 1974, suicide bombing was only accepted as a tactic in the late 1980s. The first instance of a suicide bombing was on July 5, 1987, when Captain Miller of the LTTE Black Tigers drove a van full of explosives into a military camp at Nelliaddy. More than 128 soldiers were killed.

... What are the motivations of the Black Tigers, who regularly indulge in ‘Dry Runs’ that could terrify normal person? None of the classical theorists on guerrilla warfare like Mao, Lenin or Che have advocated suicide bombing. The only comparable instance are Islamic militants in the Middle East. Their ideology believes that they will go straight to heaven. The LTTE is officially atheist and the cadre, being Hindus, believe in reincarnation of the soul...”

7

Francis attributed the motivation of LTTE suicide attacks to “mass cult hysteria that the LTTE consciously cultivates by rituals” and “judicious use of symbols rooted in Tamil myth.” In my view, Francis had missed the woods for the trees. The LTTE led by Pirabhakaran came into existence in the post-Second World War period. Suicide bombing has to be considered as one of the arsenals he uses to annihilate his adversaries. He developed this counter-weapon to boost the morale of his troops he lead.

If classical theorists of guerrilla warfare like Lenin, Mao and Che have not advocated the use of suicide bombing, there are valid reasons. The circumstances faced by Lenin, Mao and Che Guevara differed markedly in Russia, China and Central-South America respectively. Lenin’s forces did not face aerial bombing in the first two decades of the 20th century. Che Guevara, though a brilliant theorist of guerrilla war, couldn’t succeed in the field (excluding Cuba) with his strategies. It may be true that Mao may not have employed suicide warriors against his adversaries, though this need verification from authentic Chinese sources. However, Mao had stressed strongly in his manual for guerrillas, that the success of a protracted war depends on taking factors into consideration which reveals the weaknesses of the enemy. However, Vo Nguyen Giap (who received guerrilla training in Yen-an, North China under Chinese communists in 1940) used suicide bombers in his confrontation with the French army in the early 1950s. To cite John Pimlott,

“... Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap were proponents of Mao Tse-tung’s theory of revolutionary war and to understand that it is to understand much of their success. Mao emphasized the factors of time, space and will in his

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writings; the revolutionary should trade space (territory) to gain time and use that time to mobilize the political will of the people. . . .

. . . Once the Viet Minh emerged from rural areas and tried to take their enemy on in open battle, however, French military superiority should have tilted the balance. Indeed, when Giap entered this phase too soon in 1951, his forces were roundly defeated at Vinh Yen, Mao Khe and Phat Diem by a combination of French defensive measures — prepared, entrenched positions surrounded by barbed wire and minefields — and superior weapons.

Giap’s favoured tactics were to send in small suicide squads to break through the defences and follow up with wave upon wave of infantry attackers. These tactics were countered in 1951 by artillery (often firing on to predicted target areas), machine guns, aerial strikes (particularly those using napalm) and, of equal importance, the tenacity of French defenders. But when these advantages were undermined, as at Dien Bien Phu where artillery was useless against Viet Minh positions in the surrounding hills, aerial supply and support was curtailed by the deployment of Chinese anti-aircraft weapons and French defences were weakened by a policy of encroaching entrenchment, the Viet Minh could, and did, prevail. The French were, in the final analysis, out-fought.”⁸

One cannot be sure whether Pirabhakaran would have checked military source-books like the one quoted above. Considering the deployment of suicide squads and ‘wave upon wave infantry attackers’ used in the battles by LTTE since 1987, it may not be wrong to infer that Pirabhakaran followed the steps of legendary Giap, in establishing a battalion of suicide warriors to counter the aerial terror perpetrated in Jaffna.

MERVYN DE SILVA’S OBSERVATION

Among the many commentators on Pirabhakaran, Mervyn de Silva had a good grasp in reading Pirabhakaran’s mind. He recognized Pirabhakaran for what he is; a different type of leader and a rarity in the South Asian politics. In 1990, when the cordial bonhomie between President Premadasa and Pirabhakaran came to a dead-end, Mervyn de Silva wrote the following perceptive commentary. Excerpts:

“... Mr. Prabhakaran, for he is a militarist, meaning a man who uses military means for political ends. And by military means, in this unconventional war, we do not mean set-piece battles. Creating chaos and division in the rear of the enemy is a military tactic. . . . Upto the IPKF’s pullout, the central concerns of President Premadasa and Mr. Prabhakaran converged. For different reasons, of course. The LTTE leader wanted the IPKF off his back and his men out of the jungle. President Premadasa wanted to disarm the ultra-nationalist JVP by grabbing its principal ideological-propagandist weapon what the JVP called ‘Occupying Hanuman (monkey) Army’.

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After that, politics took command for both. This meant for Prabhakaran, ‘Eelam’ ideally, or regional autonomy as close as possible to an independent state. Before that he would like things done — such as the repeal of the 6th Amendment, which makes the espousal of any separatist cause, illegal. More symbolic than anything else but yet it is also a test of the government’s (and the Sinhala-dominated Parliament’s) *bona fides*.

And then, the Provincial Council — its dissolution followed by elections. Both have been delayed. And a condition laid down — surrender of arms before the polls. In his eyes, delays, conditions, uncertainties. So, he decides to do something about it, a warning to the government, to the Sinhala Establishment, perhaps even to his own negotiators. Start a fight, which is what he knows best. By this, he can also achieve something else — have his raw, teenage recruits bloodied, test the responses and fighting skills of the Sri Lankan security forces.”⁹

This above assessment of why Pirabhakaran ended his truce with President Premadasa was faultless. Premadasa was also a politician with ‘fire-in-the-belly’ and ‘street-smart’ toughness. In the same issue of the *Lanka Guardian*, following his commentary, Mervyn de Silva had printed the answers provided by Premadasa’s then lieutenant Ranjan Wijeratne. After a passage of 14 years, the pomposity shown by Wijeratne is worth a revisit.

RANJAN WIJERATNE’S INCOMPLETE MISSION

The seven-part question directed at Minister Wijeratne was as follows:¹⁰

1. Whether the government has promised the LTTE not to move out its forces without notifying the LTTE?
2. If so promised, who was responsible for ordering the said soldiers to move out, thereby subjecting them to injuries?
3. From this incident it is clear that the LTTE maintains illegal checking points in the North and the East. Has the government empowered them to do so?
4. If no such power have been granted, will the government take steps to do away with these check points?
5. Will the government adopt legal action against the LTTE with regard to the said attack?
6. Will the government compensate those injured and the dependents of the killed?

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7. What steps will the government take to prevent the repetition of similar incidents?

Minister Ranjan Wijeratne was then in an euphoric phase, following his liquidation of JVP elites. His bombastic responses to the above questions were as follows:

1. I have given a pledge to get at their (the LTTE) necks.
2. The said troops were traveling from one point to another. The LTTE met them and opened fire. We have been making every effort to avoid bloodshed. At this stage I ask Amnesty International to follow the LTTE's doings and not to accuse us of genocide. Taking note of the LTTE's actions we will deal with them accordingly.
3. Now they are running with their shoes out. Very soon their pants will go too.
4. There will be no LTTE or watch posts soon.
5. We are not going to courts. We will use the barrel. That is what they use on us.
6. We will do that.
7. Flatten the LTTE.

This response by Ranjan Wijeratne was delivered in June 1990. Six months later, when the global attention was fixed on the Gulf War, the Sri Lankan army played its card in the Colombo's political table. The *Economist* magazine covering the scene in January 1991 observed:

“...Sri Lanka's generals began pressing to resume the fight once it became clear that the ceasefire was not sticking. For perhaps the first time, the army really flexed its political muscle. That, it seems, was decisive. The army says the Tigers are now vulnerable. They have been weakened by a clamp-down on their activities in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, from where they used to get much of their arms and fuel.

The army has been promising to wipe out the Tigers ‘within six months’ for at least the past five years. It has grown dramatically in size, from some 12,000 in 1984 to 60,000-plus today. But it is still fighting against a guerrilla force that most people think can hold out almost indefinitely. The Tigers still command a good deal of support in the north and east of the country, which may have been increased by the government's policy of bombing suspected guerrilla targets from the air. Sympathy for the Tigers, the government claims, is beginning to fade. It will have to fade much more before the Tigers' days are numbered...”¹¹

6

Violating the Seventh Commandment

PIRABHAKARAN DIDN’T receive any mention when Robert Holmes chronicled the Eelam society in his *Jaffna 1980* book. When Holmes was preparing his manuscript in Jaffna, Pirabhakaran was 25 years old. Writing about the Jaffna scene in 1979, Holmes had stated, “Support for Eelam in the original sense of an independent homeland for the Tamils has declined. In early 1979 the head of the TULF [Amirthalingam] announced the willingness of his party to consider proposals for regional autonomy ¹.” A few sentences on Tamil Tigers, written by Holmes state,

“...Tigers, of which almost nothing is known for certain but about which a vast amount has been speculated. Credited with all sorts of crimes in 1977 and 1978, especially the assassination of police officers and witnesses who helped the police, the Tigers in 1979 were blamed for the death of further policemen and witnesses. The Tigers were credited with enforcing a belief in the absolute desirability of Tamil Eelam in 1977 and 1978 but faith in Eelam certainly waned in 1979 in favour of local autonomy...” ²

JULIAN WEST’S *‘Passage to Jaffna’*

The after-effects of Valveddithurai bombing by the Sri Lankan armed forces in January 1991 was recorded by Julian West’s 3,080 word travelogue-essay ‘Passage to Jaffna’ in the *Asiaweek* magazine. It provided a well-balanced portrayal of how Pirabhakaran’s influence on Eelam Tamils had taken root, especially among the younger generation. It also included thumb-nail sketches of Malini and Nishanti, ‘the Tigresses, [who] represent the new Jaffna woman’. Excerpts:

“...At mid-day on Jan. 20 an airforce helicopter flew over the town, dropping leaflets warning people to move out within 48 hours. Three hours later, as people cowered in bunkers, the first bombers arrived. They were accompanied by helicopter gunships and shelling from Palali military base, 10 km away. That night, flares from naval vessels offshore lit up the town. Four days of continuous bombardment later, after more than 250 bombs had been dropped, Valveddithurai was virtually reduced to rubble...”

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In the last attack, 500 houses and two large schools were demolished and more than 100 other buildings, including two historic Hindu temples, were irreparably damaged. A Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) camp less than a kilometre away was untouched. Valveddithurai was one of the most densely populated towns in Sri Lanka. Ten thousand people lived in a 1.6 *km* coastal strip. The tightly packed houses collapsed onto each other like a pack of cards. Miraculously, only ten people were killed and 20 seriously injured. Forewarned by the leaflets and the first round of attacks, 90% of the population left for neighbouring villages. The rest hid in bunkers. Almost every house in Jaffna peninsula has one, which accounts for the relatively low mortality rate in recent bombings.

‘We have been attacked since 1984, so we’re quite used to it’, says Dr. K. Shanmugasunderam, head of the Valveddithurai Citizens Rehabilitation Committee, who recites statistics of destruction from his ‘mobile office’, a straw shopping bag.

Not much is left of Valveddithurai. . . . The destruction of the historic Sivan Kovil and Muttiramman temples, twin Siva and Shakti temples more than 200 years old, has offended the residents deeply. ‘How would you feel if a temple in your area was destroyed?’ asks Dr. Shanmugasunderam. ‘I cannot express it in words. But I feel it in my heart’

Valveddithurai people are intensely proud of their seafaring history. They are especially proud of having produced Mr. Prabhakaran, their ‘son’, and are vehemently pro-Tiger. ‘We have not lost our hearts, despite the massive destruction’, says Dr. Shanmugasunderam. . . . The army claims it only bombs known Tiger targets. But it admits that its aircraft — single-engine Siai Marchetti training planes, adapted to carry two bombs; Chinese Y-8s and Y-12s; and British Avros, small passenger planes from which homemade bombs are pushed out — do not permit accuracy. ‘We do not have the sort of equipment the Americans have’, says an army spokesman. ‘Ours is just look and see operation. However we sometimes wonder if it’s worth killing civilians just to get 20 terrorists’. The bombs — oil drums filled with gelignite or sometimes flammable gas and rubber tubes, which stick to the skin like napalm — have no ballistic stability. . . .

In a real sense, the LTTE is like a large family. Many Jaffna people have relatives in the Tigers, and call them ‘our boys’. Their monkish disciplines are admirable, if austere: no smoking, no drinking, no marriage until a certain age and number of years of service. They have revolutionized the role of women in Jaffna, giving them equality, as fighters, and striving to eliminate dowry and caste systems.

Malini and Nishanti, tiny but stocky Tigresses, represent the new Jaffna woman. Wearing combat fatigues, their hair tied up in braids — the regulation Tigress hairstyle — the two area leaders giggle, hold hands and clasp each other’s knees as we wheel down the road in a trishaw. They are shy of me — although they are the ones with the T-81 Chinese assault rifle. Both have

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received military training and fought the Sri Lankan army in several battles. Initially, they explain, girls were involved in political work, but six years ago they insisted women be allowed to fight. They were first given AK-47 and M-16 assault rifles. Later they carried heavy weapons like rocket-propelled grenade launchers, bazookas and machine guns.

Malini says she and fourteen other women halted the advance of Indian Peacekeeping Force troops on Jaffna town in October 1987. ‘We didn’t have uniforms then, so we were wearing skirts and blouses. The Indians didn’t notice us, although we were carrying guns. They thought we were just a group of young girls. I ordered the girls to lie down and from there we started firing’. Malini, 28, is postponing marriage. ‘Getting married and having children is not a problem. But so many of my sisters have died so I have a responsibility to continue the struggle’. So far 106 women Tigers have died in the war. Nishanti, 22, joined the LTTE in 1987. Like many Tigresses she ran away from home to join, knowing her parents would stop her. They had hoped she would go to university. ‘I joined not to fight against the enemy but to liberate myself’, says Nishanti. ‘I’m opposed to the dowry system. Now I wouldn’t accept a man who wanted a dowry. Although Tamil women can choose to work and be free, all these aspirations come to nothing in the end. Women are enslaved by traditional systems and male chauvinism’. As women guerillas, they experience unheard-of freedom.

Yet the Tiger’s domination of Jaffna society, often through fear — real or imagined — gives them a sinister complexion. . . . Still, support for the Tigers in Jaffna seems genuine, even fierce. Indiscriminate bombings and an economic blockade on the north have inevitably driven people into the Tigers’ arms. ‘Young people are still joining the LTTE’, says the exiled politician. ‘They feel if they are going to die anyway in bombing raids, they might as well fight for their rights’. Adds the lawyer: ‘I don’t see how the government can ever win back the confidence of people who feel so alienated. People from Jaffna feel the government has crossed a certain moral threshold which forfeits its right to claim the allegiance of those citizens’ . . .”³

VIOLATING THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

While Eelam was being subjected to aerial terror by the Sri Lankan army acting under the orders of the then Commander in Chief — President Premadasa and his second in command, Ranjan Wijeratne, the 41st American President George Bush was splitting hairs on the issue of how to tackle the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. Can the US government legally assassinate Saddam Hussein was a prime issue of discussion in the American media. Since this issue is pertinent to the Sri Lankan scene as well, because Pirabhakaran has been accused by his adversaries for violating the Seventh Commandment [*viz.* ‘Thou shall not kill’] the thinking of American policy makers on this controversial issue is worthy of note as well.

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A one-page commentary by George J. Church in the *Time* magazine, before the commencement of the Persian Gulf War in 1991 dealt with how the US policy makers viewed the situation of ordering a hit on Saddam Hussein. This presented to the world view of the makers of American agenda about violation of the Seventh Commandment. Excerpts:

“‘No person employed by or acting on behalf of the United States government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, assassination’. That policy has been affirmed by four successive Presidents — Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and George Bush — and enshrined in Executive Order 12333, issued in 1981 and still in effect. Within the Executive Branch, that order has the full force of law. So the US government could not legally kill Saddam Hussein, even if the dictator’s death would stave off or shorten a Middle East War. . . .

To begin with, what exactly is ‘assassination’? Since the Executive Order offers no definition, presumably standard general concepts would apply. The favorite definition of Russell Bruemmer, former general counsel of the CIA, is ‘the premeditated killing of a specifically targeted individual for political purposes’. He and others contend, however, that such killing is sometimes allowed under international law.

The obvious case is open war, in which anyone exercising command responsibility becomes a legitimate target. As unquestioned commander of the Iraqi armed forces, Saddam Hussein would presumably qualify as much as Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto did, whose plane was shot down by US pilots in 1943 in a premeditated, specifically targeted and quite legal killing.

How about an undeclared war? That raise the problem of the legitimacy of the war itself. Abraham Sofaer, former legal counsel to the State Department, and others advance this argument: Article 51 of the United Nations Charter recognizes the right of self-defense against armed attack, not only for the victim nation but also for others coming to its aid. Kuwait has appealed for help under Article 51, and the UN Security Council has in effect underwritten that appeal by passing resolutions condemning Iraq. Thus the US could legitimately strike Iraq and exercise all the rights of a belligerent, including the right to kill the enemy commander, Saddam. . . .

Late last year the Justice Department reviewed how the Executive Order might apply to US-supported coups. Its conclusions are secret. But former CIA counsel Bruemmer has publicly voiced an opinion that the order ‘does not prohibit US officials from encouraging and supporting a coup, even when there is a likelihood of violence and a high probability that there will be casualties among opponents of the coup’. So long as the US does not approve specific plans for the killing of individuals, he says, ‘the prohibition against assassination has not been violated’ . . .”⁴

The physical survival of Pirabhakaran into the 21st century should be attributed to his well-conceived protection protocols. Available records show

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[see, chapter 1] that the Indian army and Sri Lankan army had plotted to hit him fatally. Thus, if Pirabhakaran is accused of violating the Seventh Commandment, one can opine that being a leader of an army trying to protect the Tamils, what he had done with his suicide bombers was to neutralize the command-and control centers of aerial terror.

SUICIDE BOMBERS: A COUNTER-TERRORIST WEAPON

The critics of Pirabhakaran, partly due to their ignorance on military knowledge, have failed to study why the use of suicide bombers became an important weapon for Pirabhakaran’s army. Apart from boosting the sagging morale of Tamils suffering from aerial terror, an intelligent military leader would have to interdict the supply routes servicing the adversary’s army. Blocking the land route to Jaffna served this purpose, effectively, but partially. The sea route to Jaffna was available to the Sri Lankan army, in addition to the costlier aerial route. The Eelam leader specifically targeted the sea-route, supplying the armed forces stationed in the Northern region with the suicide bombers.

From July 5, 1987 to August 31, 2003, the number of Black Tigers who had achieved martyrdom stood at 240. Among these 240 individuals, men accounted for 176 and women made up the balance 64. One hundred and sixty three of the Black Tigers belonged to the ‘Sea Black Tigers’ and 77 were categorized as ‘Land Black Tigers’⁵. The dates of military operations as well as the locations and the names of a sample of Black Tigers who took part in suicide bombing, between 1987 and 1995 were as follows:⁶

1. 1987 July 5: Nelliaddy — Capt. Miller
2. 1990 July 10: Sea Tigers in Valvettithurai — Major Kantharupan, Capt. Colin, Capt. Vinoth
3. 1990 November 23: Mankulam — Lt. Col. Borg
4. 1991 March 19: Silavaththai — Dumbo
5. 1991 May 4: Sea Tigers in Point Pedro — Capt. Jayanthan, Capt. Sithambaram
6. 1993 August 26: Kilali — [cadre not identified]
7. 1993 August 29: Sea Tigers in Point Pedro — Kadalarasan, Pugal-
arasan
8. 1993 November 11: Poonagari — Major Ganes, Capt. Gobi
9. 1993 November 11: Palali airbase — Kalai Alagan, Mathinilavan, Sen-
kannan, Karikalan, Sivayogan, Nallathambi, Seeralan, Kannan, Sen-
thamil Nambi, Iyannar, Veeramani, Sivarankan
10. 1994 August 2: Palai airbase — Major Jayanthan, Thilagan, Seran,
Capt. Navaratnam, Lt. Reagan

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11. 1994 August 10: Sea Tiger operation — Capt. Angaiyarkanni [first woman Black Sea Tiger]
12. 1994 October 19: attack on Sagaravardhana ship — Lt. Col. Nalayini, Major Nangai, Capt. Vaaman, Capt. Lakshman
13. 1994 November 8: Vettrilaikerni — [cadre not identified]
14. 1995 April 18: Trincomalee harbor, attack on Ranasuru and Sooraiya ships — Kathiravan, Thanigaimaran, Mathusha, Santha
15. 1995 July 16: Kankesanthurai harbor — Major Thangan, Major Senthaalan, Capt. Thamilini
16. 1995 September 3: Pulmoddai beach — Nagulan, Kannalan
17. 1995 September 10: Kankesanthurai harbor — Aruljothi, Mohan, Kumar
18. 1995 September 20: Kankesanthurai harbor, attack on Lanka Mudhitha ship — four cadres including Kannalan Siva
19. 1995 October 2: Battle at Mullaitivu sea — Major Arumai, Capt. Thangai
20. 1995 October 17: Trincomalee harbor — Ruban, Sivakami, Sivasunthar
21. 1995 October 29: accident at Alaveddi, on their way to Palali — Govindan, Venudas, Agathi, Bradman, Nilavan, Sasikumar, Kesivan
22. 1995 December 5: Batticaloa, Puthukudiyirupu camp — Major Rangan

COMPLIMENTS FROM CRITICS

Not infrequently, even Pirabhakaran’s virulent critics pay him compliments in a masked manner. For instance, in an opinion-piece Kiriella from Colombo observed,

“... Our armed forces have been provided with good amount of modern equipment such as guns, high speed gun boats, fighter/unmanned spy planes, trucks, bulldozers, body armour, heavy duty trucks for movement of artillery etc. as opposed to the LTTE who lack most of the terms mentioned above. I have on more than one occasion witnessed on TV news LTTE cadres clad in slippers firing their guns with one hand whilst holding the sarong with the other. I shudder to think what havoc LTTE would have caused if they were in possession of just one fighter plane...”⁷

One can only pity Kiriella. If what he has seen on the Sri Lankan TV makes him ‘shudder’ [viz, the cavalier fashion in which ‘LTTE cadres clad in slippers firing their guns with one hand whilst holding the sarong with the other’], he should not be dumb to comprehend the martial acumen of Pirabhakaran, who leads these cadres, is of a caliber which is tough to match.

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An editorial in the *Island* newspaper focused on the flawed policies of President Chandrika Kumaratunga. To quote,

“... Flogging the UNP for her failure to end the ‘War’ during the last seven years is unlikely to convince even the staunchest of PA supporter. She tried to end it by negotiations and by war but failed in both attempts.

Colossal defence expenditure was incurred, much more than what the UNP spent, during the seven PA years. The military strategies adopted were clearly wrong. The resources available to hold Jaffna-Vavuniya road were not sufficient and military commanders who said so were sidelined and sent into retirement. The policy of holding ‘real estate’ rejected by astute commanders like General Kobbekaduwe was ignored. Deputy Minister General Ratwatte and some of his top commanders who were in command while our forces suffered the greatest defeats are still in key posts.

The negotiated settlement held out by the PA — the draft constitutional amendment — has been a non-starter from the very beginning. Prabhakaran having rejected it outright...”⁸

The only sound inference one can draw from these observations is that if the Sri Lankan President’s policies have recorded repeated failures, Pirabhakaran must be doing something flawless with his army.

The much quoted euphemistic comment about ‘holding real estate’ which was circulating in the Sri Lankan media in the late 1990s also need some explanation. The Sri Lankan army, with all its resources, has ceded a sizeable portion of land in the Tamil territory of the island beyond its retrieval capacity. Pirabhakaran’s army has captured it outrightly. This development would not have been anticipated by the *Jaffna 1980* chronicler Robert Holmes. Pirabhakaran’s LTTE made it sure that the moribund Sri Lankan state would never be the same again, as it was in 1980.

7

Anuradhapura Massacre of 1985

PERFECTING THE JIMMY MALONE OFFENSE

PIRABHAKARAN has practised what I call a ‘Jimmy Malone offense’ with perfection. This deserved some degree of special courage. Jimmy Malone was the veteran Chicago cop character played by Sean Connery in the Al Capone bio-picture *‘The Untouchables’*. Malone, in his professional wisdom, gives an advice to the young Eliot Ness about tackling the American icon of crime, as follows:

“You want to get Capone? Here’s how you get him. He pulls a knife, you pull a gun. He sends one of yours to the hospital, you send one of his to the morgue. That’s the Chicago way.”

Delivered by Connery in his inimitable, riveting voice, that piece of advice would be a *manthra* for any budding military leader like Pirabhakaran. Some of Pirabhakaran’s successes in creating panic in the adversary’s camp can be attributed to perfecting this Jimmy Malone offense. Pirabhakaran has acknowledged his debt to the movie characters generated by Clint Eastwood; but one cannot doubt that Sean Connery’s movie roles as an action-hero of the 1960s would also have been a strong influence on Pirabhakaran.

First vivid example of this Jimmy Malone offense was demonstrated by Pirabhakaran in May 1985 at Anuradhapura. This is pertinent because by the beginning of 1983, democratic Sri Lanka was turned into a personal fiefdom of an aged politician J. R. Jayewardene, who was more or less the Colombo’s political version of Chicago’s Al Capone in the late 1920s. Jayewardene pouted democracy but practised all kinds of political thuggery, not only on Tamils but also on his Sinhalese opponents, who included the mother and husband of President Chandrika Kumaratunga. Tamils in the North and East regions of Sri Lanka were at the receiving end of army terror, for almost an year before the Anuradhapura Massacre by LTTE of May 1985. The reporters for *New York Times* and the Associated Press who visited the island had recorded the humiliation of Tamils repetitively.^{1–5}

Chapter 7. Anuradhapura Massacre of 1985

AN APPRAISAL OF THE ANURADHAPURA MASSACRE OF MAY 1985

Dayan Jayatilleka, in his vitriolic commentary about LTTE’s 25th birth anniversary noted,

“May 1985 is when the struggle for Tamil national liberation lost its innocence and heralded the end of its ‘heroic’ phase with the first large scale massacre of Sinhala civilians in the savage incursion into the sacred space of Anuradhapura.”⁶

This is vintage Jayatilleka with his blinkers. He has described the ‘*what*’, ‘*when*’ and ‘*where*’ components of the LTTE action, but conveniently hidden the ‘*why*’ component. When it suits him, he would cite the authors of the *Broken Palmyra* book. But when it is uncomfortable, he would ignore the facts outrightly. For this Anuradhapura confrontation, Hoole *et al.* provided the background, noting briefly the ‘*why*’ component, as follows:

“In reprisal for the killing by the Sri Lankan forces of 70 civilians in Valvettithurai and the damage to the homes of Prabhakaran and several other LTTE leaders, the LTTE on 14 May 1985 conducted what came to be known as the Anuradhapura massacre. A few LTTE men drove into Anuradhapura and gunned down about 150 persons with ruthless efficiency and got away.”⁷

One vignette of truth, which was obscured by Hoole *et al.* was provided by the *Time* magazine, in its analysis on the questionable deals carried out by the Indian Intelligence operatives in mid-1980s. Excerpts:

“... By late 1984, hundreds of trained [Tamil] fighters were back in Sri Lanka, where they mounted acts of sabotage against government facilities. When attacks on military targets failed to make Jayewardene budge, RAW encouraged killings of Sinhalese civilians to put more pressure on Colombo. Says Uma Maheswaran, leader of the People’s Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam: ‘A RAW officer asked us to throw a grenade into a Sinhalese cinema or put a bomb in a bus or market in a Sinhalese town. Only we and the Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front refused’. Agrees an Eelam People’s leader: ‘The RAW agents offered us money to massacre Sinhalese. But we refused’. The Tigers [referring to LTTE], by contrast, were cooperative. In May 1985 two busloads of Tigers drove into the ancient Sinhalese capital of Anuradhapura and, in the town’s main bus station, opened fire with automatic weapons, slaughtering 143 civilians there and elsewhere. According to one of the participants in the killing spree, Tiger leader Vilupillai Prabhakaran was in radio contact with RAW agents during and after the massacre...”⁸

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It should be noted that even the *Time* magazine’s analysis failed to mention the ‘why’ component in Pirabhakaran’s decision to carry out the 1985 attack in Anuradhapura, which happened only after his native town was damaged with the killing of 70 Tamil civilians by the Sri Lankan army and when his home was also damaged. Another notable fact in this *Time* magazine’s report which appeared as a box-story with the caption, “Sri Lanka: Case Study of a Disaster”, was the open accusation of RAW by Uma Maheswaran for ‘encouraging the killings of Sinhalese civilians to put more pressure on Colombo’. At that time, Rajiv Gandhi was India’s prime minister and he would have been kept regularly informed by the tactics adopted by the RAW. That after four months of this open accusation of RAW, Uma Maheswaran was bumped off in Colombo by RAW’s agents is disturbing indeed [see also, Chapter 1].

An in-depth comparison on the careers of Uma Maheswaran and Pirabhakaran would illustrate why one succeeded and the other failed miserably, though both were partners of the Eelam campaign in late 1970s. Every human aims to achieve some power. Pirabhakaran was no exception. But for that power to be stable [the word is stable, and not permanent!], one has to earn it the old fashioned way. The *Time* magazine feature also reported that in 1985,

“the [Anuradhapura] killings prompted the Colombo government to agree for the first time to negotiate with the guerillas. The talks collapsed, but the new Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, seemed reluctant to allow RAW to escalate the level of fighting. Later, when India stepped up its support of TELO, the Tigers showed their displeasure at New Delhi’s favoritism by attacking TELO camps and murdering some 150 of its members, thereby neutralizing RAW’s favorite Tamil clients. RAW agents were apoplectic, but realized that they would have to work with the Tigers as the dominant Tamil force...”⁹

Simply put, Pirabhakaran’s intelligence was superior in quality to that of the RAW’s intelligence. The Indian mandarins and politicians found it difficult to gulp this fact. The type of retaliatory attacks perfected by LTTE, the Jimmy Malone offense, have been a trade mark for the no-nonsense image of Israeli armed forces led by skilled warriors Moshe Dayan and Yitshak Rabin. Even before Israel was born, President Roosevelt’s army avenged the 1941 Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor by eliminating Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, using a Jimmy Malone manoeuvre.

One can argue whether what Pirabhakaran did was ethically correct or not, but for the first time in the recent Tamil history of the island, he stood up for the aggression against Eelam Tamils, with a signature-act which scared the pants out of his adversaries. Until that moment, Tamils had been passive victims of state-supported aggression for decades. Pirabhakaran showed

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to the Sri Lankan army and Sri Lankan President Jayewardene, that he is a real thing that Tamils and Sinhalese have never seen. Rohan Gunaratna had stated¹⁰ that Pirabhakaran, while staying in Tamil Nadu, chose Victor Oscar alias Marcelline Fuseless, the then LTTE Mannar commander for leading the Anuradhapura operation. Victor was subsequently killed in the battle front in Adampan in October 1986.

COMMAGER ON STATE TERRORISM

To place in context, I’m of the opinion that Pirabhakaran’s Jimmy Malone offense in Anuradhapura was an answer to the state terrorism. A month following the Anuradhapura operation, a 350-word essay of Henry Steele Commager (1902–1998), a reputed American historian, appeared in the *New York Times*. Wrote Commager,

Nations aren’t Innocent: “Nothing can justify the terrorism practised by the Shiites, the Iranians, the Palestinians and other desperate groups who wage war on innocent victims. But then what can justify terrorism as introduced and practised by most of the great powers whenever it served their ends over the past century or so?

For what is terrorism but resort to deadly violence against random and innocent victims, and shattering the fabric of society with dynamite and fire! What is most sobering is that all the Old World nations practised intermittent terrorism throughout the 19th century: the British in India, the Belgians in Congo, the Russians and Poles against their own Jews, the Turks against Armenians.

Americans, too, must confess their own history of terrorism against those they feared or hated or regarded as ‘lesser breeds’. Thus, the extermination of the Pequot Indians as early as 1637; the Sand Creek massacre of some 500 Cheyenne women and children in 1864 — and this after the tribe had surrendered; the lurid atrocities against Filipinos struggling for independence at the beginning of this century; Lieut. William L. Calley’s massacre of 450 Vietnamese women, children and old men at My Lai in 1969.

The formal rationalization — we might almost say legitimization — of terrorism came with World War II when all the major participants abandoned ‘precision’ bombing, directed against the military, for saturation bombing directed against civilians. It was a policy that eventually took the lives of millions of women and children in London, Coventry, Hamburg, Berlin, Dresden, Warsaw, Moscow, Tokyo and scores of other ‘open cities’. The climax of all this was the Holocaust in Germany and, in 1945, the fateful use of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

By the Vietnam War, terrorism was so taken for granted that it almost ceased to excite comment. The Vietnamese practised it in the traditional form of

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jungle warfare. Americans practised it more systematically by pouring seven million tons of bombs on Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos (with none of which we were technically at war) — three times the tonnage on Germany and Japan during World War II.”¹¹

RANJAN WIJERATNE’S ASSASSINATION IN MARCH 1991

Quite a number of anti-Eelam websites maintained by the front organizations of the Sri Lankan and India’s Intelligence agencies (for instance, the South Asia Terrorism Portal) include the assassination of Minister Ranjan Wijeratne as an LTTE operation. But contradictory views to this opinion also deserve exposure for clarifying an issue which has not been investigated in depth. Four views on the assassination of Minister Wijeratne — two by Sinhalese (Rohan Gunaratna and Mervyn de Silva), one by an Indian journalist and one by the devotees of Madhu Church, a given below.

VIEW OF ROHAN GUNARATNA

(AN ANALYST LINKED TO THE SRI LANKAN INTELLIGENCE ARM)

Gunaratna implicated the LTTE in the untimely death of Wijeratne. To quote,

“On March 2 [1991], Sri Lanka’s most powerful and most heavily guarded Minister of State for Defence Ranjan Wijeratne was killed by a car bomb which was detonated right in Colombo. Commenting on LTTE transmissions monitored by Sri Lankan security forces, a security official revealed: ‘An apparently elated LTTE voice was clearly heard over the intercepted broadcast as saying the LTTE had more than accomplished its purpose by leaving the scene of the bomb explosion without any clues’. The LTTE London office denied the killing of Wijeratne but said his death would be a ‘relief’ to the Tamil minority. Sathasivam Krishnaswamy alias Kittu, who heads that office said: ‘The LTTE acknowledges that he [Wijeratne] symbolized the Sri Lankan racist and oppressive system and was instrumental in the murder of thousands of innocent Tamils’. Investigations revealed that the bomb which killed Wijeratne had been placed inside a parked car, and was triggered off by its driver Prem, a member of the elite Black Tigers, specializing in suicide attacks.

Ranjan Wijeratne, speaking to the author [Gunaratna] two days before his death, said that 5,000 men were being trained and sent to the front every six weeks. He said that four fronts were established — Palaly, Vavuniya, Mannar and Mulaitivu. He was hopeful that the strength of the army will be raised to 100,000 by December 1991. He said that the LTTE war could be won, but the political and security elements had to be coordinated. But his vision was not to be; within 48 hours, he had become the latest casualty figure in a steadily rising death toll of a cruel civil war spanning almost a decade. The Sri Lankan government was visibly shaken by the assassination of its most

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powerful Minister. In his place, Premadasa appointed Prime Minister D. B. Wijetunge as the Minister of State for Defense.”¹²

Gunaratna also had noted the power struggle which broke out in 1990 between the then President Premadasa and Wijeratne, as follows:

“The prelude to [Eelam] War [1990] was a conflict of interests between the two powerful men — Ranasinghe Premadasa, the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Sri Lankan armed forces, and his Minister of State for Defence Ranjan Wijeratne, who on another front had just saved Sri Lanka from falling into the hands of the JVP. Wijeratne’s intention was to crush the LTTE in the same manner that he had dealt with the JVP. This would have assured him honour and even the subsequent presidency of Sri Lanka (foot note: In an interview two days before he was killed, he confirmed his intentions to the author). Wijeratne comprehended the contours of the conflict and his solution was complex — it was more than asking the IPKF to leave, or arming the LTTE to dislodge the TNA, or working out a peace pact with the LTTE. Wijeratne wanted the IPKF to ‘finish off’ the LTTE. He had assessed that the JVP threat was insignificant by mid-1989. Initially, he vehemently opposed the arming of the LTTE and initiated a dialogue with India on the fate of its proxy army — the TNA. But, Premadasa’s agenda was different and was often in conflict with his most powerful minister — Wijeratne had to tow the line or resign.”¹³

Though Col. Kittu, on behalf of LTTE, issued a denial one should note that Rohan Gunaratna’s version of implicating LTTE in the assassination of Wijeratne was written in late 1992, when Premadasa was still in power. By late 1989 (within an year of ascendancy as President) Premadasa had become deeply concerned with the power and glory accrued by Minister Wijeratne. But in the previous year, it was because of Wijeratne’s efforts, Premadasa was able to ward off the intra-party challenge for the presidential stakes mounted by his rivals Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake. In his eulogy to Wijeratne, journalist Ajith Samaranayake had stressed this fact as follows:

“Ranjan Wijeratne’s was a brief but a remarkable political career. A blunt, tough-talking man, who brought the discipline of the plantations which he revered to the business of politics, the tall, silver-haired Minister was a quixotic personality, an emerging legend wrapped in an enigma. A dedicated UNPer, he reconciled all problems by invoking the party code. He was the party man par excellence. Widely regarded as an excellent organizer, he is well known as having backed Mr. Premadasa’s claim to succeed President Jayewardene at a time when other claimants were in the field and uncertainty prevailed. Under President Premadasa his rise was even more rapid. He was Foreign Minister and thereafter Minister of Plantation Industries but always the President’s deputy as the State Minister of Defence.”¹⁴

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VIEW OF MERVYN DE SILVA (AN INDEPENDENT ANALYST OF STATURE)

Mervyn de Silva, under the pseudonym Kautilya, wrote the following eulogy to Wijeratne. Excerpts:

“Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne was made a general posthumously but he was in fact a soldier in civvies, always pure white trousers and tunic. He was the party’s front-line commander, and once installed State Minister of Defence, Commander-in-Chief de facto in two wars — the war against the JVP in the South, and the much longer war in the North-East.

In his essential simplicity, he thought he could crush the ‘Tigers’ as effectively as he did the JVP. He didn’t grasp the essential differences — the most important of which was motivation and the discipline exemplified in the cyanide capsule. He believed, somewhat naively, that more men, more arms, more money could give him the victory he had scored so triumphantly in the South. . . .

In a society torn by divisive conflict, the violent and the unseen, and by both steadfast allegiances as well as by changing loyalties, Ranjan, unknown to him, became a point of intersection between those contemporary forces, competitive claims diverse and fierce issues. To name a few, military solution/political settlement; old UNP/new UNP; Sinhala nationalism/Thomian liberalism; ‘law-and-order’/dissent, opposition; army/party, etc. etc.

No wonder so many theories, from the Singaporean connection; to LTTE/EROS, DJV/EROS; inside-job/ and any ‘mix’ of these. What interested me was how each individual and opinion group, quite often dispassionately, almost pre-selected as salient this or that detail which suited best his/her version. The Rashomon Effect.”¹⁵

VIEW OF RAJIV SHARMA (AN INDIAN JOURNALIST)

Rajiv Sharma, a New Delhi journalist who authored a book on Rajiv Gandhi assassination, fingered Minister Wijeratne’s then boss President Premadasa as the main culprit. Excerpts:

“An ugly side of Premadasa was reported in the press during the investigations of the assassination of his political rival and minister of state for defence, Ranjan Wijeratne. Wijeratne was the former chairman of the ruling United National Party, to which Premadasa belonged. A popular figure with the military brass, Wijeratne was entertaining hopes of replacing Premadasa. On March 1, 1991, Wijeratne was holding an unscheduled meeting with the Chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force when Premadasa barged in unannounced. The embarrassment writ large on the faces of the assembled men was only too vivid for Premadasa to miss. None spoke. A much worried Premadasa retreated in silence. The following morning, when Wijeratne was driving to his office in his bullet-proof Mercedes, he was blown to bits.

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Murky aspects of the hidden Premadasa-Wijeratne rift came to the fore in a crucial interview by Premadasa Udugampola, former head of Sri Lanka’s bureau of special operations, to M. D. Nalapat in *The Times of India*. Udugampola who was forcibly retired at the age of 57, by his government when he was DIG [Deputy Inspector General of Police], had incurred the wrath of the ruling establishment for demanding an independent inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the murder of Wijeratne.”¹⁶

VIEW OF DEVOTEES (AS PRESENTED BY JOHN COLMEY, AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST)

One cannot leave out another interpretation of Minister Wijeratne’s assassination, since it describes the faith of the persecuted. In 1992, John Colmey, the *Asiaweek*’s correspondent based in Colombo, wrote a lengthy travelogue-essay on his trip to Jaffna, along the lines of Julian West (see, Chapter 6). Excerpts:

“On Feb. 28, 1991, Deputy Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne gave a stiff warning to 9,000 refugees at Madhu Church. If they didn’t leave and allow the armed forces to move on nearby Tiger positions, he told the press, he would bomb the camp. The next night, with the sound of artillery fire in the distance, hundreds of refugees knelt before a statue of the Virgin Mary that welcomes visitors to Madhu with open arms, palms turned up. Near midnight, say the people who prayed that night, a ‘miracle’ happened. The statue’s arms began closing and opening repeatedly. They considered it a sign to stay.

“The morning after the ‘miracle’, Wijeratne and more than 25 others were killed in Colombo by a massive Tiger car bomb. The army’s march through Madhu veered in another direction. Priests at the church don’t believe the statue story. But they admit it partly explains why the Madhu Church refugee camp now has nearly 30,000 residents, with more on the way.”¹⁷

Whether miracle or not, three other personalities mentioned in Colmey’s feature who had some choice words for Pirabhakaran had untimely deaths. Two were military personnel: namely Major General Denzil Kobbekaduwa and Brigadier Vijaya Wimalaratne. On the latter, Colmey had reported as follows:

“When I leave Wimalaratne I tell him I may see Prabhakaran in Jaffna. I ask if he has a message for him. ‘Tell him’ he says with a broad smile, ‘there’s a devil waiting to meet him on the other side’.”¹⁸

Colmey had also taken note of the aerial bombing of *Durga Devi Devasthanam* Goddess Temple, about 1.5 km from Tellippalai town. Excerpts:

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A helicopter pilot reported spotting people moving in the temple area. The response from Air Force Command, according to a monitored and recorded transmission: ‘Hit it’. Two Siai Marchettis and a British built Avro attacked the temple and refugee camp three times. . . .”¹⁹

When Colmey’s feature appeared in the *Asiaweek* of August 14, 1992, Brigadier Wimalaratne along with his friend Maj-Gen. Denzil Kobbekaduwa had lost their lives in a land-mine blast. The third individual who had bad-mouthed Pirabhakaran for Colmey was Mohammad Ashraff, the Tamil-speaking Muslim politician, who was reported as saying that he would like to ‘slit Prabhakaran’s throat’ if given a chance. Ashraff died tragically in a helicopter crash in 2000. Reporter Colmey even faced problem with President Premadasa. His lengthy essay in the *Asiaweek* irked the paranoid Premadasa, since nothing was written about the President, while Brigadier Wimalaratne’s achievements received abundant praise. Colmey was expelled from Sri Lanka on the orders of Premadasa.

8

Four Musketeers of UNP

A RETROSPECTIVE look from late 1988 to October 1994 reveals the power struggle which depleted the front-line positioned four musketeers of the post-Jayewardene phase of UNP. First, Premadasa and Wijeratne joined hands to prevent Athulathmudali and Dissanayake reaching the presidency sweepstakes. Secondly, Wijeratne having gained stature as the JVP-smasher staked claim to Premadasa’s throne. Miracle or not, Wijeratne was assassinated in a car bomb blast in March 1991. Thirdly, sensing that Premadasa had become a lone wolf, Athulathmudali and Dissanayake pounced on him through a parliamentary plot. Fourthly, Premadasa with street-smart toughness evicted both of them from the party. Fifthly, Premadasa had a quick draw on Athulathmudali. Sixthly, Premadasa followed the path of two of his tormentors — Wijeratne and Athulathmudali. Finally, Dissanayake as a lone wolf, while perfecting his throne-capturing act, paid for his sins. All four of them fell for their Himalayan-sized avarice one by one.

The official versions, though challenged by accumulated evidences, implicate LTTE in the assassinations of all four musketeers of UNP. This is simple and convenient for many Sinhalese to believe and painless for the politically-corrupt Sri Lankan law enforcement agencies to peddle. However, ardent supporters of these four UNP musketeers (which include the immediate family members of the deceased) have expressed reservations on the official versions peddled by the Sri Lankan media.

While not negating the fact that Wijeratne and Premadasa (being the *de facto* and *de jure* Commander in Chief of the Sri Lankan army, during 1991–93) would have been legitimate military targets of LTTE, one should note that from January 1991 to May 1993, the relationships among the four UNP musketeers were not cordial. Though Athulathmudali and Dissanayake presented a veneer of cordiality to the public after their expulsion from the UNP by Premadasa, their unity was bonded only by their mutual hatred of the man from Kehelwatte. Even when they formed the new breakaway party (DUNF), they were bickering on who would be the prime leader of that splinter party. Their co-leadership ploy resembled the farce of two persons trying to sit in one toilet seat at the same time. Following the deaths of Athulathmudali and Premadasa, the last man standing turned out to be Dissanayake. The DUNF party he co-founded with Athulathmudali split into two factions, one led by

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Athulathmudali’s widow Srimani and the other led by Dissanayake. Subsequently, Dissanayake returned to the UNP through the connivance of Premadasa’s successor D. B. Wijetunge, and elevated himself to the ranks of UNP’s presidential candidate — merely 18 months following Premadasa’s assassination.

PROBABILITY ANALYSES ON THE BENEFICIARIES OF FOUR
ASSASSINATIONS

Probability analyses on the beneficiaries of the assassinations of UNP’s four musketeers, which occurred between March 1991 and October 1994 are presented below.

Victim

Deputy Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne

Place & Date

Colombo, March 2, 1991

Assassination method

Bomb planted in a car

Immediate Beneficiary

R. Premadasa (the President of Sri Lanka)

Main Beneficiary’s

level of antagonism	:	high
accessibility to area of strike	:	convenient
accessibility of assassination material	:	easy
access to an assassin	:	easy

Relationship to LTTE had become confrontational since mid-1990.

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Victim

UNP-breakaway party's co-leader Lalith Athulathmudali

Place & Date

Colombo, April 23, 1993

Assassination method

shooting by gun

Immediate Beneficiary

R. Premadasa (the President of Sri Lanka) and probably Gamini Dissanayake (co-leader of the UNP-breakaway party)

Main Beneficiary's

level of antagonism by main beneficiary : high
accessibility to area of strike : convenient
accessibility of assassination material : easy
access to an assassin : easy

Relationship to LTTE had become confrontational since mid-1990.

Victim

President Ranasinghe Premadasa

Place & Date

Colombo, May 1, 1993

Assassination method

suicide bombing

Immediate Beneficiary

Gamini Dissanayake (main of the UNP-breakaway party)and India's policy mandarins

Main beneficiary's

level of antagonism : high
accessibility to area of strike : convenient
accessibility of assassination material : easy
access to an assassin : not easy, but available at a price

Relationship to LTTE had become confrontational since 1987.

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Victim

UNP’s Presidential candidate, Gamini Dissanayake

Place & Date

Colombo, October 24, 1994

Assassination method

suicide bombing

Immediate Beneficiary

Chandrika Kumaratunga (prime minister of Sri Lanka)

Main beneficiary’s

level of antagonism	: high
accessibility to area of strike	: convenient
accessibility of assassination material	: easy
access to an assassin	: not easy, but available at a price

Relationship to LTTE was cordial at the time of assassination.

POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS

Analysts like Rohan Gunaratna had repeated *ad nauseam* that LTTE is the only organization to assassinate the heads of state belonging to two countries. The manner in which the investigations on the assassinations of Rajiv Gandhi and Premadasa progressed during 1991–94, prompted me to write a letter to the *Tamil Times*. Excerpts:

“Political assassinations and what follows when an associate of the assassinated leader ascends to the power has remained predictable since the times of Julius Caesar. Bertrand Russell, in his classic work, *Power* (1938) wrote, *A politician, if he is to succeed, must be able to win the confidence of his machine, and then to arouse some degree of enthusiasm in a majority of the electorate. The qualities required for these two stages on the road to power are by no means identical, and many men possess the one without the other.*

According to this principle, the associate of an assassinated leader is placed in a precarious position, if he is not photogenic or does not possess mass appeal. So, he will do everything not to revive the memories of his assassinated colleague. Lyndon Johnson ascended to the power following John F. Kennedy’s assassination in 1963. Hosni Mubarak became the leader of Egypt after the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981. Narasimha Rao was lucky to become the prime minister due to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. Similarly, D. B. Wijetunge owes his position as the President to the assassins of R. Premadasa.

One can see parallels in the styles of how Johnson, Mubarak, Rao and Wijetunge have behaved in ‘solving the problem’ of the assassinations of their

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immediate predecessors. Johnson and Mubarak rushed to deliver the ‘verdict’ and tried their best to erase the public memories of their assassinated predecessors, though it is questionable how much they succeeded in this venture. Still doubts remain about who assassinated Kennedy and Sadat, and for what reasons. Rao and Wijetunge worked in the opposite direction to that of Johnson and Mubarak. But their motives remained the same. They are least interested in finding an answer to the assassination, which brought them to the pinnacle of power.

Politicians who step into the shoes of their assassinated predecessors do not gain much by reviving the memories of their deceased seniors. An exception to this rule of thumb occurs when the new leader is a family member of the deceased leader. Thus the ‘chapters’ on the murders of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike and Indira Gandhi were closed in quickest possible time, because Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Rajiv Gandhi who followed them respectively were related to the deceased leaders...”¹

All told, once the victim’s funeral and the formal mourning phase is passed, the beneficiaries count their blessings and carry on with their careers rather than trying to find out who committed the assassination. President Wijetunge was not keen in finding out who killed his President Premadasa, since he was competing with the ‘populist image’ of his predecessor. Gamini Dissanayake was not that interested in finding out who killed his DUNF Party colleague Athulathmudali, since it did not serve much for his own political ascendancy. Finally, President Chandrika Kumaratunga has not bothered about finding out who killed her presidential opponent Dissanayake, because she was the immediate beneficiary of that assassination.

President Premadasa’s assassination President Premadasa was the second Sri Lankan head of state to be assassinated, the first one being padre Bandaranaike. Few days later, the *New York Times* editorially commented on Premadasa’s assassination; rather than paying the usual eulogy to the fallen head of state, the editorialist wrote a sobering reflection on why the assassination could not be averted. Moreover, the editorial also linked S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike’s dubious contribution to the nation-building process and its repercussions to the Sinhala-Tamil unity. This short editorial stated:

The Tragedy of Sri Lanka: “When Sri Lanka became independent in 1948, it was called Ceylon and seemed to have it all: reasonable prosperity, a stable parliamentary system, habits of nonviolence and a landscape of bewitching beauty.

Now Sri Lanka, its official name since 1972, is synonymous with strife and tragedy. Last Saturday its president and two dozen others were blown to bits by a suicide bomber. This followed the murder of the president’s chief

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rival and leader of the opposition. The cycle of retribution seems certain to continue.

How did things go so horribly wrong? Sri Lanka's story says a good deal about the unintended consequences of rooting politics in religion and ethnicity. It starts with the election victory in 1956 of the Oxford-educated Solomon Bandaranaike, a year that also marked the 2,500th anniversary of Buddha's attainment of Nirvana. Capitalizing on religious fervor, the prime minister made Buddhism the favored religion and decreed that Sinhalese, spoken by Buddhists, was henceforth the sole official language.

This angered a minority of mainly Hindu Tamils, who saw themselves at a permanent disadvantage since they spoke a wholly different language than the mostly Buddhist Sinhalese. So Bandaranaike temporized, and suggested allowing 'reasonable use' of Tamils. Communal riots erupted, and the well-meaning prime minister was murdered in 1959 by a Buddhist fanatic. In due course there followed a full-scale civil war as an extremist Tamil faction clamored for a separate state and found support in India, with its 50 million Tamils, just across the strait.

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi saw a chance in 1987 to placate Indian Tamils and win points as a peacemaker in Sri Lanka. He dispatched 50,000 troops to Tamil strongholds on the island as part of a peace accord signed in Colombo. But India's sometimes brutal soldiers were unable to disarm Tamil militants, and in 1991 Gandhi himself was assassinated, almost certainly by a Tamil extremist.

The lesson is sobering. When an ethnic majority diminishes the citizenship rights of a well-established minority, even an idyllic island can plunge into a bloodbath. It is an open question whether Sri Lankans can ever recover what has been lost. But there is time for other countries to ponder Sri Lanka's tragic experience.”²

What is striking in this editorial was the emphasis on the 'why' component of the assassination and not on 'who' did it. There was not a single sentence of praise for Premadasa. The first 16 sentences provide a capsule summary of events of the post-1956 period probably because it was written mainly to the American audience who had to be appraised on the background to the 'why' component of Premadasa's assassination.

However, three assertions in the above editorial need reiteration. First, it acknowledges the 'full-scale civil war' in Sri Lanka in which 'an extremist Tamil faction' [LTTE] was 'clamoring for a separate state'. Secondly, the sobering lesson for other countries from Sri Lanka's predicament is that 'when an ethnic majority diminishes the citizenship rights of a well-established minority', assassinations are bound to happen. Thirdly, 'whether Sri Lankans can ever recover what has been lost' is an open question. These three asser-

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tions acknowledge the role played by Pirabhakaran and his army in turning Sri Lanka into a moribund state.

Why I stress these assertions is to rebut the fallacy propagated in the Colombo and Chennai press that Pirabhakaran is only a ‘terrorist’ and nothing else. For instance, the *Island*, Colombo’s pro-war newspaper, carried a bizarre editorial prior to the execution of Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma bomber. It took to task the US Secretary of State Colin Powell as follows:

“... It was only the other day that US Secretary of State Colin Powell urged Sri Lanka and the LTTE to negotiate and evolve a solution to the northern conflict. While a negotiated settlement of the conflict is the best, if possible, the question is whether such exhortations by powerful nations do not smack of double standards. For, they themselves do not hesitate to deal with those who unleash violence against the state and civilians in the most stringest manner, while preaching to others on virtues of negotiating.

Take for example, McVeigh. He was thrown in prison and condemned to die by lethal injection. The US law took its due course against him and the American public are demanding that he be executed — the first federal execution in 38 years. While this treatment is meted out to McVeigh, Sri Lanka is urged to talk to the LTTE, whose leader Prabhakaran, is responsible for dozens of blasts and hundreds of massacres in comparison to which McVeigh’s crime might fade into insignificance...”³

By comparing the crime of Timothy McVeigh (1968–2001) and the war-related operations carried out by Pirabhakaran’s army, the *Island* editorialist revealed his ignorance in American law and especially the McVeigh case. First, McVeigh in his deposition had stated that he was the sole perpetrator of 1995 bomb blast of Oklahoma’s Federal Building. Thus by his own admission, McVeigh never had an ‘army’ to lead. Secondly, for more than ten years the turmoil in Sri Lanka has been recognized in international circles as a civil war, and Pirabhakaran leads one of the warring factions of this civil war.

What is a civil war and how it differs from terrorism? Dingiri Banda Wijetunge, the lackluster UNP leader who followed Premadasa for the presidency in 1993, was the ignoramus who became a laughing stock by equating LTTE’s military manoeuvres in a civil war against the Sri Lankan army as ‘terrorism’. An anonymous correspondent to the same *Island* newspaper ridiculed this myopia as follows:⁴

‘We do not have an ethnic problem, we have a terrorist problem’ was how a certain former president of this country characterized our situation. The same person, visiting Paris for an Aid Consortium meeting responded harshly to a European foreign ministry official, who inquired about the human rights situation in the country with the following words: ‘What human rights problem?

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We do not have any human rights problem’. The diplomat had been aghast. He had been taken aback by the man’s tone and all he had to say later was: ‘May God help you if these are your leaders’.

One should not assess harshly D. B. Wijetunge (a man with a limited world-view), when even more literate politicians like L. Kadirgamar, who served as the foreign minister of Sri Lanka from 1994 to 2001, peddled the same view unabashedly. Thus, two issues deserve discussion. These are, (1) What are the criteria used to categorize a civil war? (2) How a civil war is differentiated from terrorism?

CRITERIA DEFINING THE CIVIL WAR

In his retrospective review study of civil wars which occurred in the post-Second World War period, Roy Licklider defined a civil war as ‘any conflict that satisfies all of the three following criteria’. ⁵

1. Some influential leaders must be concerned about possibly having to live in the same political unit with their current enemies after the killing stops. This concern must be important enough to influence the kind of settlement they are prepared to accept.
2. There must be multiple sovereignty, defined by Charles Tilly as the population of an area obeying more than one institution. ‘They pay taxes (to the opposition), provide men to its armies, feed its functionaries, honor its symbols, give time to its service, or yield other resources despite the prohibitions of a still-existing government they formerly obeyed’ (Tilly, 1978). This criterion differentiates civil wars from other types of domestic violence, such as street crime and riots, in which there is no centralized control of the opposition. To distinguish civil wars from colonial wars, each side must have significant number of troops made up of local residents.
3. A civil war, by our definition, involves large-scale violence, killing people. I used the operational definitions of the Correlates of War project: (a) 1,000 battle deaths or more per year and (b) effective resistance, that is, at least two sides must have been organized for violent conflict before the war started or else the weaker side must have imposed casualties on its opponent equal to at least 5% of its own (to distinguish between civil wars and political massacres).

However unpleasant it has to be to his adversaries, by Licklider’s three stipulated criteria for a civil war, Pirabhakaran can only be categorized as a

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civil war leader and not as a ‘terrorist’. To recapitulate, (1) Pirabhakaran had organized an army. (2) He has a population behind him which provide men (and women) to his army and honor the symbols of his military unit. (3) Importantly, the population of the area where Pirabhakaran commands support, ‘give time to its [his army’s] service, or yield other resources despite the prohibitions of a still existing government they formerly obeyed’. Also, Pirabhakaran’s army has ‘significant number of troops made up of local residents’. Sri Lankan army has been accused of using hired mercenaries. But Pirabhakaran’s army is made up of local residents.

In the next chapter, when did Pirabhakaran’s army transformed into one of the warring parties in the Sri Lankan civil war is discussed. This is because, there is some confusion on this issue about the date of transformation in the published literature.

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COMMENCEMENT OF CIVIL WAR IN SRI LANKA

MAJORITY OF THE contemporary analysts of Sri Lankan politics and international journalists point to July 1983 as the commencement date of civil war in Sri Lanka. By analyzing multiple sources and the events which occurred between July 1983 and December 1986 in Eelam and by trying to correlate these to Licklider’s three criteria which have to be satisfied for the designation of civil war, I infer that the date of commencement of civil war should be marked for November 1986. The period from July 1983 to October 1986, until the Battle at Mannar where LTTE leader Victor became a martyr for the cause, has to be labeled as a period of civil unrest, followed by civil strife. The dictionary definitions of the three words in discussion namely, unrest, strife and war, are as follows, and I provide examples within parentheses.

1. Unrest is defined as, *‘trouble; turmoil, especially with regard to public or political conditions and suggesting premonitions of revolt’*. (bank raids; LTTE’s 1985 retaliatory attack in Anuradhapura).
2. Strife is defined as, *‘fighting; any contest for advantage or superiority’*. (Infighting in TELO between Bobby and Das factions; LTTE’s decimation of TELO)
3. War is defined as, *‘an armed conflict between nations or states; the science of military operations’*.

To recapitulate, Licklider’s three criteria which need to be satisfied for a designation of civil war are:

1. Presence of influential leaders concerned about the possibility of living in the same political unit with their current enemies after the killing stops.
2. Existence of multiple sovereignty: Population of an area obeying more than one institution, paying taxes, providing men to its armies, feeding its functionaries, honoring its symbols, giving time to its service,

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yielding other resources despite the prohibitions of a still-existing government they formerly obeyed.

3. Large scale violence, reflected by (a) 1,000 battle deaths or more per year, and (b) effective resistance where the weaker side must have imposed casualties on its opponent equal to at least 5% of its own (to distinguish between civil wars and political massacres).

Now, let me show why the civil war began during Pirabhakaran’s sole-leadership of Eelam Tamils, and not when Amirthalingam was the nominal leader in July 1983, or when there were competing claimants for leadership among the Tamil militants, between August 1983 and end of 1986.

Pirabhakaran’s ascent to Eelam leadership, though unprecedented in South Asian setting, is legitimate, if one comprehends the peculiar conditions Sri Lanka faced in the mid-1980s, when (1) parliamentary democratic process was paralysed by the duplicitious 1982 referendum designed by an Al Caponist President (2) the TULF leadership abandoned its constituents and fled to Madras, and (3) Sri Lankan government was militarily showing aggression in the Tamil zones, under the pretext of eliminating the ‘Tamil terrorists’.

1984 — THE YEAR OF CHAOS

1984 will be remembered in the Eelam history as one in which EPRLF made waves. It produced a bizarre abduction of American couple, Stanley and Mary Allen, by EPRLF militants. This episode, for some reason, has been omitted in the *Broken Palmyra* book, authored by Rajan Hoole and his colleagues. Though Pirabhakaran was not involved in this abduction episode, I wish to cite this episode to show the leadership skills shown by Pirabhakaran’s competitors, and how Pirabhakaran’s stature differed from them. The Allens’ episode also deserves exposure since one of the perpetrators of this kidnapping currently holds a cabinet post in President Chandrika Kumaratunga’s government.

Allens from Ohio state, while working on a development project in Jaffna, were abducted on May 10, 1984 in Jaffna by the EPRLF. The EPRLF then demanded that Allens will be released when 50 million rupees in gold is paid to the Tamil Nadu government and a number of EPRLF cadres held in Sri Lankan custody were released. In hind-sight, one can only laugh at these two fool-hardy demands made by the EPRLF, when India was playing host to a visit by the then Vice President George Bush.

Mohandas, former Director General of Police (Intelligence) of Tamil Nadu and the central player of this abduction episode made his deposition to the Jain

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Commission (investigating Rajiv Gandhi assassination) on January 2, 1996, as follows:

“One night I was sleeping in my house. I got a call from the US Consul General from Madras at 11 pm. He told me frantically that Mr. and Mrs. Allen who were working as water resources experts in Jaffna had been kidnapped by militants. He wanted my assistance to rescue them. I told him how could I help him, for the incident had happened in Jaffna. He pressed that the President of the United States of America was interested. The Consul General said that a large amount of gold (to be paid as ransom) and six or so militants in Sri Lankan custody must be released. This must be done within 48 hours or else Mr and Mrs Allen would be shot dead. Then something struck me and I asked the Consul General to find out the names of the militants whom they were asking for release. Then as soon as I placed the phone down, I got a call from G. Parthasarthy from Delhi repeating the same request.

I rang up MGR and took his permission to take up this matter. I immediately proceeded to office calling all my principal officers to come to the office. As soon as I reached the office, I got a call from the US Consul General revealing the names of the militants whose release the kidnappers had wanted. My officers immediately said that they were from the EPRLF. So the hunt began to find out whether there are any important EPRLF fellows in Madras. After about 24 hours, we got 3 or 4 of them sleeping in a house. There were also two women who were released. The catch was very important. Among the people we caught were one Mr. Padmanabha who was later massacred by LTTE. Then, two, Vardharaja Perumal, the subsequent Chief Minister installed by the IPKF in East Sri Lanka, and three, General Douglas, self-styled, who was the chief of militant wing of the EPRLF. I asked my officers to take the three to a five star hotel. It was about 2:00 am with a lot of security, the officers started questioning. But upto 6:00 am, they did not budge.

So I went there with two commandos with loaded revolver. I made the three fellows stand. I placed my revolver on the table and made the commandos aim with their AK-47 at them. There was silence for two minutes. I looked at them straight and said: ‘It is your people who have made ransom demand on Allens. I will not allow you to open your mouth. Whatever happens to Allens will happen to you three right in this room’. After five minutes, General Douglas said that he would speak to his people in Jaffna to release Allens. I said, ‘Mind you, nothing in return, no gold; no release of their comrades’. General Douglas contacted Jaffna and got the release of Mr and Mrs Allen and, within four hours, Mr and Mrs Allen were released at the residence of Bishop of Jaffna with their eyes blindfolded.”¹

This kidnapping incident organized by EPRLF cadres in Jaffna, though no harm was done to Allens due to quick-minded action taken by MGR’s police chief K. Mohandas in Madras, created a negative image on Eelam militants in

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the spring of 1984. A *Time* magazine report by Spencer Davidson, on what happened in Jaffna and Mannar, further substantiated the civil strife which was engulfing the Eelam in that year of chaos. Excerpts:

“For two weeks the violence had spread through Sri Lanka’s northern province, a bloody tit for tat of ambush and attack, pitting government forces against insurgents fighting for independence for the country’s predominantly Hindu Tamil minority. Roads lay deserted, banks and offices were shuttered, and shops opened for only a few hours each day. By the time a measure of calm had been restored last week, at least 150 people had lost their lives, including 25 government troops — the last worst bloodletting in Sri Lanka since July 1983, when hundreds died in communal clashes between the majority Sinhalese and the Tamils. Said a Western diplomat in Colombo: ‘This is the first sustained and significant challenge to the government’s authority in a year’.

... The violence reached a climax early last week when troops rampaged in Mannar, about 50 miles southeast of Jaffna, in retaliation for a Tiger ambush in which ten military men were said to have died. By the time the soldiers’ destructive fury was spent, 123 shops had been burned and five Mannar residents lay dead. ... Minister Athulathmudali insists that the government would never permit a backlash by the Sinhalese. ‘That would be disastrous’, he said last week, as the government offered compensation and help in rebuilding Mannar. But reconciliation will be difficult, if not impossible. Even President Jayewardene admits gloomily that there now exists ‘a virtually unbridgeable gap’.”²

Even an year following the July 1983 holocaust, when Jayewardene’s regime invited Israeli military advisers for the first time in Sri Lanka, Pirabhakaran was not noted by the international news analysts. A commentary which appeared in the *Economist* magazine under the title, ‘Call in the Professionals’, described the entry of Israeli Intelligence personnel into the conflict. Excerpts:

“... The number of Israeli military advisers in Sri Lanka is officially put at 10, but there are probably about two dozen, training Sri Lankans at a military establishment near Colombo. They belong to *Shin Beth*, the Israeli internal security agency and a cousin of Mossad, the intelligence service. It takes a long time to train someone in counter-insurgency, and it is unlikely that any Israeli-taught men have gone into action against the Tamil guerrillas fighting for a breakaway state in northern Sri Lanka.”³

This commentary also stated that the links EPRLF had with PLO around that time would have been one of the reasons for Israeli support to the Sri Lankan government.

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“... The Tamils’ Eelamist People’s Radical Front has close ties with the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Its guerrillas have received training in PLO camps in southern Lebanon. A number of them were detained when Israel overran the camps during its invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. This PLO link swayed the Israelis when Sri Lanka came shopping for advice. Under an agreement with the United States, Israel is not supposed to help other governments with their security unless Israel’s own security is involved. As Tamils are being trained just across Israel’s border, this condition was felt to be met.”

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The last sentence of this *Economist* commentary was revealing: ‘Sri Lanka is not yet at civil war. But chaos is doing well’. Thus, one year following the July 1983 holocaust, civil war between the Sri Lankan government and Eelam Tamil militants was yet to begin. Narayan Swamy observed, “The LTTE announced that it was switching from ‘our tactic of hit and run to a sustained guerrilla campaign’ and urged other ‘liberation groups to join us as comrades-in-arms to fight our common enemy and defend our people’.”⁵

Then, it took another two years for LTTE to qualify as the authentic Eelam army in the Sri Lankan civil war.

1985 — THE YEAR IN THE BRINK OF CIVIL WAR

As I show below from the excerpts of news reports and commentaries which appeared in the *Economist*, *Sunday Times* (London) and *The Nation* (New York), the situation in Eelam transformed from chaos into ‘near civil-war’ in 1985. This year began badly for the LTTE. On January 9, 1985, LTTE lost Pandithar, one of its oldest members, to an army raid at Achuveli, in addition to losing another 13 guerrillas.

A month later, on February 13, LTTE showed its vibrancy by raiding the Kokkilai army camp in which more than 100 guerrillas took part. It announced that 106 army men were killed and lost 16 of their guerrillas. The Sri Lankan government, beginning a trend of announcing dubious fatality figures in its engagements with LTTE, informed the public that only 4 of its soldiers died in Kokkilai raid by LTTE, while killing 14 guerrillas. Narayan Swamy recorded that,

“Ravi Jayewardene [the son of the then President of Sri Lanka, who was serving as an advisor to the army] who visited the camp 3 days later, was in for a shock. For the first time since the ethnic conflict turned into a full-scale confrontation after July 1983, the Sri Lankans realised how sophisticated the enemy was.”⁶

I would consider that this LTTE’s raid on Kokkilai army camp in February 1985, which followed TELO’s raid of Colombo-bound *Yal Devi* train at

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Murikandy on January 19, 1985, in which 22 army men were killed, effectively terminated Amirthalingam’s leadership status. While Sri Lanka was sliding into the brink of civil war, by Licklider’s criteria, Amirthalingam’s leadership of Eelam Tamils satisfied only the first criterion. By exiling himself in Madras after the July 1983 holocaust, he couldn’t organize his TULF party cadres vibrantly to satisfy the second and third criteria of Licklider.

A competition for the Eelam Tamil leadership among the five militant factions sprang up in 1985. The competing parties were, TELO, LTTE, PLOTE, EPRLF and EROS. The leaders of each of these five factions satisfied Licklider’s first criterion for civil war leadership. Also, they established their influence among segments of the Eelam Tamil population, thus satisfying Licklider’s second criterion of ‘multiple sovereignty’. However the leadership skills of Pirabhakaran’s competitors (as demonstrated for instance, by EPRLF’s kidnapping episode of Allens in 1984, or the slavery of TELO to India’s intelligence operatives, or the secretive cult-like dealings of PLOTE) left much to be desired, though this was hardly visible to the general public in 1985.

The *Economist* magazine’s analysis entitled ‘A small but solvable war’, which appeared in August 3, 1985 presented a good synopsis of the then situation in Eelam. Excerpts:

“The guerrillas were at first small groups of middle-class extremists who did not reflect the opinions of most Tamils. Known as ‘the boys’, they came from among the educated but frustrated young, many of whom had been unable to get into universities because of the policy of favouring the Sinhalese. When the army went in to root them out, it turned minority violence into mass secessionism. The indiscriminate reprisals against civilians do not seem to have been ordered by officers; the problem was that 95% of the men in the army’s ranks were Sinhalese peasants, most of whom regarded Tamils as foreigners and saw their job as fighting a war, not restoring law and order. Last year the government banned fishing around the Tamil’s bit of the coast, and restricted movement in Tamil areas. The fishermen and farmers found it almost impossible to make a living; so the peasants joined in what had been a mainly middle class fight, and the guerrillas suddenly had a flood of volunteers. Most people this correspondent spoke to in the North supported the guerrillas.”⁷

This commentary also recorded that, “As the guerrilla movement grew, control of the north slipped away from the government. . . .” But by mid-1985, in real terms, even the Eastern Sri Lanka was slipping away from the control of Sri Lankan government, as presented by Simon Winchester’s on-the-scene report. A brief sketch of a young Tamil Tiger from Trincomalee, as presented by Winchester, is as follows:

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“ ‘We are continuing with the fight’, insisted Gamesh, a young man who, in normal times, had been a medical student, and was still a talkative and polite middle-class Tamil of 24. When we met, in a secluded village 10 miles south of ‘Trinco’, last week, he was carrying a Soviet-made AK 47 assault rifle, a bandolier of ammunition, a pouch of hand grenades and a commando knife. With his two well-armed colleagues — one a chemistry student, the other a former civil servant — from a local unit of the Tamil Tigers guerrilla group, Gamesh was scornful of Tuesday’s announcement of an 18-week ‘cessation of hostilities’ between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the small army of militant Tamils, in which he is a section leader. . . .

The battle for control of Trincomalee — Nelson called it ‘the finest harbour in the world’, and it was a prime Royal Navy base until 1957 — is turning out to be the critical struggle in Sri Lanka. Militant Tamils, who want all of northern and eastern Sri Lanka for themselves, as an autonomous or semi-autonomous state to be named Tamil Eelam, see Trincomalee as their natural capital city. But the island’s Sinhalese majority, well aware of the strategic and commercial importance of the harbour — as a base for the Ceylon Navy and as an expanding centre for container trade with the Orient — is equally determined not to allow it to fall into Tamil hands.

In our brief reconnaissance of the region — cut short by our arrest, interrogation, and summary removal back to Colombo — it became easy to understand the bitterness and hatred that is currently dividing the communities in Sri Lanka. . . . The Tamil Tiger guerrillas are widely admired, their violent tactics now, to judge from conversations and interviews conducted last week, accepted by virtually all sectors of rural Tamil society. The fighters themselves, who agreed only with great reluctance to be interviewed, were confident and, it has to be admitted, impressive. The trio we met, though possibly not representative, were intelligent young men. They were not the hooligans or cowboys mentioned in the Colombo press and they also were not, they insisted, Marxists. True, their weapons were Soviet-made (the Sri Lankan army uses American M-16s). But they said: ‘We want no more socialism for Tamil Eelam than President Jayewardene wants for Sri Lanka as a whole. We want freedom for our people, that is all’.

But in pursuit of that freedom had not some terrible acts of slaughter been committed by the guerrillas? ‘Yes, but it is a vicious circle’, said Gamesh, the medical student. ‘Violence breeds more violence. You have it in Ireland. We have it here. It will not end until the cause is taken away’.⁸

It should be noted that Winchester and a photographer who accompanied him were arrested near Mutur and brought to Colombo, under the pretext that both of them had “entered Sri Lanka as tourists and had no journalistic accreditation from the [Sri Lankan] government.”⁹

Five months later, the *Nation* weekly of New York carried an analysis by Richard Greenberg, with the caption, ‘Sri Lanka Lurches toward Civil War’

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(November 30, 1985). Among the named sources, it carried the comments of V. Balakumar (the leader of EROS), B. Deogupillai (the Bishop of Jaffna) and A. S. Balasingham (the spokesman for the LTTE), in addition to the then National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali. The published comments of these four were as follows:

Balakumar: “The Sri Lankan security forces have been our best recruiter.”

Rev. Deogupillai: “Many people are afraid of the boys, but they are even more afraid of the army.”

Balasingham: “The colonization of the Tamil homeland by Sinhalese settlers is part of a deliberate policy aimed at the genocide of the Tamil people. In the Eastern Province, the Sinhalese share of the population has grown from 8.4 percent in 1946 to 24.9 percent in 1981. We will never accept anything less than the union of the two provinces which make up the Tamil homeland.”

Athulathmudali: “The facts are simply against it.” [on relinquishing control over the Northern and Eastern provinces]

Pirabhakaran, who was living in Madras, was not cited (probably not interviewed) by Greenberg. But, one paragraph proved the unbelievable organizing skill of Pirabhakaran. “ ‘If it’s war, it must be war’, President Jayewardene declared in a speech after the collapse of the Bhutan talks. But the ‘war’ has already cost millions of dollars, which have been diverted from development. Even with a military budget eight times larger than that of 1977, the army leader had admitted that a victory on the battle field is virtually impossible, and the Finance Minister is predicting huge deficits and potential economic ruin if the fighting continues. It is not clear that the guerrillas could sustain a prolonged war either.”¹⁰

18 years after its publication, Pirabhakaran had proved the validity of the then Sri Lankan army leader’s premonition that victory on the battle field is virtually impossible. How? Among the five main Eelam militant factions which jostled for power, only Pirabhakaran’s LTTE developed into a full-fledged army to satisfy the third criterion of Licklider for being a participant of a civil war. Of the other four Eelam militant groups (PLOTE, TELO, EPRLF and EROS), EROS faction of Balakumar joined the LTTE. PLOTE forfeited the stage by its erratic leadership and its inability to engage the Sri Lankan army continuously. TELO and subsequently EPRLF lost their sheen and paid for their sins of becoming the puppets of India’s intelligence agencies. One of the wisecracks of Lalith Athulathmudali, made in 1986, was “Once they [Eelamists] get their air-conditioned cars they will forget Eelam” turned out to be true to quite a number of leaders belonging to PLOTE and EPRLF, and their breakaway groups like EPDP.

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1986 — THE FIRST YEAR OF CIVIL WAR

In my assessment, the commencement of repetitive, aerial bombing by the Sri Lankan military was a significant marker to delineate the beginning of civil war from civil strife. The first such aerial aggression in Eelam was reported in the *Saturday Review*, as follows:

“7 civilians, including 2 children were killed and 16 others injured in bombing and firing by the Sri Lankan Air Force in the outskirts of Jaffna on 19th February. 14 houses, a rice mill, a power loom, the Vairavar temple and the bo-tree were damaged. The places affected by the bombing were Thavady, Suthmalai, Manipay, Kondavil and Navalay. The bombing by 5 Air Force planes, had started around 4.30 pm and gone on for nearly one hour.

The apparent provocation for the aerial attack — the first in Sri Lanka since World War II when the Japanese bombed Colombo and Trincomalee in 1942 — was the reported presence of a camp of the Tamil Eelam Army (TEA) led by ‘Panagoda’ Maheswaran in the Thavady area.”¹¹

Another significant marker which one should consider for the support the proposal that 1986 was the first year of civil war, and not 1983, is the cumulative total of LTTE cadres who lost their lives in engagements with the Sri Lankan army. The threshold for satisfying Licklider’s third criterion of civil war (*viz.*, ‘effective resistance where the weaker side must have imposed casualties on its opponent equal to at least 5% of its own’) was reached only by the end of 1986. According to the casualty statistics of LTTE cadres, published in the LTTE publication¹², LTTE lost its first cadre on November 27, 1982. By the end of 1986, LTTE had lost 423 of their fighters to the civil unrest and civil strife, which preceded the civil war; 5 in 1983, 36 in 1984, 123 in 1985 and 258 in 1986.

From the information provided in Narayan Swamy¹³, I assembled the loss of Sri Lankan army men who confronted the LTTE, following the Kokkilai army camp raid in February 1985. It is as follows:

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1985 April 22	:	20 soldiers ambushed at Mullaitivu.
1985 April 26	:	10 soldiers killed in a gun battle at Ariyalai.
1985 May 7	:	5 soldiers killed in an army truck blast near Valvettithurai.
undated	:	attack on Mannar police station, killing ‘several’ policemen.
undated	:	10 police commandos killed in Trincomalee.
1985 June 1	:	30 naval personnel killed in an attack on a naval camp.
1985 September 27	:	9 soldiers killed in a gun battle, following an attack on a police station, 16 km from Anuradhapura.
1986 October 12	:	fierce gun battle in Mannar, killing 28 army men, and LTTE losing one of its leaders, Victor, who led the 1985 retaliatory raid on Anuradhapura.
1986 October 14	:	landmine attack in Trincomalee, killing 10 army men.

Understandably, the above cumulation is factually incomplete. But, one can infer that if LTTE’s armed cadre numbered around 1,500 at that time¹⁴, the threshold of reaching Licklider’s third criterion for being one of the warring parties of civil war was reached near the end of 1986, when the casualty figures inflicted on Sri Lankan army by LTTE’s [acknowledgeably, the weaker side] engagements reached at least 5% of LTTE’s strength. The strength of Sri Lankan army in 1984 was 12,000¹⁵. By the end of 1986, this number would have increased to nearly 25,000 – 30,000. The end of 1986 also marked the closure of Pirabhakaran’s leadership-apprentice phase and his impending permanent return to Eelam from Tamil Nadu.

10

1987 — Paradigm Shift in Eelam

1987— THE PARADIGM SHIFT IN EELAM

ONE REASON WHY I differentiated the muddling terminology of civil unrest, civil strife and civil war in chapters 8 and 9 is to debunk the logic of some Rip Van Winkles among the non-Tamils, living in fool’s paradise by not coming to terms with Pirabhakaran’s elevation as a civil war leader. A typical example is a polemic piece authored by a regular contributor to Colombo’s partisan press, who uses the pseudonym ‘Leo Panthera’. Excerpts:

“Are we faced with a war, a rebellion or the machinations of a criminal outfit? Believe it or not there is no consensus on this foundational issue that must surely determine the parameters of the counterforce that we employ to quell the disturbance.

By common agreement a ‘war’ is the unhappy result of a conflict between states that has escalated to such levels that resolution is possible only through the use of arms. Is the ‘Eelam War’ of this nature? One would think not — but we have clarion calls from the so-called ‘International Community’ beseeching the ‘two sides’ to come to an amicable agreement. Here the unspoken assumption is that ‘Eelam State’ exists *de facto* or is ‘aborning’ if a poetical expression is allowed. Indeed, the state-controlled press carried recently a lengthy statement from the Media Minister (a Cabinet-rank official) begging ‘the two sides’ to forget the past and make it post-haste to the negotiating table.

If this is the official position it makes a paradigm shift with regard to which the public must be appraised and educated — not slipped in surreptitiously. If that which menaces the state is a rebellion, foreigners must be asked to keep off. If any kind of war is contemplated, it must be against those alien powers that are aiding and abetting the insurgents. Finally, if Prabhakaran and his gang are criminals — their unparalleled record of brutality and terrorism vouches for this — the culprits should be caught, put on public trial and hanged rather than being humbly invited to the negotiating table. . . .”¹

It is unfortunate that this polemicist’s stance is in variance with what the Sri Lankan army has presented as history in its website, launched on January 1, 2001. The paradigm shift, which Leo Panthera wrote about, had occurred

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in 1987. According to the Sri Lankan army’s history, Eelam War-I had begun actively in 1987. Excerpts:

“During the past fourteen years, there were many operations conducted against the LTTE. ‘Operation Liberation’ was conducted to wrest control of the Vadamarachchi area in the Jaffna peninsula, and was aimed at forcing the LTTE to enter negotiations...”²

In these two sentences, the Sri Lankan army has acknowledged that its opponent in war was LTTE, and not any other Tamil militant factions. It also states that, it conducted many major operations until 2001 and the aim was ‘at forcing the LTTE to enter negotiations’. By extension, LTTE’s leader Pirabhakaran has remained the civil war leader of Eelam Tamils for the past 17 years. How can one explain the muddled thoughts of polemicists like Leo Panthera? I provide an explanation. Five stages of grief, espoused by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross may be of some help.

GRIEF STAGES OF THE SRI LANKAN STATE

In 1969, Zurich-born American medical doctor Elisabeth Kubler-Ross published a trend-setting book, *On Death and Dying*. In this book, she presented her novel idea of five stages of grief, which occurs in cancer patients who await the death. These five stages of grief are:³

- Stage 1:** Denial — the patient denies the forthcoming loss of life, and react by withdrawing from routine and social contacts.
- Stage 2:** Anger — the grieving patient becomes furious at the person who inflicted the hurt (for instance, who transmitted the disease) or at care-givers (doctors misdiagnosed the malady).
- Stage 3:** Bargaining — the patient then makes bargain with the God, pleading like ‘If I repent for the sins, will you allow me to live a little longer?’
- Stage 4:** Depression — During this stage, the patient gives up hope of survival, though undercurrents of anger and sadness still persist.
- Stage 5:** Acceptance — The final stage of grief, during which anger and sadness prevailing in stage 4 tapers off, and the patient learns to accept the impending reality of death.

It is not inappropriate to view that apart from humans, even nations or states can die, for which history provide many examples. When states are in such a moribund condition, the citizens of such states also pass through Kubler-Ross formulation of five stages of grief. The current Sri Lankan state is a good example.

Repetitive outbursts on Pirabhakaran by the Sinhalese in the parliament, multi-media and internet can be understood, if we tag the five grief stages

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to the impending death of the Sri Lankan state. Some polemicists like Leo Panthera are in the first stage of grief — Denial. Many of the Buddhist clergy and media scribes in Sri Lanka are in the second stage of grief — Anger. They identify Pirabhakaran as the one who has caused the grief and vent their anger on him. Quite a number of Sinhalese politicians (belonging to SLFP and UNP) are in the third stage of grief — Bargaining. Since 1987, Jayewardene, Premadasa, Chandrika Kumaratunga and Ranil Wickremasinghe have been making use of ruses to bargain for power, with Pirabhakaran.

Sri Lankan military personnel probably fall into two stages. Politicians (the big-wigs) among the military ranks are in the ‘Bargaining’ stage of grief. The foot soldiers (and their families) who face the brunt of LTTE’s power are in the fourth stage of grief — Depression. From what appears in Colombo’s partisan press, a notable percent of non-affluent Sinhalese public also have reached the ‘Depression’ stage. In late 2003, only a minority among the Sinhalese have reached the final stage of grief — Acceptance of impending death of Sri Lankan state.

FEW EXAMPLES OF DEPRESSION — AS REVEALED IN COLOMBO PRESS

It is a good exercise for anyone, who come across any commentary or criticism on the current plight of Sri Lankan state, to comprehend the mood of the writer by classifying the commentary’s tone, according to the five stages of grief, formulated by Kubler-Ross. Three examples are given below.

An opinion-piece which appeared in the *Island* (Colombo) in the aftermath of Katunayake Airport attack by the LTTE commandos, aptly authored by a “Depressed Citizen, Mt. Lavinia”, illustrates my point. Excerpts:

“It is reported that the Bandaranaike International Airport and the adjoining Air Force Camp were guarded by more than 300 security personnel on that fateful day (24. 7. 2001) when our aircraft received massive damage from only 20 LTTE cadres. Instead of firing at the terrorists, some security men were sleeping, some hid themselves, and others ran away to save their lives, leaving the terrorists a safe passage to destroy everything at sight. . . .

The security staff, of course, had come back to lock the stable door after the steed was stolen, and gain the commendation of the president for restoring normalcy in double quick time! This had been the ‘modus operandi’ of our security officers even when the LTTE attacked, inter alia, the Central Bank, Oil Tanks, Galadari Hotel, Harbour and Dalada Maligawa. . . .

By the way, let not the Minister of Tourism waste the hard-earned money of the tax payers in trying to promote more hotels, and particularly in advertisements till the end of the accursed Eelam war. However much we may advertise, the foreigners are no fools to rush in where angels fear to tread, at the risk of their life and limb. . . .”⁴

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In contrast to the verbal gymnastics of ‘Leo Panthera’ (who is in the denial stage of grief), this ‘Depressed Citizen’ makes no bones about the moribund state of Sri Lanka, by yearning for the ‘end of the accursed Eelam war’. Second example of depression-tinged writing was from C. A. Chandraprema, frequent contributor to the *Island* newspaper. On the same ‘Katunayake raid’ by the LTTE, Chandraprema observed:

“The LTTE has in the many years since 1983, grown as an organization and they have carried out many spectacular attacks. They have bombed to smithereens the one and only Central Bank, they have bombed the one and only oil refinery. In their attacks on military bases, the number of Sinhalese casualties are at World War Two levels. Nowhere else in the world does one find trained soldiers getting wiped out by their thousands in one go in internal conflicts. The casualty rates in the Sri Lankan army are enough to even frighten India. . . .

The foreign media and the international community probably thinks the Sri Lankan polity may now be literally tearing their hair in anguish over the [Katunayake] Air Base attack. But those living here will know that this is hardly the case. Of course if an attack like this had taken place in the USA or the UK, the public will be feeling humiliated and furious. To feel humiliated, one has to have a sense of shame.

But the Sinhalese have no sense of shame. They lost it long ago. The country’s main air base has been reduced to ashes but nobody in the Air Force or the government has resigned, nobody has been court martialled, nobody has been sacked without pension, nobody has been demoted. After the Katunayake debacle the President even thanked the armed services for their efficiency. All that will happen is that the debris will be cleared after the insurance companies have looked at the remains and life will continue as usual. You see, the Sinhalese cannot afford to have a sense of shame. If they had a sense of shame, considering all the things that have happened over the past two decades, they would all be dead of apoplexy by now. . . .⁵

Another regular analyst K. Godage wailed in the *Island* newspaper that the LTTE’s blitzkrieg on the Katunayake airport was a revenge attack. His analysis was full of depression, with intermittent undercurrents of anger and sadness. Excerpts:

“Shock, deep sadness and insecurity pervades this country today, for we have been badly let down once again. The questions being asked are, ‘Who is responsible for our security?’ ‘Is anybody accountable to anybody, leave alone us the people, whom they are least concerned about?’ The words ‘responsibility’ and ‘accountability’ have lost their meaning in this country. . . .

‘Disgraceful, quite unbelievable, shocking, pathetic’ were some of the words that came to mind, when I first heard of the attack. These thoughts were

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overtaken by anger and I am certain that millions around this country felt the way as I did. In recent years we have had six major attacks by the LTTE in the city. Does not the sheer ineptitude of those responsible make you sick in the guts? And we are said to be on some sort of war footing. . . . Do not those responsible feel ashamed of themselves? Is there no self-respect left? I suppose SHAME is something unknown to the authorities. The LTTE leaders may be considering us as a pack of morons and imbeciles — and who can blame them. . . ?”⁶

After providing his ‘two penny-worth’ of advice, such as upgrading of Intelligence of the state’s security apparatus by enlisting ‘foreign assistance’, to the authorities concerned, Godage concluded his sermon to the ruling mandarins, “If the country’s main international airport cannot be secured from terrorist attack what more? Can any foreigner have any confidence to even visit this country, leave alone invest. The hotel cancellations are just coming in — and we can expect doom and gloom in the months ahead. What a let down!” I would add that Godage should focus more on upgrading the ‘intelligence’ of politicians who cling to the ropes of power in Sri Lanka.

To be fair by K. Godage, he had included in his commentary, nine specific massacres perpetrated by the Sri Lankan army on Tamils from July 1983 to 1985, with a qualifying note that “The LTTE in their charge against the armed forces of Sri Lanka [has] cited the following instances of mass massacres. I cannot vouch for their authenticity of some of the incidents cited but according to them the following massacres occurred.”

Taken together, what one can gather from these depression-tinged writings of Sinhalese public is that they circumstantially pay compliments to Pirabhakaran’s strategic skills as a leader of an army. But observers should not forget that Pirabhakaran earned his merits the old-fashioned way; by trial and error, by experimentation and improvisation, and by specifically adhering to the three components of Edison’s formula for success — ‘*stick-to-it-iveness*’, common sense and hard work. What is remarkable is the fact that, during the past two centuries, he never had the benefit of a military role model among Tamils in India, Eelam, Malaysia or Singapore, to follow.

BREARLEY’S THOUGHTS ON LEADERSHIP

It is opportune at this moment to introduce the thoughts on leadership, as presented by a sportsman, who knew his beans. Mike Brearley (born 1942) was a former England test cricketer, who is recognized for his winning record as a captain in the 1970s. Clear thinking, calmness under pressure and decisiveness were his forté in delivering success as a leader. Brearley’s eight thoughts on leadership skills are as follows:⁷

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1. Seen from a distance a successful team may look well organized and cohesive; get closer up and you see, in my experience, the vigour and rivalries of a group of strong personalities. It is like a lively argumentative family.
2. The aim of a team is not to remove individuality but to harness it in the intents of the whole.
3. When a team works well all its members share aims. Selfishness is modified when our ends and identifications broaden.
4. The good leader gives weight to both forces, the needs of the individual and those of the team. He or she will foster an atmosphere in which members of the group feel free enough to have their heads, without slipping over into selfishness. It can be a fine line.
5. These tensions — self interest versus group interest, freedom versus equality, conflict versus cohesion — appear in all teams. Both elements in the contrast need attention, and a sensitive leader helps the balance to veer in relation to the prevailing wind, keeping the boat on course. The leader’s task requires flexibility. He or she needs to be firm and capable of strong, decisive action but has to listen, consult and give people their heads.
6. Another area of flexibility lies between delegation and taking decisions (and responsibility) oneself. In the ordinary running of a team the confident leader can allow, from moment to moment, different individuals to be in charge, provided always that he or she can when necessary reassume control.
7. There are always tendencies within a group to go against the task of the team, and at such times the leader’s responsibility is not only to listen and facilitate, but also to persuade, enlist and confront. At such times a leader needs courage and a willingness to fight the source of infection, as well as tact and freedom of mind.
8. Another requirement is to have the capacity to free oneself from the prevailing emotional valencies. . . . Team leaders need, as Freud said of members of his profession, courage.

Pirabhakaran scores well in each of the eight demands of leadership, presented by Brearley. What is noteworthy is that, Brearley had the benefit of a first class degree from Cambridge University before he embarked on his success as one of the two winningest test cricket captains (the other being, Ray

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Illingworth), England produced in the past five decades. But Pirabhakaran’s formal education was limited to secondary school level in Jaffna. In addition, the level of risk and responsibility is more daunting for Pirabhakaran than what was faced by Brearley during his captainship of the cricket team. First, whereas Brearley led only 10 men, Pirabhakaran has to lead now around 10,000 young men and women. Secondly, whereas Brearley’s opponents in the field consisted of only 11 men at any time frame, Pirabhakaran has to face an opponent, who is ten-fold higher in head-count. Thirdly, whereas cricket, for Brearley, is only a summer game; but civil war for Pirabhakaran is a more serious effort.

Being a Classics scholar, Brearley closed his essay on leadership with the following paragraph, which is worth reproducing:

“Good teams, in whatever sphere of life, require a wide range of qualities that are in creative tension with each other. The Greek historian Xenophon, writing about the situation in 504 BC when the Greek City States were faced with threats of invasion from Persia, listed the personal requirements for an elected general: ‘ingenius, energetic, careful, full of stamina and presence of mind ... loving and tough, straightforward and crafty, ready to gamble everything and wishing to have everything, generous and greedy, trusting and suspicious’. The situation has not changed much since 504 BC.”⁸

Judging from his track record, from Anuradhapura ‘Massacre’ of May 1985 to Katunayake Air-Force Base raid (which generated the above-mentioned depression-tinged breast-beating by the Sinhalese public) in July 2001, none will dare to question if one asserts that Pirabhakaran fits the bill — word for word — of what Xenophon wanted in an elected general.

11

In the eyes of International Journalists

PIRABHAKARAN IN THE EYES OF INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISTS

PIRABHAKARAN became a focus of attention to the journalists in 1986. He was only 32 then. For the past 18 years, this journalistic peeping via the ‘key-hole’ on Pirabhakaran has continued unabated. A rarely available, exclusive interview with Pirabhakaran is a career-booster for any budding journalist in Sri Lanka or India. In 1987, the year which I designated as the ‘year of paradigm shift’ (see, chapter 10), two biographical essays^{1,2} on Pirabhakaran in the international magazines established his stature beyond the South Asian region, as a young leader of note. These two biographical essays specifically include two facts which mark the early career of Pirabhakaran. First is the 1975 assassination of Duraiappah, in which Pirabhakaran is identified as one of the three hit-men. The second is the ruthless nature of Pirabhakaran’s LTTE which elevated itself to power in 1986, by decimating the competing Tamil militant factions. As once noted by Sirimavo Bandaranaike (when she was out of power), “Facts sometimes do not give us the whole truth³.” Journalists, being in a hurry to beat the deadline, rarely bother to reflect on the question of ‘why’ LTTE had to take such a drastic action, which left an unpleasant taste in the Eelam campaign.

At least one Indian journalist, K. P. Sunil, who also authored a biographical essay on Pirabhakaran in 1987 with the caption ‘Cornered’ had provided the following suggestion.

“While the LTTE was consolidating its position [between 1983 and 1985], several other militant groups like the Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS), the Tamil Eelam Liberation Army (TELA), the Tamil Eelam Army (TEA) and several other minor groups with similar goals and objectives, but with marginal differences in ideology, had sprung up. With the proliferation in the number of militant groups, the Eelam movement started losing its identity and Pirabhakaran probably encouraged by his superior military strength and strike power, decided to assimilate lesser groups through military action rather than through a process of dialogue.

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In 1986, at Pirabhakaran’s initiative, the LTTE decimated TELO, which in 1980 had been its ally in the Neerveli Bank raid (when Rs. 8 million was looted) and also in some of its initial encounters with the Sri Lankan army. Soon after, EPRLF was declared an enemy and became the target of Tiger attacks.”⁴

Sunil was correct in identifying the factor why Pirabhakaran made a swift move against his one-time Eelam Tamil allies. One should also stress that the two militant groups which Pirabhakaran had targeted, namely TELO and EPRLF, had become ‘intelligence-hazards’ to the vital growth of LTTE during that time. Being on the pay-roll of India’s intelligence operatives, both TELO and EPRLF, by 1986, had lost track of their original mission and vitality and thus were becoming only of nuisance value.

Regarding Pirabhakaran’s role as an assassin of Alfred Duraiappah, I present the following analogy. A notable number of Americans (such as Jimmy Stewart, George McGovern and John Glenn) who later became famous in their chosen professions, served as bomber pilots during the second world war, and did kill quite a number of civilians in Europe by their actions. The only misfortune these civilians living in Germany and Italy had was that they were living under the dictates of Hitler and Mussolini. But, none would dare to label Jimmy Stewart, George McGovern and John Glenn as killers or as assassins. In a similar vein, the homicide of Duraiappah has to be treated as a symptom of tension-filled phase, which engulfed Jaffna in January 1974, with the untimely death of ten Tamils at the end of the Fourth International Tamil Research Conference.

In this context, attention should also be drawn to the study of Dutch anthropologist Peter Kloos, who spent four months (July – October 1993) in Sri Lanka for field work. Contrary to what I had argued in chapter 10, Kloos favored 1983, as the year of the beginning of civil war. To quote,

“Sri Lanka is at war — with itself. Since 1983 a permanent civil war of exceptional cruelty is raging, especially in the north and the east of the island. This civil war is sometimes characterized as an ethnic conflict between a Sinhala majority and a Tamil minority. To some extent it is — but such a characteristic may unduly overemphasize ethnic homogeneity of either population, and underestimate internal differences and conflicts that contribute to the construction of ethnic identities.”⁵

Then, Kloos also identified two problems which researchers had to face in studying the Sri Lankan civil war. The first is, “It is not possible under present circumstances to carry out the research one would like to do. It is impossible to carry out research in the LTTE-controlled north of Sri Lanka and among the LTTE themselves, unless one becomes a Tiger. This, however, implies giving

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up independency of views.” The second problem is that “ethnic identity is a dynamic as well as an elusive phenomenon; dynamic in the sense that it is being reconstructed all the time, elusive because it can hardly be objectified.”

These two problems identified by Kloos, though completely ignored by other academics, are very relevant in analyzing the main criticism against Pirabhakaran and LTTE that he doesn’t serve the Tamil interests since he and his group has killed so many Tamils who disagreed with his views. In his concluding remarks, Kloos had observed:

“The fiercest fights in the mid 1980s were between several Tamil secessionist groups rather than between these Tamil groups and the Sri Lankan Government. Although this intra-Tamil struggle has to some extent been documented (*see*, Hoole *et al.* 1990; Narayan Swamy, 1994) it is not very clear why the LTTE won that struggle: it may have had the most ruthless and uncompromising leader of the almost forty Tamil insurgent groups that had come into existence in the 1970s. The emergence of the LTTE may thus have been predicated on the extreme personality characteristics of their leader, but such an individual factor does not explain why he was successful.... Fear for Tamils created the Tigers, one could with some exaggeration say, but fear for the Tigers resulted in seeing a Tiger in any young Tamil (LTTE attacks, real or supposed, are usually followed by razzia’s in Colombo, in which often hundreds of young Tamils are remanded). In these processes of escalation, cause and effect are hard to distinguish from each other....”⁶

12

Pirabhakaran and Duraiappah

PIRABHAKARAN’S RETURN WHICH SHIFTED THE PARDIGM

PIRABHAKARAN’S return to Eelam from Tamil Nadu in January 1987 was a land mark event in recent South Asian history. It has parallels to Mahatma Gandhi’s first landing in South Africa, from Rajkot in 1893. That was a paradigm-shifting journey, which the then imperial British rulers never bothered to notice seriously. Why did a timid young barrister Gandhi (then aged only 24), with a mediocre profile in his barrister job opt to travel to South Africa? In his autobiography, Gandhi states that even in his homeland, he was insulted by the arrogance of British authorities.

Similarly, why did Pirabhakaran (then aged 32) who had enjoyed the cozy comfort of MGR’s preferential patronage for more than 3 years, decide to return to Eelam? Of course, at an opportune time, Pirabhakaran himself will share it with the Eelam Tamils, what was in his mind when the year 1986 was fading into history. Five interpretations on why Pirabhakaran returned to Eelam exist in published literature. All these different versions, offered by different analysts, may have elements of truth in them. Let me first provide the different versions which have appeared in print, and then sift the kernels of truth.

1: *Indian Intelligence operative’s version*

“... It was not until January 1987, that Prabhakaran returned to Jaffna although the local commanders had been pleading with him to visit them at least once. Two unrelated reasons made Prabhakaran return. One was the genuine feeling for the suffering Tamils in the peninsula when the Sri Lankan Government introduced the ban on movement of fuel, and two, he did not want Kittu, who had attained fame in the earlier ‘Operation Short Shrift’ when the LTTE successfully pushed back the Sri Lankan forces into their camps in April 1986, to consolidate his standing among the people of Jaffna.”¹

2: *Journalist Anita Pratap’s version*

“Prabhakaran’s view was that Rajiv Gandhi was not having the true picture of the Tamil problems and, therefore, he was swayed by the officers. A little before November 1986, I met Prabhakaran at Madras. I also met Prabhakaran in early December 1986, after he returned from the SAARC meeting [held in Bangalore]. I met him at Madras. He said that MGR was furious that he

Chapter 12. Pirabhakaran and Duraippah

[Prabhakaran] did not sign the Accord with Jayawardhene at Bangalore. MGR summoned Prabhakaran and gave him a tongue lashing. Prabhakaran gave his reasons for not doing this. MGR said at that time, ‘If you are operating in Tamil Nadu, I have allowed you to operate in Tamil Nadu. But you have to play by our rules’. But Prabhakaran said that ‘I can’t surrender my Cause’. At which point, MGR apparently told him ‘You fight for it in your country’. Prabhakaran is a man of tremendous pride and he walked out of that meeting and has apparently never returned to Tamil Nadu.”²

3: Prof. Kingsley M. de Silva’s version [akin to UNP’s] version

“At the end of the Bangalore Conference it was announced that, ‘Apart from the subjects of finance, and administration which were not clarified with the TULF, the matters which require further clarification and agreement [were] fully set out in (a) working paper on (the) Bangalore discussions, dated 18 (November) 1986’.

The LTTE alone adamantly refused to accept these proposals. The Indian government showed its displeasure by imposing restrictions on Sri Lankan Tamil activists operating from Indian territory. This was the first time that such restrictions had been imposed. The initiatives of the Indian government in this regard were nullified by the Tamil Nadu government’s unconcealed reluctance to cooperate in these moves. In addition the Indian government sought to prevent the LTTE leader Prabhakaran then operating from Tamil Nadu from leaving India for Jaffna. These pressures succeeded until the end of 1986 by which time Prabhakaran and the LTTE ideologue Balasingham slipped across the Palk Straits to the Jaffna peninsula, to continue to fight from there.”³

4: P. Nedumaran’s [one of Pirabhakaran’s confidant’s] version

“On January 3 [1987], Prabhakaran had a farewell meeting with Nedumaran, the only Indian who was privy to the LTTE supremo’s departure plans. . . . He dismissed the others and confided to Nedumaran that he was leaving for ever because he feared for his life in India. ‘(If we remained here), ‘we will not be able to take independent decisions for our people’s welfare’, Prabhakaran said. ‘There is a plan to have me killed in Madras or New Delhi. The danger will remain as long as I remain here. Our struggle will intensify if I return to Eelam’.”⁴

5: J. N. Dixit’s [India’s top honcho in Colombo during 1986–89] version:⁵

“By the end of 1986, Prabhakaran was disillusioned with his Indian connection. The pressure generated on the LTTE after the Bangalore SAARC Summit made him decide that he must shift his base to Sri Lanka for a long struggle. His judgement has been proved correct with the passage of time.”

Among the five versions presented above, the self-serving Indian Intelligence operative’s reason that Pirabhakaran returned to Eelam because he feared the ascendancy of his colleague Kittu is a dubious one; though the other reason provided by the Indian Intelligence-*wallah* corroborates well with the versions of others. Then, it is interesting to compare the versions of Anita

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Pratap and Kingsley de Silva, since both are contradictory. According to Anita Pratap, MGR pushed Pirabhakaran to leave Tamil Nadu. But Prof. de Silva has mentioned that the “Indian government sought to prevent the LTTE leader Prabhakaran from leaving India for Jaffna”, and he also states that the Tamil Nadu government [to be understood as, MGR] nullified the initiatives of the Indian government.

When one studies the farewell message of Pirabhakaran delivered to Nedumaran that “he[Pirabhakaran] was leaving forever because he feared for his life in India” with that of Prof. de Silva’s version that India wanted to keep Pirabhakaran in India and that of Anita Pratap’s version that MGR pushed Pirabhakaran to leave Tamil Nadu, one can infer circumstantially that the Indian Intelligence-wallahs might have planned to assassinate Pirabhakaran. MGR’s parental-type of admonition, based nonetheless on affection, to Pirabhakaran to leave Tamil Nadu has to be understood as a premonitory warning against the duplicitious mind-set of India’s intelligence wallahs. Even J. N. Dixit’s diplomatic version is an admission on the failure of India’s intelligence-wallahs to keep Pirabhakaran within their handling range, and he compliments Pirabhakaran’s intuition with the statement, “**His [Pirabhakaran’s] judgement has been proved correct with the passage of time.**”

PIRABHAKARAN AND DURAIAPPAH: A PATRIOT AND A LOYALIST

Pirabhakaran’s return to Jaffna in January 1987 completed a rite of passage; he had transformed himself from a fugitive (since mid 1975) to a full-fledged leader. This (if one may call, tortuous and torturous) route to leadership does exist, as demonstrated by the careers of Mao Ze Dong, Menachem Begin and Fidel Castro. Even Pirabhakaran’s boyhood idol Subhas Chandra Bose had taken this route to claim a place among the pantheons of India’s freedom struggle. Thus, I would like to focus on the event which made Pirabhakaran, a fugitive in 1975.

Why did Pirabhakaran assassinate Duraiappah? The simple answer, if expressed in the context of American freedom struggle, Pirabhakaran was (and is) a patriot, and Duraiappah was a loyalist. July 27, 1975 is marked as the first military encounter in Eelam history, similar to June 27, 1776, which marked the first hanging of an American soldier, executed by order of a military court of Patriots. Thomas Hickey was condemned as a traitor for conspiring to deliver General Washington to the British rulers and hanged near Bowery Lane in the New York City.

Do I condone the assassination of Duraiappah? In a letter to the *Tamil Times*(London) I had stated,⁶

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“Being a Tamil born in the post-independent Sri Lanka, like so many hundreds of thousands of Tamils living in Sri Lanka, India and elsewhere in this globe, I share the ideals for which the LTTE is fighting a revolutionary war against the Sri Lankan government’s armed forces. But this does not mean that I agree with all the actions of the LTTE and I also have no authority to speak on behalf of the LTTE. However I am not going to give up to anyone who does not acknowledge the positive contributions of the LTTE to the Tamil liberation struggle. . . .

LTTE has behaved (and is behaving) like every other revolutionary movement in the world which initiated an armed struggle against a more powerful, entrenched adversary. Beginning from the American revolutionary war (led by George Washington) in the 18th century to the Soviet revolution (led by Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin), Chinese revolution (led by Mao Tse Tung and Zhou En Lai) and Cuban revolution (led by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara) in this century, all the revolutionary struggles have shed much blood, not all belonging to that of adversary. Hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians also died for no fault of theirs. There were also an adequate share of blunders in every revolutionary struggle which became a success. So why one has to set a different standard to the Tamil Tigers, while paying homage to the actions of revolutionary heroes of the past, whether it is Washington or Lenin? . . .

If we study the historical events in proper perspective, the actions of LTTE infringing the human rights of fellow citizens (whether they are Tamils, Muslims or Sinhalese) is neither applausable nor despicable, in terms of a revolutionary struggle. It will be great if Eelam is born without a shed of blood, but even under the leadership of the apostle of non-violence Mahatma Gandhi, a free India was born with a loss of many millions of lives, with another ‘pre-term baby’ Pakistan, which itself gave a tragic birth to Bangladesh. . . .”

DURAIAPPAH’S ASSASSINATION

Alfred Duraiappah has a visible internet presence. This is probably due to the ‘Tunney Hunsacker effect’. ‘He is the Tunney Hunsacker of Tamil history.’ Does the name Tunney Hunsacker rings a bell to anyone? Even among boxing enthusiasts, only an avid fan of boxing history may remember this name. His recognition comes from the fact that he was the first professional opponent of Muhammad Ali, who won a decision against him on October 29, 1960 at Louisville, Kentucky. Duraiappah is remembered not for any of his achievements in politics or social service or academics, but as the first military opponent of Pirabhakaran.

This being the reality, a valiant attempt to project Duraiappah as a Tamil humanist and social worker was made by the scribes of University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna), in one of their news bulletins in 2000. In a sym-

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pathetic portrayal of Duraiappah, these scribes wrote as follows:

“27th July 2000 was the 25th anniversary of the murder of Jaffna’s mayor and former MP, Alfred Duraiappah. He may not have represented any great principle or ideal in politics. But he had one great virtue, he was a killer neither in private life nor in politics. He did not aspire to lead the Tamil people, nor did he care to project himself outside the Jaffna electorate. Inside the electorate his politics is simple. He tried to make everyone feel that he was their family member. He even tried to befriend those who regarded him an enemy and attended their functions uninvited. He knew everyone by name, and he could often be seen in a Muslim tailor’s shop near the Jaffna Court where he practiced, half-seated on a table, chatting to ordinary people, waving at passersby and inquiring after their affairs. It suited him to have government patronage to pass on and so he aligned himself with the SLFP.

He posed a challenge to the nationalist TULF (Federal Party) in the prestigious Jaffna electorate and nowhere else. It irked the nationalists that this man who was oblivious to nationalist claims and dealt only with jobs, transfers, market buildings, a stadium, public lavatories and lamp posts could be popular with the people. . . . ” ⁷

This apology to Duraiappah mixes facts and fiction. Ah! the Duraiappah Stadium — the eponymous arena to proclaim his name in Jaffna. The facts related to the naming of this stadium reveals one of the vices Duraiappah had, but hidden by his apologists. A personally affable politician (akin to the big-city alderman in an American setting) of limited local influence, Duraiappah had his quota of vanities. Jack van Sanden (a retired D. I. S. Police) exposed this in 1981. To quote,

“When I was Superintendent of Police, Northern Province, a Public Committee convened under my chairmanship that did the spade work, collected the necessary funds and completed the Jaffna Sports Stadium. The credit for this formidable task must go primarily to the public of Jaffna who were more than lavish in promoting this praiseworthy scheme and helping to bring it into being. This stadium was built for the present and past generations of sportsmen of the North, for whose benefit this project was primarily intended. I may mention that the late Mr. A. S. Mariyanayagam, who was then Asst. Supdt. of Police, Jaffna and Mr. P. A. Pragasam, who was the Manager of Lake House Branch, Jaffna, were a great asset to me in collecting the necessary funds. If not for their assistance this scheme might not have materialized.

After I left Jaffna on transfer the completed Stadium was handed over to the Municipal Council by the Stadium Committee as it found it difficult to maintain it. This would never have happened had I continued to be in Jaffna. The late Mr. Alfred Duraiappah, who was subsequently elected the Mayor of

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Jaffna named the Stadium after his name. He was only a member of the Stadium Committee that assisted me and at no time did he function as the President of the Stadium Committee after I vacated the post. For these reasons I am not happy with the present name. I have no doubt that the Jaffna public appreciates what I have done and the Municipal Council would consider changing the name and give it a suitable name appropriate for the peninsula.”

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Duraiappah did some generous things to Jaffna people during his tenure as the Mayor of Jaffna. But, as Holmes had pointed out, Jaffna voters in the 1960s and the first half of 1970s also knew ‘why he did what he did’. That’s why they were cynical about all politicians with the possible exception of Chelvanayakam. Thus, it is misleading to evaluate Duraiappah’s 1975 assassination in isolation. For an objective evaluation, the factors which precipitated this assassination have to be explored and interpreted. Until now, anti-LTTE analysts had ignored these precipitating factors.

Duraiappah became known nationally when he was elected to the Jaffna constituency as an Independent in the March and July 1960 general elections, in three-cornered contests, defeating the Tamil Congress leader G. G. Ponnambalam and the Federal Party candidate. In the 1965 general election, G. G. Ponnambalam defeated Duraiappah in the Jaffna constituency. Then, in the 1970 general election, both Duraiappah and G. G. Ponnambalam were defeated in the Jaffna constituency by the Federal Party nominee, C. X. Martyn. Thus, Duraiappah’s limelight at the national level lasted only 5 years.

Narayan Swamy, while describing in detail ‘how’ Pirabhakaran had prepared for his confrontation on July 27, 1975, failed to discuss ‘why’ Duraiappah had to meet his fate like that. This lapse has been taken care of by Kingsley de Silva. In his second volume of J. R. Jayewardene biography, de Silva introduced Pirabhakaran as follows:

“By the mid 1970s radicalization of politics in Jaffna was an established fact, and with radicalization came violence, including the beginnings of terrorism as a fact of life in the politics of the Tamils, especially in the north and east of the island. At the beginnings the targets in these carefully chosen acts of political violence were Tamils associated with the government, culminating in the attempted murder of a pro-government Tamil MP, and then the murder of the Mayor of Jaffna, Alfred Durayappah, a leading figure among Tamil supporters of the UF government in the north, by Velupillai Prabhakaran, who was to become, in time, the most prominent and violent of the separatist activists among the Tamils.”⁹

In the above passage, though de Silva referred to “radicalization of politics in Jaffna” and “with radicalization came violence”, he failed to elaborate how

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and why radicalization came to the Tamil zones of the island. However, in his *magnum opus* ‘*A History of Sri Lanka*’, de Silva had described the practices of political thuggery and patronage peddling of ruling party operatives as well as the emerging authoritarian tendencies which were poisoning the Sri Lankan political atmosphere. Excerpts:

“Under the U. F. [United Front] government, emergency powers were invoked in dealing with the [JVP] insurgency, but they were retained long after it had been crushed, and were extended from month to month, not because they were really necessary but because they were inconvenient in dealing with dissent. These emergency regulations in effect suspended normal political processes, if not the constitution as a whole, and conferred extraordinary powers on the government. . . . Forces within the government [which] pressed for increasingly authoritarian attitudes toward its political opponents. This trend was originally an after-effect of the suppression of the insurgency of 1972, but it persisted throughout the government’s tenure of office, long after the threat to the security of the state had disappeared. Indeed this authoritarianism was one of the most distinctive characteristics of Mrs. Bandaranaike’s U. F. government. . . .

One other point needs elaboration, namely discrimination on political grounds. This form of discrimination is a comparatively novel one in the context of the liberal political traditions of Sri Lanka. Preferential treatment of supporters of the government in recruitment and promotion within the state service has always been a feature of the process of government in Sri Lanka since independence, but now, for the first time, preferential treatment of government supporters was ‘institutionalized’. . . . The bases of appointment were political affiliation, personal connection, or still more dubious considerations. It led to both inefficiency and corruption, with the latter serving the function of mitigating the worst effects of this system of open discrimination against employment of children and close relatives of Opposition activists and supporters, and the former serving the equally important one of softening the harsher and more repressive features of the authoritarianism which the U.F. established and encouraged. . . .”¹⁰

de Silva also observed, in the same chapter briefly, how the Sirimavo Bandaranaike-led government came to be unpopular among the Tamils, due to the antics of Badiuddin Mahmud, the Minister of Education.

“In his hand, this cabinet post became at once a political base and a fountain of patronage, to be used to strengthen the ties between his [Muslim] community and the Party to which he belonged, the SLFP. Such success as he achieved in this was by its very nature transient. He was soon a controversial figure; his education policy was one of the major points of divergence between the government and the Tamils.”¹¹

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de Silva had further summarized the then-fermenting sentiments of Tamils, especially among the youth as follows:

“A by-product of the increasing alienation of the Tamils from the Sinhalese since the adoption of the [1972] new constitution was the conversion of a large section of the Tamils of the north to the idea of a separate state: it is an indication of the intensity of feeling in the Tamil areas at what they saw as a deliberate attempt to reduce them to subordinate status. . . .”¹²

Nevertheless, de Silva failed to highlight the specific events which impacted the Jaffna region between 1972 and 1974. These include,

1. S. J. V. Chelvanayakam resigning his Kankesanthurai seat in the National State Assembly in October 2, 1972, challenging the UF government to test the popularity of its newly introduced Constitution among the Tamils.
2. Undue postponement of the Kankesanthurai by-election by the government for over two years.
3. Vehement opposition of the UF government for holding the 4th International Tamil Research Conference in Jaffna, in January 1974 and its unfortunate repercussions.
4. UF government eventually nominating a locally influential Communist Party candidate Mr. V. Ponnambalam to contest the by-election against Mr. Chelvanayakam.
5. Mr. Chelvanayakam winning the Kankesanthurai by-election, held in February 6, 1975, by a margin of over 16,000 votes (Chelvanayakam polling 25,927 votes against Ponnambalam’s 9,457 votes).

WHY DURAIAPPAH AND NOT V. PONNAMBALAM?

The first public announcement for a separate state for Tamils was made by TULF leader Chelvanayakam during his campaign for Kankesanthurai by-election in January 1975. Duraiappah, having anointed himself as the ‘prime pimp’ for the Sirimavo Bandaranaike’s discriminatory policies in Jaffna peninsula canvassed support for the unpopular UF government. His assassination took place five months after the Kankesanthurai by-election.

Why Duraiappah, and not V. Ponnambalam (who represented the U. F. government in the much delayed, Feb. 1975 by-election for Kankesanthurai) was assassinated? Is it because, though V. Ponnambalam represented the Communist Party, he had a ‘clean image’ and his sincerity of purpose was not

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doubted by even young Tamil militants. Contrastingly, Duraiappah, though being an ex-MP for Jaffna, by his deeds had turned into a ‘prime pimp’ for the repulsive SLFP rule. Thus, one could infer that Duraiappah lost his life, mainly because he served as the public face of the repulsive policies enforced by Sirimavo Bandaranaike’s regime in Jaffna.

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LTTE’S VIEW OF ITS TAMIL RIVALS IN 1987

THE SEEDS FOR the disinformation campaign that the LTTE is an ‘anti-Tamil’ organization were first sown by the India’s Intelligence operatives and their Eelam acolytes, once the officers manning the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) found to their chagrin that Pirabhakaran had left Tamil Nadu. How LTTE viewed the situation in early 1987, when Pirabhakaran returned to Eelam is revealed by the interview given by Kiddu to *Asiaweek*’s correspondent Aruna Kulatunga in December 1986. Excerpts: ¹

Asiaweek: Why did you join the militant movement?

Kiddu: Ours was never an ideological struggle against a majority because of race or religion. It had to do with economic factors — education, employment, out right to decide what we want to do.

Asiaweek: Tamil politicians are negotiating with the government right now. Why have you refused to do so?

Kiddu: The politicians have no say in Jaffna now. We are in complete control. They don’t even come to Jaffna. We haven’t negotiated with the government because there is nothing to negotiate. We want a separate state and we have already achieved our objective here in Jaffna. But if they want to talk to us, they are welcome.

Asiaweek: What action have you planned for the present and future?

Kiddu: For now, it’s a case of containment. We have time on our hands. Our cadres are very young, mostly in their late teens. All are completely committed, all have been personally affected by the violence. The LTTE has more than 10,000 regulars all over the country. The whole population of Jaffna supports us.

Asiaweek: What about the other Tamil militant groups?

Kiddu: PLOT [People’s Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam] has ceased to exist and its Jaffna leader, Vijayapalan, is in our custody. We are now in the process of disbanding EPRLF [Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front], just like we did to TELO [Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation]. The latter was acting against the common interests of the Tamil people to establish a state of their own and govern it themselves. TELO was being influenced and virtually controlled by outsiders. Secondly, it was carrying out anti-social acts such as

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robbing people of money and levying taxes that were too high. EPRLF came under the influence of the same people who controlled TELO. We have asked EPRLF to disband itself and turn over its weapons to us. If it disobeys, we will have to take strong action. That’s the only way to prevent a third party from interfering in what is purely a problem between us and the Sinhalese. After all, we are still Sri Lankans.

Asiaweek: Why insist on a separate state?

Kiddu: [That] is our ultimate goal. We will not lay down arms until we achieve it. But, in the interim, we want the authorities to recognize that we have the right to a separate state of our own and to occupy areas where Tamils have been living for ages.

Asiaweek: Do you think the new peace proposals are sincere?

Kiddu: We think they are a farce. The government says there is devolution of central power. But each department is ultimately controlled by an appointee of the president. Even the chief minister will be a presidential appointee. So what is the control we are going to have?

This particular issue of *Asiaweek* magazine which carried Kiddu’s interview also informed the readers that he had a \$ 35,000 price on his head. About Pirabhakaran’s return, it regurgitated the view espoused by the Indian Intelligence operatives [*see*, chapter 12] as follows:

“Early last month, Prabhakaran returned to the peninsula from his base in Madras, the capital of Tamil Nadu State in south India. His visit — the first in three years — came amid rumors of a power struggle between the LTTE’s India-based leadership and field commanders in Jaffna. Reports circulated recently that Prabhakaran had ‘arrested’ Kiddu, who had begun asserting himself in his absence. However, LTTE sources contacted by *Asiaweek* in Jaffna before direct telephone links were suspended said the commander was not under detention. Earlier, Kiddu himself had denied a rupture with his leader and dismissed reports of one as ‘propaganda by the government’...”

2

The disinformation campaign on LTTE gained momentum when the Colombo-based hacks who were torch-carriers to the brutal Premadasa regime (such as H. L. D. Mahindapala and Dayan Jayatilleka) picked up the chant of India’s mandarins and intelligence operatives to deflect the criticism on human rights abuse during the first two years of Premadasa period.

A CRITIQUE ON THE STATISTICS OF LTTE’S “MASSACRES”

The dictionary defines a proposition as, ‘a scheme or proposal offered for consideration or acceptance’. Since its emergence in mid-1970s, one of the

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oft-repeated proposition on LTTE, by the fast-talking politicians in Sri Lanka as well as India and regurgitated in the partisan press of Colombo as well as Chennai is that, LTTE led by Pirabhakaran is not a liberation movement, but a ‘brutal, fascist and terrorist’ movement. This proposition, by extension, argues that LTTE is thus not a true representative of Eelam Tamils. A representative example is the editorial in the *Island* (Colombo) newspaper in 2001. It provided the numbers I had wanted on the LTTE’s ‘massacres’ since 1984 from an anti- LTTE source. The numbers the *Island* editorialist had served to his readership is reproduced below.³

“The following are proof of what LTTE terrorism is like behind the facade of ‘liberation’. The LTTE has so far committed over 200 massacres obviously to rid the north and east of Sinhalese and Muslims. The following incidents selected at random are glaring examples of LTTE terrorism.

- | | | |
|---------------|---|--|
| 1984 | : | The LTTE kills 127 civilians, mostly Sinhalese, in the north |
| 1985 | : | The LTTE kills 150 Sinhala civilians at prayer in Anuradhapura |
| 1986 May 3 | : | The LTTE bombs an Air Lanka plane in Colombo, killing 16 people |
| 1986 May 7 | : | bombs the Central Telegraph Office, Colombo, killing 14 people. |
| 1987 | : | The LTTE kills 113 people in Colombo by exploding a car bomb. |
| 1987 June | : | kills 29 Buddhist monks at Arantalawa. |
| 1988 March 3 | : | LTTE kills 15 Sinhalese civilians in Morawewa. |
| 1988 March 5 | : | blows up a truck in Trincomalee killing 24 civilians. |
| 1988 May 1 | : | blows up a bus in Trincomalee killing 22 passengers. |
| 1988 Nov.14 | : | kills 27 Sinhalese civilians in a bus. |
| 1989 Feb.11 | : | the LTTE kills by hacking and shooting 34 Sinhalese civilians in Duluwewa. |
| 1989 Feb.28 | : | kills 37 Sinhalese civilians at Borawewa. |
| 1990 | : | LTTE massacres 600–700 policemen who surrender on government orders during the LTTE-UNP talks. |
| 1990 Aug.3 | : | the LTTE uses machetes, guns and grenades to kill 40 Muslims praying in a mosque in the eastern village of Kattankudy. |
| 1990 Aug.12 | : | the LTTE massacres 122 Muslims in Eravur. |
| 1991 April 21 | : | the LTTE kills 21 Sinhalese villagers in Moneragala. |
| 1991 | : | Kills 27 civilians in Batticaloa. |

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1992 April 29	:	the LTTE kills 56 Muslims at Alinchipathana.
1992 Oct.15	:	explodes a bicycle bomb in Batticaloa killing 22 Muslims.
1992 Oct.15	:	the LTTE massacres 166 Muslims in Paliyagodella.
1993 May 1	:	the LTTE assassinates Sri Lankan President Ranasingha Premadasa, together with 22 others.
1994 Jan.19	:	the LTTE kills 15 bus passengers at Anuradhapura.
1994 March 21	:	the LTTE kills 22 fishermen in Puttalam.
1994 Nov.24	:	the LTTE kills Sri Lankan Opposition Leader Gamini Dissanayake and 51 others in Colombo during the LTTE-government talks.
1996	:	The LTTE bombs the Central Bank killing 82 civilians.
1996 October	:	the LTTE bombs Hotel Galadari killing 18 civilians.
1998	:	The LTTE bombs Dalada Maligawa killing 16 persons.
1998 May	:	the LTTE explodes a vehicle bomb in Maradana killing over 10 civilians.
1999	:	The LTTE explodes a bomb at the Kandy private bus station killing 2 civilians.
1999 July	:	the LTTE assassinates TULF MP Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam.
1999 December	:	the LTTE makes an attempt on President Chandrika Kumaratunga, and kills 22 civilians.
1999	:	The LTTE bombs a UNP election rally, killing 10 civilians.
2000 June	:	the LTTE kills Minister C. V. Gooneratne and 22 others.
2000 October	:	the LTTE kills 6 persons opposite the Eye Hospital.

Thus could be seen the crimes the LTTE has perpetrated against humanity — and against ‘the Tamil-speaking people’, like Muslims.”

The assassinations of Ranjan Wijeratne and Lalith Athulathmudali were missing in this list somewhat surprisingly indicating that these high-profile killings probably were not LTTE’s attacks. If one adds the number of people who had died, since 1984, due to LTTE’s ‘terrorism’ or ‘crimes against humanity’ as the editorialist of the *Island* has grandiosely implied, the total number cumulates to 1,481 civilians (*i.e.*, 127 + 150 + 16 + 14 + 113 + 29 + 15 + 24 + 22 + 27 + 34 + 37 + 51 + 40 + 122 + 21 + 27 + 56 + 22 + 166 + 23 + 15 + 22 + 52 + 42 + 24 + 82 + 18 + 16 + 10 + 2 + 1 + 22 + 10 + 23 + 6).

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The “600-700 policemen” who were “massacred following surrender on government orders” in 1990 need to be excluded, since this category doesn’t fall under the civilians. Among the 1,481 civilian victims, those specifically identified as Muslim civilians (40 + 122 + 56 + 22) amount to 240. Though the anti-LTTE editorial stated that LTTE had committed “over 200 massacres”, **the supplied information provides figures for only 36 incidents for a period of almost 17 years.** Even some of the ‘massacres’ (especially those which occurred in the Eastern zone), designated by the *Island* editorialist as ‘LTTE-induced’, have been attributed to other militant Tamil factions, who were colluding either with the Indian army or with the Sri Lankan army.

It is also obvious that, if there had been any other incidents where non-Tamil civilians had been killed anywhere in Sri Lanka, with a casualty list exceeding a dozen, the editorialist would certainly have added these numbers with glee and attributed them to LTTE. In the absence of such incidents, the above list is all what the anti-LTTE propagandists could provide for the alleged LTTE ‘massacres’. If the number of Muslims (240) who had been reported ‘killed by the LTTE’ are subtracted from the grand total of 1,481 then, it can be inferred that LTTE had been responsible for the death of 1,241 Sinhalese civilians. Technically, in Sri Lanka, political power-holders such as the President of the state, the Cabinet ministers and even MPs cannot be included in the conventional ‘civilian’ classification, since once they elevate their status from private citizens, they become ‘non-civil’ and do not behave like civilians. Regular civilians do not have gun-totting personal body guards and bullet-proof vehicles.

How valid is the above-cited statistics and the purported inference that “LTTE has perpetrated crimes against humanity” in scientific terms? The obvious question will be, ‘The number of LTTE’s victims compared to what?’ This brings one to the issue of non-use of controls by the journalists and analysts who practise their trades in Colombo and Chennai.

THE CONCEPT OF CONTROLS: SADLY LACKING IN ANTI-LTTE FEATURES

The concept of controls in evaluating a submitted fact deserves a brief introduction. This is one of the cardinal principles in scientific experimentation. Edwin Boring (1886–1968) of Harvard University was an influential American experimental psychologist for nearly four decades in the 20th century. In 1954, he wrote as follows:

“the concept of control is basic to all experimental design and is, indeed, inherent in the essential relational nature of a fact. The word control has three meanings: (1) a *check*, in the sense of a verification but thus also in the sense

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of a restraint, since verification restrains; (2) a *restraint*, in the sense of a checking and thus also in the sense of maintaining constancy; and (3) a *guide* or *directing*, in the sense of producing a precisely predetermined change, a constant and thus a restrained change. The word *check* itself has the first two meanings, though not the last, and the original meaning of control was check, for the word was *counter-roll* (*contre-rolle*), a duplicate register or account made to verify an official or first-made account and thus a check by a later roll upon the earlier. So the thought of correctness or conformity achieved by restraint runs all the way through the history of the word...”⁴

Boring continued further:

“The term *control* in the sense of a check or test observation or experiment came into scientific parlance in the latter half of the nineteenth century. By 1893 we find the *New English Dictionary* defining control as ‘a standard of comparison used to check the inferences deduced from an experiment by application of the Method of Difference’, which is the name of John Stuart Mill’s second method of experimental inquiry.”⁵

Therefore, if one equates the civil unrest which led to civil strife and ultimately civil war in Sri Lanka as a long-running, unfortunate experiment, and the civilian deaths which have occurred since 1983 have been due to multiple parties, of which LTTE is one, for a proper evaluation of LTTE’s role in such civilian deaths, the roles of other parties also need to be considered in the calculation.

Sadly, the concept of control remains an unknown entity for Colombo’s partisan journalists as well as anti-LTTE analysts like the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna). To evaluate the LTTE ‘atrocities’ in the island, an objective analyst should take into account two types of control; (1) internal control (2) external control. An internal control will provide the statistics for deaths occurring in the island, *for which LTTE is not an immediate cause*. An external control will provide the statistics for deaths occurring beyond the borders of Sri Lanka, where a similar situation (a civil war) prevails in which a liberation movement is fighting an entrenched government.

CASUALTY BREAK-DOWN IN THE EELAM CIVIL WAR (JULY 1983–JULY 2001)

For the past few years, international journalists covering the Eelam civil war, routinely provide a sentence to the effect that ‘this war had claimed the lives of 60,000 or 70,000 Sri Lankans’. But, due to reasons of ignorance or difficulties in clearly identifying the military participants and civilians, or for convenience of not offending the Sri Lankan government which allow them partial access to

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battle front, they do not divulge the break-down of casualties. John Colmey’s lengthy report in 1992 was an exception. While traveling through Jaffna, he then noted,

“Death toll [is] estimated at upto 25,000 so far in the civil war. Killed since 1983:

security forces men	:	about 3,000
Tigers	:	5,000–5,500
other militants	:	2,000–2,500
civilians	:	10,000–15,000

In addition, as many as 150,000 have been tortured. Since 1983, the army has grown from a ceremonial force of some 14,000 soldiers to a professional, highly motivated one of 100,000. In the same period the military budget has risen five fold to [US]\$ 433 million.”⁶

Nine years later, the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka provided the following numbers.⁷

1. The estimates of the total number of deaths in the war until 1998, ranged between 50,000 and 60,000.
2. Casualties among the combatants would be in the range between 25,000 and 35,000.
3. Until 1998, the official estimate of deaths in the Sri Lankan armed forces and other security personnel is approximately 12,000. Until 1999, the official estimate for members of the armed forces missing in action is 3,800.
4. The government estimate for deaths of LTTE cadres is approximately 18,000. But according to the estimates provided by the LTTE, it had lost 13,603 cadres until December 1998.
5. Casualties among all the other organizations (not identified by name) could be estimated at another 2,000.
6. The total number of claims received by the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Reconstruction for compensation in cases of death and disappearance in the North and East, until 1992 amounted to 17,529; however, this estimate may have to be adjusted downwards. The total number of civilian deaths in the North and the East for which the government has paid compensation during the period 1994–98 is 4,663.
7. Civilian deaths due to Tamil militant groups, mainly the LTTE, during 1985-90 period could be estimated at about 2,000. During the period 1990–1998 alone, there were about 78 major terrorist acts in the border areas and in Colombo city and its suburbs; the number of civilian deaths caused by them was approximately 1,800.

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Though the numbers stated are reasonable estimates, for obvious reasons, these are skewed against the LTTE, to project the view that the Sri Lankan army has an exemplary human rights record. The reality speaks otherwise.

Since the North and East of the island have remained the the major theater of the war, casualties among Tamil civilians outweighs the casualties among Sinhalese civilians. Thus, my estimates, which can be cross-checked with other published sources in the international press, somehow varies a little from that of the numbers presented by the National Peace Council publication. Two additional points need to be noticed. First, the above numbers do not clearly demarcate the lives lost in the Eelam zone during the Indian army’s war against the LTTE between October 1987 and March 1990. Secondly, the civilian casualties due to the actions of other Tamil militant factions which played the roles as ‘spotters’ and ‘bucket carriers’ to both the Indian army and the Sri Lankan army have been underestimated by nearly 1,000.

MY ESTIMATE OF CASUALTIES IN THE SRI LANKAN CIVIL WAR
[1983–2002]

The ever-increasing death toll in the Eelam civil unrest, which began in 1983, has to be attributed to the actions of four parties, namely

1. Sri Lankan armed forces
2. Indian army (from August 1987 to March 1990)
3. LTTE
4. Other Tamil militant-mercenary groups (PLOTE, EPRLF, TELO and EPDP)

From 1983 to early 2002, LTTE had fought against the Sri Lankan armed forces, Indian army and other Tamil militant-mercenary groups. For convenience, I omitted the death tally due to the deeds of JVP, which should be considered as the fifth party. I omitted the JVP because it’s role was mostly limited to the non-Eelam zones of the island. Realistically, the number of civilian deaths due to JVP aggression (1987–1990), and counter-offensives made by the UNP government have to be scaled altogether in an expanded scale. For instance, the *Economist* magazine, in its report following the assassination of Gamini Dissanayake in 1994 observed that,

“Only five years ago its[Sri Lanka’s] rivers and beaches were filled with mutilated corpses, victims of government-sponsored death squads unleashed to annihilate a Maoist-style insurrection in the Sinhalese south. Up to 60,000

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people died in that conflict — twice the number of casualties in the ethnic war. Ranasinghe Premadasa, who presided over the death squads and was himself killed, was believed to have employed Tamil militants to get rid of his Sinhalese political opponents.”⁸

As of June 2004, in my calculation, the casualty numbers in the Eelam civil war due to the actions of each of the above-mentioned four parties *excluding* JVP, stand as follows:

Sri Lankan armed forces have caused 38,701 deaths; the Indian army (between October 1987 and March 1990) caused 7,000 deaths; LTTE has caused 26,206 deaths; Other Tamil militant groups have caused 2,900 deaths. **Grand total of casualties, thus amount to 74,807.** In percentage terms, 52% of the deaths should be attributed to the Sri Lankan armed forces; LTTE’s actions resulted in 35% of the deaths; Indian army alone contributed to 10% of the deaths, from Oct.1987 to March 1990. The actions of other Tamil mercenary groups (at times embedded with the Indian army and/or Sri Lankan armed forces) were responsible for 3% of the deaths. **That the Sri Lankan armed forces caused 52% of the total deaths attributed to the civil war is supported by the fact that the North-East region of the island was the main battle ground. In addition, the 10% contribution of Indian army to the total death toll (again, the North-East region being the sole battle ground) reveals that a cumulative sum of 62–65% of the total death toll in the civil war resulted from the deeds of Sri Lankan and Indian armies and their embedded Tamil mercenary groups.** LTTE’s loss of fighters, from November 27, 1982 to August 31, 2003 amount to 17,701.⁹

This number of 17,701 has to be sub-divided into three categories: LTTE cadres killed by Sri Lankan armed forces (16,300), LTTE cadres killed by the Indian army, during its IPKF operation (1,000)¹⁰, and LTTE cadres killed by other Tamil militant factions (400). By LTTE’s own statistics, it lost 516 fighters in 1987, 379 fighters in 1988 and 418 fighters in 1989, which totals to 1,313 cadres. Among these, nearly 1,000 can be assumed as losses in the IPKF-LTTE confrontation; of the remaining 313, LTTE’s confrontation with the Sri Lankan army from January to the end of June 1987 could have resulted in the deaths of nearly 200 cadres. The balance 113 would have lost their lives due to the treachery of other Tamil militant-mercenary groups (which were then embedded to the IPKF).

The break-down of deaths (a total of 74,807), caused by the four parties can be categorized as follows:

1. Number of deaths due to the actions of Sri Lankan armed forces

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LTTE cadres killed	=	17,701
Tamil and Muslim civilians killed	=	21,000
Total	=	38,701

2. Number of deaths due to the actions of Indian army (from August 1987–March 1990)

LTTE cadres killed	=	1,000
Tamil and Muslim civilians killed	=	6,000
Total	=	7,000

3. Number of deaths due to the actions of LTTE

Sri Lankan armed forces killed	=	21,506
Indian armed forces killed	=	1,200
Sinhalese civilians killed	=	1,300
Tamil and Muslim civilians killed	=	1,000 *
Other Tamil militant cadres killed	=	1,200 [†]
Total	=	26,206

4. Number of deaths due to the actions of other Tamil militant groups (PLOTE, EPRLF, TELO, EPDP)

Sri Lankan armed forces killed [‡]	=	100
LTTE cadres killed	=	400
Sinhalese civilians killed	=	400
Tamil and Muslim civilians killed	=	2,000
Total	=	2,900

In late 2001, Gen. Ratwatte had belatedly acknowledged at a meeting held at the Kandyan Art Association Cultural Hall that, “In their battle against the LTTE more than 18,000 heroic security personnel lost their lives while another 10,000 were disabled^{11a}.” In June 2004, it was reported that 21,506 Sri Lankan soldiers had died in battles.^{11b}

SRI LANKAN SUICIDE STATISTICS AS AN INTERNAL CONTROL

Sri Lanka’s unusually high suicide statistics is a valid internal control, to debunk the claim of LTTE ‘atrocities’ against civilians. One caveat is to be noted: the suicide statistics are culled from police records, which obviously is an underestimate; in addition, due to the prevailing civil war these statistics were mainly collected from the provinces, excluding the North and the East

*Tamils 760 and Muslims 240

[†]including the Tamil National Army, trained by the Indian army

[‡](during 1983–86)

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of the island. The number of successful suicides in Sri Lanka for years from 1995 to 2000 were as follows:

Year	Suicides
1995	8,519
1996	7,367
1997	6,228
1998	5,869
1999	5,907
2000	5,412
Total	39,302

A grand total of 39,302 suicides committed in the last six years. Among this 39,302 suicides, 29,759 were men and 9,543 were women. ¹²

Thus, the suicide casualties, between the years 1995 and 2000 in the predominantly Sinhalese regions of the island exceed the deaths caused by LTTE actions (between 1983 and mid-2001) by over 13,000. It is somewhat ironic, that while Pirabhakaran’s motivated Black Tigers, who function as ‘*Uyir-aayutham*’ (Life weapon) is much discussed by analysts like Rohan Gunaratna, the civilian suicides occurring in pandemic proportions among the Sinhalese are only whispered about and hidden out of shame. Journalist Feizal Samath in early 1998 quoted Dr. Karunatissa Athukorale, a sociologist affiliated to the University of Peradeniya a comparison.

“Athukorala estimates that more than one person commits suicide every hour in Sri Lanka, greater than the number that dies on the country’s battle fields. The civil war is estimated to have killed at least 50,000 in the last 15 years.”¹³

Thus, according to Dr. Atukorale, $24 \times 365 = 8,760$ suicides occur in an year in Sri Lanka. In comparison, the number of civilian deaths between 1983 and mid-2001 which can be attributed to LTTE ‘atrocities’ amounts to 2,500 (highest range). Since the total number of recorded suicides in Sri Lanka, between 1995 and 2000, adds to a grand 39,302, the oft-repeated proposition that LTTE has perpetrated ‘crimes against humanity’ lacks foundation.

FALLACIOUS PROPAGANDA ON LTTE’S SUICIDE BOMBERS

An anti-LTTE play ‘*Forbidden Area*’ scripted by one Visakesa Chandrasekren, identified as a Tamil woman received some publicity in 2000 ¹⁴. This play introduced a naïve preposition that the prime motive of LTTE women suicide bombers is sexual frustration. Sexuality is a theme which has been exploited by pulp novelists, movie makers, pseudo-scholars, and pimps in the

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hotel industry to make profit. And if Ms. Chandrasekera’s prime motive for linking sexuality theme to her anti-LTTE play was profit-oriented, one could say that she is entitled to her ‘15-minutes of fame’. The fact that Sri Lanka now has one of the highest suicide rates in the world for men and women has been highlighted in academic circles for the past decade. The *Economist* magazine also stated this to raise doubt on the theory that LTTE was involved in the assassination of Gamini Dissanayake. To quote,

“It should be noted that the island’s predominantly Sinhalese population has one of the highest suicide rates in the world. In the murky world of Sri Lankan politics, it is not impossible that Mr Dissanayake was murdered by someone else. Possible suspects include Sinhalese Buddhist chauvinists (who assassinated Mrs Kumaratunga’s father in 1959), senior army officers (who tried to stage a military coup just before August’s parliamentary elections), and anti-Tiger paramilitary groups. After three decades of frequently controversial political activity, Mr Dissanayake also had many enemies, some of them within the UNP itself.”¹⁵

According to Nalini Ellawala’s commentary the number of women who committed suicide in 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 were 2263, 1626, 1554, 1351, 1371 and 1378 respectively¹⁶. These figures add to a cumulative total of 9,543 women who committed suicide between 1995 and 2000. By population ratio, 75 percent of 9,543 would have to be Sinhalese, which turns out to be a little over 7,150. That the cited figures, being police record statistics, are gross underestimations cannot be neglected. For sake of argument if one assumes that the young LTTE women residing in the island commit suicide because of sexual frustration, the same logic should apply to other Sri Lankan women who have committed suicide as well. So, does the 7,150-odd Sinhala women who committed suicide between 1995 and 2000 also suffered from sexual frustration? Is sexual frustration gender-specific? Is any medical data available on this issue for Sri Lankans including Tamils? If not, one should add the number of men who had committed suicide, which turns out to be, again according to the police records, a whopping total of 29,759 between 1995 and 2000¹⁷. Assuming that 75 percent of this number should be Sinhalese, nearly 22,300 Sinhalese men committed suicide between 1995 and 2000, since Chandrika Kumaratunga became the President of Sri Lanka. If one extrapolates Visakesa Chandrasekera’s logic, these individuals would also have been sexually frustrated.

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“A leader is useless when he acts against the prompting of his own conscience, surrounded as he must be by people holding all kinds of views. He will drift like an anchorless ship, if he has not the inner voice to hold him firm and guide him.”

— MAHATMA GANDHI ¹

EELAM OF MID-1980S: THE FRONTIER TERRITORY

WHEN PIRABHAKARAN landed in January 1987, the then Tamil Eelam could easily be visualized as resembling that of a frontier territory depicted in many a Hollywood Western story line, which entertained us decades ago. *High Noon*, *Shane* and *Gun Fight at O. K. Corral* are some classic movies which come to my mind. If one re-reads Kiddu’s answers in his 1987 interview to the *Asiaweek* magazine (see, chapter 13) in 2001, the analogy appears so apt. The old social order, which was maintained by the Sri Lankan state had begun to rot. Then, there emerged quite a number of puppet gangs, whose strings were pulled by the Indian Intelligence operatives. These puppet gangs lacked a flag and lacked a vision as well, though for convenience and masquerade carried the ‘Eelam’ tag in their banners; — Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation, Eelam People Revolutionary Liberation Front, People Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam, Eelam People Democratic Party etc. Pirabhakaran’s entry in Jaffna was more or less like that of the Sheriff in the frontier territory, riding up on his horse and marking his area of influence: *‘Listen boys, you’ve been trouble around here for a long time, so get out of town by sun rise, and don’t ever let us see you back around these parts again’*.

The decimation of TELO and EPRLF and later Tamil National Army (TNA), by the LTTE, between 1986 and 1990 had to be interpreted along these lines. There was much agony among the Eelam Tamils for deterioration of discipline, especially after the introduction of ‘gun culture’ in the early 1980s. But, discipline in the island’s public life per se had begun to disintegrate two decades before that, when the Sinhalese politicians wrongly believed that the maniacal *mantra* ‘*Ape Anduwa*’ (Our Government) would serve as the panacea for their lack of tact and leadership skills.

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The curse of post-independent Sri Lankan politics is the lack of discipline among the politicians who became the representatives of people. This came to be felt strongly since the ascension of Sirimavo Bandaranaike as the prime minister. The only Sinhalese politician of note who cared for a little dose of discipline, when he was offered the proverbial ‘power-stick’ was that irrepressible eccentric Wijayananda Dahanayake. He even dictated, during his short tenure of power (late 1959 to early 1960) following the assassination of padre Bandaranaike, that the ‘D’ in his name stood for ‘discipline’. He was a school teacher during colonial times, before he plunged into politics in mid 1940s. Thus, Dahanayake knew something about the value of discipline. When the SLFP kitchen-plotters couldn’t stand the heat generated by Dahanayake, they dumped him in early 1960 and with that, the essential ingredient which could have saved the island was also thrown out. Rather than the importance given to ‘the country’, ‘the people’, and even ‘the party’, the key-word in the SLFP came to be ‘family’ (read as, Bandaranaike family) and with that Ceylon’s future as a viable and productive country was sealed.

When Dahanayake cared about discipline, he was in his late 50s, and Pirabhakaran was only 6 years old. The only island leader, following Dahanayake, who cared about discipline came to be Pirabhakaran, and when he instilled the significance of discipline for his cadres, he himself was youth in his 20s. In his strong adherence to discipline, Pirabhakaran stands peerless among other Sri Lankans. But other successful freedom fighters (Mahatma Gandhi for instance) have instructed the importance of discipline their followers. Arm chair critics, *bourgeoise* scholars and pretentious *Poo Bahs* who are more literate, but less intelligent than Pirabhakaran, fault the LTTE leader for his monkish demands in discipline highlighted by ‘No smoking, No drinking and No sex’ for his cadres.

The success of Pirabhakaran’s discipline has been elegantly portrayed in two *Time* magazine features scribed by Edward Desmond and Tim McGirk in the 1990s. Since both appeared in the *Time* magazine, there exists an element of coherence. The first feature appeared, when LTTE had established itself solidly in the northern Eelam, following the withdrawal of India’s army. It described the Pirabhakaran’s leadership style and his adherence to strict discipline. The second feature described the mind-set of a Sri Lankan army. It presents snippets of the mind-set of a Sri Lankan army’s foot soldier (a deserter), revealing glimpses of the lack of discipline and why he was absconding from his ‘employer’, despite the fact that in 1997 LTTE had ‘lost’ Jaffna. Excerpts from the descriptions of Edward Desmond: ²

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“...Tigers do what they are told, whether on guard duty or in battle. The ultimate symbol is the vial of cyanide dangling on a string around the sentry’s neck’ a vial carried by all the fighters, including their leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran. Rather than be captured, more than 600 of the guerrillas have committed suicide by taking the poison....

The Tigers remain visibly popular among Tamil civilians, despite the fact that the guerrillas tolerate no dissent. Informers, complainers, questioners all risk the same punishment; ‘a bullet in the head’. But the weapon of fear alone does not explain the Tigers’ success. Firm resolve is instilled during intense training and indoctrination. Says Prabhakaran: ‘Commitment comes from strictly enforced discipline’. The guerrillas, men and women alike, are not allowed to drink, smoke or have sex. Anything but unquestioning acceptance of the Tiger credo ‘to be loyal to Prabhakaran and to fight and sacrifice body, life and soul to achieve an independent state of Tamil Eelam’ is taboo. Small infractions result in humiliating tongue lashings, usually in front of other Tigers; severe offenses such as rape, murder or bribe taking bring an instant death sentence. Last month a Tiger who had killed a civilian in a dispute was publicly executed.

Tigers are expected to live austere. They have no personal possessions except their weapon and a change of clothes. Family ties are cut; the new family is the Tiger legion. A Tiger’s weapon, usually an AK-47, becomes the most important object in his life. The guerrillas are warned never to let the rifle touch the ground; they are told that at least 10 comrades might have died in the effort to capture it. Says Anton Balasingham, a spokesman for the guerrillas; ‘We teach them to transcend their egos and material pleasure, to subordinate their lives to a noble cause’.

Discipline is effective because the Tigers’ cause, in the minds of the typically poor and middle-class young Tamils they recruit, is just. The Tigers demand the creation of Eelam; they are convinced that the ethnic Sinhalese who dominate Sri Lanka’s population and government will not give the Tamil minority a fair share in education, jobs and government.... The Tigers develop a passionate veneration of Prabhakaran, their 36-year-old political and military leader. There is Prabhakaran the war hero, who led the now famous ambush of a Sri Lankan army patrol in 1983 that touched off the Tamil-Sinhalese war. There is Prabhakaran the incorruptible, who refuses to deviate from his goal of Eelam despite military pressure from India, despite offers of money and power from Colombo and New Delhi that turned the heads of less resolute Tamil leaders. There is also the Prabhakaran who embodies the spirit of a glorious Tamil past, especially the Chola dynasty, a line of belligerent kings in southern India who in the 11th century invaded what is now northern India, Java, Sumatra and Sri Lanka. Prabhakaran plays on such history in political classes; he borrowed the Tiger symbol from the Cholas’ imperial crest.

It is in the end Prabhakaran whose will binds the Tigers. His followers call him *Annai*, or elder brother, and talk of him with wide-eyed awe, their only

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far the possibility that they might let him down. ‘He is mother, father and god all rolled into one’, says a guerrilla named Sunil. Government soldiers tell of a badly wounded female Tiger they captured at Elephant Pass. Her dying words were not a call for mother but for ‘*Annai, Annai*’.”

For reasons of shock, slant and surprise as well as due to deadline pressure, journalists are known to use words and phrases which sometimes appear less accurate, unless the context and nuance is understood clearly. In the above sketch on Tiger psychology, Desmond describes that ‘firm resolve is instilled during intense training and indoctrination’. The use of the word ‘indoctrination’ is nothing but inappropriate.

Tim McGirk, in his 1997 report portrayed a Sri Lankan army’s foot soldier, who is on the run, and who was also upset that his discipline-challenged superiors stole his food ration. Excerpts:³

“Corporal Rana is on the run. A tank gunner, Rana, 26, is one of the Sri Lankan army’s 23,000 deserters. He fidgets with a lucky amulet hanging around his neck, one that has shielded him in battle against the Tamil Tigers and, more recently, from arrest by military police. He was not the only soldier to go AWOL [absence without leave] from his 800-man unit; Rana reckons 300 others slipped away into the jungle or simply never returned from home leave. After serving nine straight months inside a war zone, facing a fanatical enemy who embraces martyrdom on the battlefield, Rana (not his real name) couldn’t take it any longer. Besides, he says, the officers stole his food rations. So during a furlough, Rana ran away. Now he spends his time at his parents’ village home, dodging the police and teasing his hair out into a 50s-style... the soldiers just want to survive, while the Tigers welcome death as a kind of devotional sacrifice....

The LTTE’s elusive chief, Velupillai Prabhakaran, 43, is not only a genius guerrilla tactician but also a deft manipulator of symbols. He has tapped an undercurrent of martyrdom in Tamil folklores and films (his favorite actor is said to be Clint Eastwood) to create an army — mainly of impressionable teenagers — some as young as 11 and 12 — ready to pop cyanide or become suicide bombers for their leader. This fanatical loyalty, senior military officers concede, has enabled Prabhakaran’s 8,000 to 10,000 insurgents to inflict punishing losses on a Sri Lankan army ten times that size....”

The last paragraph of Tim McGirk’s commentary read,

“The army is readying for a major assault against Prabhakaran’s jungle bases in Mullaitivu district. But the army, like the Tigers, is running short of men. When only 450 volunteers signed up during a national-wide recruitment drive with a goal of 10,000, authorities tried to lure back Corporal Rana and the 23,000 other deserters. Several amnesties have been announced — soldiers were given back their full rank and salary — but when the final offer expired

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on Oct.24, some 10,000 runaways were still missing. Among them was Rana. ‘When I read about the battles, sometimes I feel like going back to my unit’, he says. ‘My friends tell me it’s better now’. One improvement they have mentioned; an officer who stole his rations have deserted too’.

The punch-line that the officer who stole the food rations of foot soldier Rana also deserted the Sri Lankan army is humorous and ironic. It reveals that the officers in the Sri Lankan army may have surplus food and drinks, but they starve from lack of a surplus dose of discipline.

WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?

Desmond’s 1991 portrayal of LTTE stressed the importance of discipline to its success. That the Sri Lankan army couldn’t break the backbone of LTTE in the 1990s vindicates the beliefs and claims of Pirabhakaran related to discipline. What in fact is discipline? I quote from a talk of Franklin DuBois, a physician, delivered in 1952. Excerpts ⁴

“From time immemorial discipline has been recognized as an essential ingredient of man’s life. Experience has demonstrated that objectives can be achieved and individuals can be happy only if human energies are directed in an orderly fashion. Since a person’s desires often conflict with the desires of others, society has set up regulations for the common good, to which each member of the group must adhere or suffer a penalty. . . .

Discipline defined: ‘To arrive at helpful conclusions, one must first have an understanding of what is meant by discipline. The immediate and restrictive connotation is apt to be what is done to an individual when he is disturbing to others, but we shall deal with the broader concept that discipline is a process of training and learning that fosters growth and development. Its derivation is the same as that of disciple: ‘one who learns or voluntarily follows a leader’ (Webster). Discipline is, therefore, primarily the process of ‘making a disciple’. . . .

While discipline may carry with it an idea of punishment, this should be only the discomfort that logically follows the pursuance of a selected course of action and is voluntarily accepted as incidental to the attainment of a desired goal. One speaks of the discipline of medicine, of art, of athletic training, when one refers to hardships foreseen and endured in an undertaking that leads to the chosen objective. Like the athlete, the child in training must learn to accept the restriction of many of his impulses. Discipline is, in essence, adherence to the rules of life; not a hardship to be endured intolerantly, but an educational opportunity to be welcomed enthusiastically, since it is only through discipline that lasting satisfactions can be obtained. . . .”

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MERIT IN SEXUAL DISCIPLINE

In her 1996 Rajani Thiranagama Memorial Lecture, Radhika Coomaraswamy, a Tamil academic residing in Colombo, critiqued the sexual discipline of young LTTE women⁵. The title of Ms. Coomaraswamy’s lecture was, ‘LTTE women: is this liberation’? With a self-introduction bordering on pomposity,

“I am often asked, as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, what I feel about the women cadres of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). As someone who has been entrusted with the task of attempting to protect women victims of violence, how do I respond to a situation where women become the perpetrators of violence?

Coomaraswamy pretentiously identified herself as a Gandhian with a claim,

“As women concerned with non-violence, we can only be critical of the dynamics which have led to this process [of militarisation]. As people concerned with human rights, we have to question and challenge any discourse which attempts to promote this perverse militarisation of civil society as a step towards the realization of equal rights among women.”

Subsequently, in her lecture, she ridiculed Gandhi’s other cherished values (of self-sacrifice, austerity, sexual discipline and freedom from the fear of death)⁶:

1. “LTTE is also clear that the ideal woman remains a virgin; sexuality is seen as an evil, debilitating force... Self-sacrifice, austerity and androgyny are put forward as ideals.”
2. “Death, not life, is celebrated. The greatest feat for a woman is to die a martyr. This celebration of heroic death is an aspect of most nationalist movements, but in the LTTE it is a major factor which determines and conditions the life of women who have dedicated themselves to the cause.”
3. “They [LTTE women] are denied sexual or sensual experiences. This refusal to accept hybridity, sensuality, sexuality, the social mixing of human beings as an important part of everyday life, is a foundational principle of nationalist ideologies and the LTTE is no exception.”

One shouldn’t be surprised that Ms. Coomaraswamy was making a mountain out of a mole hill. She conveniently overlooked the mission of LTTE women; they are in combat duty and not functioning as cabaret artistes or fashion models or casual sex workers. Combat duty, like convent life, demands eschewing sexual thrill. Those who undergo special training and adhere to disciplining their minds can achieve higher goals than ordinary mortals who allow their

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minds to sexual gratification. Mahatma Gandhi has shown the lead in this adoptive strategy and Pirabhakaran has followed the steps of Gandhi, in inculcating sexual discipline among his cadres. In one of his early works, to appear in print, (*A Guide to Health*), Gandhi preached about sexual discipline. Following passages are excerpted from the chapter on Sexual Relations:

“Many are the keys to health, and they are all quite essential: but the one thing needful, above all others, is *Brahmacharya*. . . . What do we mean by *Brahmacharya*? We mean by it that men and women should refrain from enjoying each other. That is to say, they should not touch each other with a carnal thought, they should not think of it even in their dreams. Their mutual glances should be free from all suggestion of carnality. The hidden strength that God has given us should be conserved by rigid self-discipline, and transmuted into energy and power not merely of body, but also of mind and soul.”⁷

This health guide of Gandhi, first appeared when he was 42, and a quarter century before India received its independence. Radhika Coomaraswamy’s lament on the ‘celebration of death’ seen among the LTTE women has been answered by Gandhi as follows:

“...*Brahmacharis*: They know no fear of death, and they do not forget God even in the hour of death; nor do they indulge in vain complaints. They die with a smile on their lips, and boldly face the day of judgement. They are true men and women; and of them alone can it be said that they have conserved their health”⁸

Kindly note that Gandhi had used the word *brahmachari* in a gender-neutral context. His healthy advice on sexual discipline seems more relevant for achievers, considering the pathos in the careers of John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton, who were found lacking in this component.

SEXUAL DISCIPLINE IN SRI LANKAN ARMY

While Pirabhakaran has strictly enforced sexual discipline for his army, how does his rival army face the situation? The qualitative distinction between the two armies is revealed by a report by Malini Govinnage in 1999, under the caption, ‘Casual sex thrives in war climate’. Excerpts: ⁹

“Anuradhapura as we know it, was a town of religious and archeological importance. It bore witness to the rich spiritual and cultural heritage of the country. Today it has a different story to tell. . . . According to the reports young women from several parts of the country come to the town to provide pleasure for money to young men, some of them in the army. . . . For hoteliers

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in Anuradhapura, this is a very good business. A room is rented out for 400 or 500 rupees per night. They hire women and keep them for their customers. Hoteliers are very supportive and protective of these women. . . . Over the years, Anuradhapura became a camp town and a transit point for the armed forces who travel to and from the North. Invariably, they have a stop-over in Anuradhapura. Those who come from the South get off here and stay in camps until the time for their next flight to the war front. Some soldiers with nothing particular to engage in, loiter in the town where they meet these women. . . .

Altogether there are around 40 hotels in Anuradhapura engaged in this trade. Some of these are well equipped residential houses which have been rented out for 10,000 to 20,000 rupees per month. . . . This situation arose in Anuradhapura, because it is a transit point. Young soldiers come here. They look for a way out to release their repressed minds and bodies. In the town, they have very limited ways to enjoy themselves.

[According to Dr. Kithsiri Kaldera, former head of the STD clinic in Anuradhapura hospital] There’s no cinema, no theatre, not even a park. We should look at the problem from their point of view. Many of these men have a common mentality about their lives and future. They seem to think this way: ‘As we are people who are destined to get killed sooner or later, [we] have to make most of out of it for the short spell we are here, whether it is good or bad’ Women flock to the town around the 20th to 30th of the month — the time when the soldiers’ pockets are full.”

Govinnage’s field report, while confirming the moral bankruptcy of analysts like Ms. Coomaraswamy, simultaneously attests to the sound strategy of Pirabhakaran in enforcing sexual discipline among his cadres.

15

Colombo in the bin Laden Bandwagon

OSAMA BIN LADEN AND PIRABHAKARAN: THE DIFFERENCES

If the tragic events of September 11, 2001, which occurred in the eastern region of USA spilled blood of unimaginable volume, hacks like Gamini Weerakoon in Colombo sprung to action in the aftermath to prove that they also can spill bile in equal proportions in the name of anti-terrorism campaign. While much of the journalistic world focused its efforts on Saudi Arabian exile Osama bin Laden and his Al-Quaida network, the target of Colombo-based hacks was not bin Laden, but Pirabhakaran and LTTE. The editorialist of the *Island* newspaper wailed in an editorial entitled, ‘Double standards on terrorism’. Excerpts:

“...Prabhakaran has thrown out all forms of devolution proposed, including the celebrated Devolution Package. The intransigent [1985] Thimpu demands, which are a short cut to a separate state, remains inflexible as ever. Thus, while attempting to fight terrorism militarily — not in a way wars are usually fought but going by the Charter of Human Rights — and trying to talk to the Tigers, have only resulted in a rag-tag band of ruffians turning out to be a global terrorist force. Western nations are aware that they are largely responsible for keeping terrorism going on for 18 years in this country by helping the terrorists to finance their terrorism here.

A good example of this is an E-mail we received today from a Tamil expatriate living in Japan in response to our recent editorial about waging war and peace simultaneously. Referring to us in scatological terms, he boasts that it is not this two-track policy of war and peace that has kept terrorism going. It is because of the invincibility of the Tamils. With that kind of thinkers financing Prabhakaran, to expect a negotiated settlement is only a pipe dream...”

I was that ‘Tamil expatriate living in Japan’, mentioned in the above passage. I e-mailed three letters, and the purported ‘scatological term’ appeared in the third email. Weerakoon, showing Victorian era prudery, failed to mention what this ‘scatological term’ was, and under what context I used it. If he had bothered to publish all the three email letters which were sent by me,

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non-partisan readers would comprehend his bias against Pirabhakaran, LTTE and Eelam Tamils living in the diaspora. The ‘scatological term’ referred to by Weerakoon was none other than ‘fart’. This word, once hidden in civil discussions, has gained prominence during the past five decades in its derivative sense, referring to ‘something worthless’ and ‘annoying’, especially in American English. J. D. Salinger used this word, in his acclaimed novel, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) as follows:

“All of a sudden this guy sitting in the row in front of me, Edgar Marsalla, laid this terrific fart. It was a very crude thing to do, in chapel and all, but it was also quite amusing.”²

FOUR BILE-SPILLING EDITORIALS IN THE *Island* NEWSPAPER

Now, I analyze the four editorials published in the *Island* (Colombo) newspaper in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 events, in which Pirabhakaran and LTTE were inappropriately linked with bin Laden.

In the middle of a first editorial, entitled ‘Towards a terror-free world’, the following passage appeared.

“The question that arises here is how the US will achieve its avowed objective of meeting terrorism head on with its northern neighbour nestling terrorists to her bosom? It was about a year ago that two Canadian ministers came under fire from the Canadian press for having graced a fund raising dinner of the LTTE, whose leader Prabhakaran is Sri Lanka’s bin Laden.”³

Then, the final paragraph of the same editorial stated,

“Success of any global anti terror drive depends on its sustainability and the commitment of the developed world. Its goal, on the other hand, must not be confined to the US avenging itself. Instead its objective must be to prevent the same fate befalling any other nation whether it is a friend of the western powers or not. Equally important is the resolve on the part of powerful nations to bid farewell to the weapon of terrorism as a means of forcing smaller nations into submission. For terrorism always come home to roost. This is the lesson that bin Laden, Prabhakaran and others of their ilk have given the world.”⁴

I responded to this editorial via e-mail (sent on Sept.18, 2001) to the editor of *Island*. To quote,

“This comment is with reference to your editorial entitled ‘Towards a terror-free world’ (Sept. 17). I’m always amazed by your propensity to compare ‘apples and oranges’, and your comparison of Osama bin Laden and Prabhakaran is a recent example of this perennial sickness. Here I submit four differences between Osama bin Laden and Prabhakaran, for your information.

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1. Osama bin Laden is a native of Saudi Arabia, currently domiciled in Afghanistan. His targeted enemy is USA and he is not waging a direct war against Saudi Arabia. Contrastingly, Prabhakaran is a native of then Ceylon, and currently still living in the island. His army is waging a war against the Sri Lankan state, and not against USA. Not a single American has died due to the activities of LTTE either in Sri Lanka or elsewhere.
2. Osama bin Laden’s patrons are Pakistan and Afghanistan’s Taliban, created by Pakistan’s Intelligence-wallahs. Prabhakaran’s current adversary is Sri Lankan state, whose prominent patron is Pakistan. So, one can infer who is close to Osama bin Laden. It’s the Sri Lankan state and not Prabhakaran.
3. Osama bin Laden is not leading any liberation movement. But Pirabhakaran is leading a liberation movement, with covert and overt ethnic followers in excess of millions. Though it is reported that Osama bin Laden’s group has ‘cells’ in more than 60 nations, his followers do not amount to more than even 100,000 (see, ‘Osama bin Laden and his Group’, *Washington Post*, Sept. 13, 2001).
4. Even for the sake of argument, if one sticks the label of terrorist to both Osama bin Laden and Prabhakaran, anyone with basic knowledge on terrorism can comprehend that Osama bin Laden is a transplanted terrorist, similar to Che Guevara. Do not forget that Che lost all his ‘post-Cuban period’ wars, because he was always a ‘stranger’. Prabhakaran, on the other hand, lives among his own followers, and wages war against his adversaries.”

The second editorial appearing on Sept. 19 in the *Island* newspaper, again mentioned Pirabhakaran in association with some of the recent history’s designated villains. Its title was, ‘Sri Lanka and the Global Alliance on Terrorism’. Excerpts:

“The pundits on terrorism often tell us that terrorism is merely a symptom of a deeper underlying disease that has to be addressed first if terrorism is to be eradicated. By and large this contention is correct, but quite often the god-fathers of terrorism are not susceptible to logic, reason or plaintive cries of humanity and have their own visionary objectives which they are determined to achieve come hell or high water. Adolf Hitler, Japanese imperialists of the Second World War, Communist revolutionaries of Russia and China and our own Third World tin pot dictators like Pol Pot, Vellupillai Prabhakaran and Rohana Wijeweera are some such examples. The cause for this kind of terrorism is the leader who does not listen to reason. Will bin Laden listen to reason?”⁵

I responded to this editorial again by an email dated, Sept. 20. The text of my communication to Weerakoon was as follows:

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“The *New York Times* editorialist yesterday pleaded, ‘What the country needs from the [US] President right now is consistency, in both message and tone’ [*New York Times*, Sept. 19]. If you have to be taken seriously, I make a similar request on your coverage on Prabhakaran. It seems to me that you suffer from a pathological tendency to compare the incomparables.

In your editorial of Sept. 19, entitled, ‘Sri Lanka and the Global Alliance on Terrorism’, you place Pol Pot, Vellupillai Prabhakaran and Rohana Wijeweera into the same cluster as ‘Third World tin pot dictators’. By conventional definition, a dictator is a head of state who has gained power by democratic or undemocratic means. Hitler and Marcos gained power by democratic means before becoming dictators. Pakistan’s Generals (beginning from Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, Zia ul Haq and to the current head of state Pervez Musharraf) and Indonesia’s Gen. Suharto gained powers by undemocratic means to become dictators. Among the three you have specifically cited from Asia, Pol Pot was a head of state but not Prabhakaran and Wijeweera. By this convention, you have inadvertently omitted two Sri Lankan heads of state (J. R. Jayewardene and Premadasa) who by their deeds proved to be dictators. Even within your three incoherent choices, anyone with common sense would tell that Pol Pot differs from the other two. Pol Pot was pandered and supported by the power elites from USA and China, from 1975 to 1990s. Contrastingly, Prabhakaran stands on his own feet without being propped either by USA or China.”

BEGGARS IN THE BIN LADEN BANDWAGON

The war-mongering *Island* newspaper continued to spew bile and venom on Pirabhakaran and LTTE in two more editorials, which appeared on September 21 and September 22 of 2001. The Sept. 21 editorial stated:

“Sri Lanka is, perhaps, the only country in the world that wages a war and at the same time does not wage it. As a result, it has neither defeated terrorism nor made peace with terrorists. It has only vacillated for 18 long years between war and peace and has paid tremendously for its indecisiveness. . . .

Now that bin Laden has ‘roused a mighty giant’ — in President Bush’s words, — Prabhakaran must be a worried man fearing a crackdown on the LTTE overseas. There should be no surprise if he waves an olive branch all of a sudden from the Wanni and offers to talk peace — until the US crusade comes to an end. Remember the LTTE has condemned the terrorist attack on the US obviously in an effort to curry favour with the US authorities. Perhaps, the LTTE might give serious thought to organizing demonstrations abroad to condemn the attacks on the US so as to save its skin. . . .

The question is why Sri Lanka should not emulate the US. If the US does not want to talk to terrorists, then why should we? Sri Lanka cannot afford to be out of step with the world leaders. What the anti-terrorists groups demand is that the government strike while the iron is hot. They don’t want the government to allow a vital opportunity to go abegging. Any sensible government

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keen to defeat terrorism would have taken time by its forelock. Knowing the LTTE for what it is and having been taken for a ride on previous occasions, the government must desist from any course of action that will cause it to fall into a peace trap again. It must join forces with the US, which is on a worldwide crusade against terrorism.”⁶

The Sept. 22nd editorial of the *Island* did not mention Pirabhakaran by name, but it pleaded like a beggar for alms and arms from the USA as follows:

“The United States has banned the LTTE for reasons of its own, probably because of the threat posed to the security to it. For whatever reasons, Sri Lankans and the Sri Lankan government have appreciated it very much. But it should be noted that the United States still has a strict embargo placed on sale of US weapons to Sri Lanka. There is only limited cooperation in defence matters which are limited to training personnel and the like but Sri Lanka needs much more assistance in armaments in its fight against terrorism.

Sri Lanka’s political, economic and military plight is such that it is in no position to refuse whatever assistance the US requests despite the ‘anti-imperialist’ monitor [*i.e.*, JVP] of this ‘government on probation’. Besides we have had excellent relations with the United States for long years and have no interests in international terrorist groups. Time is now opportune for Sri Lanka not only to give leadership of Third World countries in the American War on Terrorism but also make reasonable requests for assistance in its war against a global terrorist organization.”⁷

I opted for pungent humor to answer the bile of Weerakoon, and again responded with an email of Sept. 22, carrying the caption, ‘*Beggars in the bin Laden Bandwagon*’. Excerpts:

“Scorn is not my usual weapon of choice in a debate. But sometimes literati like Shaw have used scorn as a weapon to put his critics in place. Thus I make an exception in this letter. For exiled Tamils like me, your editorial musings on LTTE and Prabhakaran are nothing but beggar’s stinking farts, for the following reasons. First, both are produced from the digested materials of previous days. Secondly, both are hardly deadly and ignored by decent people. Thirdly, both provide some state of relief to the producers.

This comparison was elicited by your two editorials entitled, ‘War or peace?’ (Sept. 21) and ‘Fighting global terrorism: Can America help us?’ (Sept.22). The first three sentences of the Sept.21 editorial state, “Sri Lanka is, perhaps, the only country in the world that wages a war and at the same time does not wage it. As a result, it has neither defeated terrorism nor made peace with terrorists. It has only vacillated for 18 long years between war and peace and has paid tremendously for its indecisiveness.”

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These are nothing but varnished lies. Petty minded politicians from J. R. Jayewardene, Athulathmudali, Ranjan Wijeratne, Premadasa, Wijetunga to Chandrika Kumaratunga and Ratwatte, in association with a whole batallion of ‘non-field’ Generals had waged war against LTTE with ferocity. Only thing which mattered during the past 18 years was that the Tamil Tigers couldn’t be tamed. The person in the street knows that Sri Lankan state’s exchequer has been repeatedly robbed, on the pretext of war, by the people manning the ‘war industry’. Now, fishing on the pain of American psyche, the stately beggars and their torch-carriers are placating to hitch a ride in the bin Laden bandwagon.

The second half caption of Sept. 22 editorial ‘Can America help us?’ was nothing but an apoplectic pleading for such a ride. One single statistic is enough to show how bankrupt the Sri Lankan state had become. In 1981, one US dollar exchanged for nearly 20 rupees. In 1994, when Chandrika Kumaratunga came to power, the same single US dollar was worth for nearly 45 rupees. In the last quarter of year 2001, the pitiable Sri Lankan rupee had depreciated to the exchange level of 90 rupees for a US dollar. This constitutes one of the main reasons, why the Sri Lankan state couldn’t continuously wage the war against the LTTE, and the ‘vacillation’ smoke-screen presented by you is just baloney.”

The baloney, bile and the bloated egos of the hacks in Colombo and Chennai sometimes deserved pricking with pungent humor. My comparison of their editorial musings to the beggar’s stinking farts is the best I could use as an analogy. However, expecting reason and impartiality from servile hacks who are burdened with unpleasant lives is akin to waiting for turkeys to dance like peacocks.

16

The ‘Truth’ in the ‘Terrorist’ Label

*“There are no whole truths; all truths are half-truths.
It is trying to treat them as whole truths that plays the devil.”*
— ALFRED NORTH WHITEHEAD (1861–1947)

LTTE’S DESIGNATION as a terrorist organization in the USA, came to be applied first in October 1997. President Chandrika Kumaratunga’s coterie, Sri Lanka’s muffled press, New Delhi’s Intelligence operatives, Chennai hacks as well as Sinhalese bureaucrats and expatriates have their own truths on why LTTE received the ‘terrorist organization’ designation. But in my view, LTTE’s designation as a ‘terrorist organization’ in the USA resulted from the turf war between FBI and Clinton administration, with the US State Department playing the role of an intermediary and also sanctioning the interests of American private military companies. Unlike other journalists, ‘experts’ and ‘analysts’, I do not rely on confidential and secretive sources. As an academic, I scrounge the open and published sources of facts and analyses and then try to fit the pieces like a jig-saw puzzle. This is my finding.

(1) KARL INDERFURTH’S TESTIMONY

In 1997, Karl Inderfurth, the newly appointed Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of South Asian Affairs, made the following observations before the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the Committee on International Relations in Washington DC. To quote,

“... In Sri Lanka last year, we had a \$3 million aid program and a two-way trade with over \$1.5 billion. Trade, not aid, is the wave of the future... In Sri Lanka, where heavy fighting between government and LTTE forces continues, the United States supports a negotiated political settlement to the conflict. Last week’s massive bomb attack in Colombo only underlines the importance of ending the fighting. We believe the Sri Lankan Government’s wide-ranging proposals for constitutional reform are a solid basis for a peaceful solution to this tragic conflict. Earlier this month we designated the LTTE as a terrorist organization for the purposes of the Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. We call upon the LTTE to stop its indiscriminate attacks and support a negotiated settlement of the conflict in Sri Lanka.”¹

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Mr. Doug Bereuter, one of the committee members, raised the issue of LTTE to Mr. Inderfurth for additional clarification, as follows:

“Mr. Doug Bereuter: Just a few minutes ago, you mentioned the designation of the LTTE as a terrorist organization. I think all of us in Congress were pleased to see the Administration release that list of terrorist organizations. Our expectation would be that this will place a cramp on their fund raising opportunities in this country.... How do we now plan to react to past Sri Lankan Government’s request for assistance, and how specifically will our domestic law enforcement agencies attempt to implement the requirements of the act, of the list that has been promulgated under the act which lists the LTTE as a terrorist organization?”

Mr. Inderfurth’s response was,

“Mr. Chairman, with respect to the terrorist designation, this is a domestic matter. This relates to what we will do within our country with respect to fund raising by LTTE organizations or sympathizers. It will relate to visas. It will relate to assets that can be dealt with here. The FBI and other law enforcement agencies will be pursuing this — indeed, already are. So the terrorist designation does not speak to any further cooperation we may have with the Government of Sri Lanka. It very much relates to what we will do in this country.

Now with respect to the Sri Lankan Government, we do have a normal, strong, bilateral relationship with them. We have made it clear to them that we do not have any view that we should become engaged directly in their insurgency and in terms of any provision of military assistance. On the other hand, we have a normal bilateral relationship where we do have training programs with their military. We do have supply relationships, and we will continue those. But in terms of their insurgency and their war in the North dealing with the LTTE, this is something that is very much a Sri Lankan matter, but we will do what we can within the confines of our law to assist.”²

The points to be reiterated in Mr. Inderfurth’s testimony are as follows:

1. “with respect to the terrorist designation, this is a *domestic matter*. This relates to what we will do within our country with respect to fund raising by LTTE organizations or sympathizers.”
2. “The FBI and other law enforcement agencies will be pursuing this — indeed, already are.”
3. “So the terrorist designation does not speak to any further cooperation we may have with the Government of Sri Lanka. It very much relates to what we will do in this country [USA].”
4. “in terms of their insurgency and their war in the North dealing with the LTTE, this is something that is very much a Sri Lankan matter.”

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To these, should be added the following facts.

Fact 1: No record exists in documentation or hearsay of a single American individual dying due to LTTE’s violent activities in Sri Lanka or elsewhere since 1983. But, Rev. Eugene J. Hebert (an American Jesuit missionary, originally from Jennings, Louisiana) had lost his life in Batticaloa in 1990, due to the repressive terror of the Sri Lankan state’s army personnel. In Chapter 45 the ‘last letter’ written by this missionary is presented.

Fact 2: No record exists in documentation or hearsay about Pirabhakaran preaching anti-American sentiments to his cadres.

Fact 3: FBI’s annual budget in 1993 was 2.0 billion US dollars. By 1998, it reached 3.0 billion US dollars. In 2001, prior to the Sept.11 incidents, the FBI budget stood at 3.6 billion US dollars.³

Fact 4: ‘Terrorism’ was the theme song FBI played to the decision makers in the Capitol Hill to receive funding. The cover story on FBI which appeared in the *U. S. News & World Report* of June 18, 2001 stated, “The engine driving the budget increases, of course, is terrorism. Since 1993, the FBI’s counterterrorism budget has exploded, from \$77 million to \$376 million. The biggest increases came after the carnage wrought by McVeigh in Oklahoma City. Just recently, Freeh [the ex-Director of FBI, who was a President Clinton appointee] asked for an additional \$26 million to expand a joint terrorism strike force. Not surprisingly, the terrorism pitch is a winning one on Capitol Hill.”

Fact 5: When LTTE was first designated as a ‘foreign terrorist organization’ by the US State Department in October 1997, LTTE was not even banned in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan ban on LTTE came in February 1998, following the damage to Dalada Maligawa compounds. This ban was lifted in September 2002.

(2) FBI’S ROLE

Almost a month before the *US News & World Report* cover story on the current status of FBI, the *New Yorker* magazine carried a profile of Louis Freeh, the then FBI’s boss, in its ‘Annals of Politics’ column. Some facts presented in this profile of Freeh reinforced the consequences of the political tug of war between Freeh’s FBI and the Clinton administration, which in turn came to affect the LTTE. Though Freeh was appointed to the position by President Clinton, their relationship lost cordiality soon after and they were not in talking terms, not for weeks or months — but for years! Excerpts:

“Freeh noted in his retirement statement that during his tenure [i.e., between 1993 and mid 2001] the Bureau [FBI] has more than doubled its overseas presence. . . . By the time he leaves, at the end of June, Freeh, . . . has overseen the largest expansion of the FBI in the agency’s history, and assured its central

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role in national-security issues, very possibly becoming more powerful than J. Edgar Hoover. . . .

Relations between Freeh and the Clinton White House soon deteriorated, beginning with Freeh’s criticism of White House efforts to involve the FBI in the Administration’s decision, in 1993, to fire members of the travel staff, and his public objection to the Administration’s proposed cuts in the FBI’s 1995 budget.”⁴

Taken together, the above two facts [*i.e.*, Karl Inderfurth’s testimony, the retired FBI director’s penchant for expanding his area of control beyond the borders of USA, and Clinton administration’s numerous scandals — sexual and political— and diversionary bullying tactics] led one to infer that for the FBI to receive additional annual funding from federal budget, it had to show ‘targets’ which it was intending to pursue. And LTTE became one of the 30 ‘nominally acceptable targets’ to be included in the US State Department’s list of ‘Foreign Terrorist Organizations’.

(3) ROLE OF US STATE DEPARTMENT

The US State Department’s role in sanctioning military deals (in a limited range, so as not to embarrass the American presidency) was also revealed in mid 1997 in an Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s Radio National program. The focus of this weekly investigative documentary program, produced by Stan Correy, on that day was private military companies. Full transcript has appeared in the internet.

Relevant sections on the consultancy for the Sri Lankan army by the Military Professional Resources Inc. (MPRI), which is an American ‘gun for hire’ soldier company and the comments of Stan Correy (the producer), David Isenberg (of the Center for Defence Information in Washington DC), Paul Harris (a British correspondent), and General Ed Soyster (MPRI’s spokesman) are provided below.⁵

“Stan Correy: The other big company is MPRI — Military Professional Resources Inc. They began business in 1988, when a group of ex-Pentagon Generals decided to put their expertise out for hire.

David Isenberg: They are a completely private sector organization, albeit with extensive contacts with the public sector, the US military, government and defence establishment. . . they’re squeaky clean, they don’t do anything which isn’t fully vetted and scrutinized and approved by the relevant US government agencies, and the US State Department. . . .

Stan Correy: MPRI’s success as a corporate army role model comes about because of its work in Croatia in 1995.

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Paul Harris: The Croats launched an offensive simultaneously on seven or eight fronts and this is not from the old Warsaw Pact textbook, this offensive was straight from the NATO textbook. And I believe that the Croats were quite up to reading military strategy and doing this on their own. Now by coincidence, MPRI had for a couple of years been training the Croatian army. MPRI of course would stoutly deny to you that they were in any way involved in this offensive, but equally I think it’s nave to take that at face value, and to me the offensive bore all the hallmarks of a western-style planned military strategy.

Stan Correy: MPRI do deny that they led the campaign in Krajina. General Ed Soyster is MPRI’s spokesman. He is also a former head of defence intelligence for the US military. . . However the ‘guns for hire’ label does still [hangs] around MPRI. The phrase ‘US military advisor’ has a rather nasty echo in recent US history. After all, it was US military advisors who began the protracted US involvement in Vietnam. So when it leaked out last year [1996] that private American advisors, identified as MPRI, were said to be taking a contract to train soldiers in one of modern Asia’s civil wars, media alarm bells began to ring.

Paul Harris explains how it all started at a going-away party in Sri Lanka’s capital, Colombo.

Paul Harris: MPRI were involved in drawing up I understand, a long-term training strategy for the Sri Lankan army, a program which would vastly improve its capability. Well, the news of this started to leak out after a drinks party at which the retiring commander of the Sri Lankan army, possibly had one over the odds. He revealed that America was coming to the assistance of the Sri Lankans, and he rather let the cat out of the bag. It was very embarrassing to the American Embassy in Colombo, and for those of us who knew how many beans made five, it’s quite clear that MPRI was involved, that the US government was involved at a more official level, and the bottom line was that the Americans withdrew from Sri Lanka, announced that withdrawal at the end of August [1996], beginning of September last year in a run-up of course, to Presidential elections [of 1996]. And the White House was extremely concerned about publicity which its actions were getting in Washington, and they felt obliged to publicly say that ‘We’re not getting involved in another Asian adventure’. They might have added, ‘in the run-up to an election’. People in the US State Department told me, ‘Nothing to do with us, it must be those MPRI people’. And of course MPRI said, ‘Oh well, we’re not involved’. And so everybody was using the presence of the other, as you might say, to dodge the column.

Stanley Correy: Paul Harris. Well, General Ed Soyster doesn’t want to dodge the column’. Yes, MPRI did go to Sri Lanka, but the contract to train the Sri Lankan army was never signed.

Ed Soyster: We were contacted by the Sri Lankan government. In fact I personally went to Sri Lanka with another officer in the company, and discussed the possibility for training there. That contract, like any other business arrangement,

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was not signed. We did have a licence from our State Department because of the nature of the training that we were going to provide, to conduct a training. But like any business, I don’t know any business contractor that goes out on every opportunity and comes back with a contract. So we’ve done no work there. Two of us were there for about a week with discussions, and that’s our total involvement in Sri Lanka.

Stan Correy: I suppose what people are saying is because you are a US company and have the military background, and do work by the State Department, your presence could be seen as American involvement.

Ed Soyster: It certainly could be, because we are Americans. But again I would emphasise that MPRI’s a private company; we’re not a proxy for the government; we do work directly for our own army. They’ve have crossed the bridge and recognized that this is a very good way to receive training. But we are not supported by the government in any way, not one nickel of US money has every gone to any effort of MPRI overseas.

David Isenberg: A company like MPRI stands at the pinnacle of this new hierarchy of private sector military firms. There’s intense interest, because on the one hand they are private, and independent, but on the other hand they are very close to the US government military elite. In fact all their overseas contracts are vetted by the State Department. Couldn’t they very easily become another arm of the US government, doing what the State doesn’t want to do directly with its own military?...”

After reading this transcript, especially the comments of General Ed Soyster, one can infer that the Gen. Soyster has not denied the link his MPRI company had with the US State Department. First he had asserted that “We did have a licence from our [US] State Department because of the nature of the training that we were going to provide, to conduct a training.” Subsequently he also informed that “We’re not a proxy for the government; we do work directly for our own army.” Mr. David Isenberg had also corroborated this fact with the statement, “they [MPRI] don’t do anything which isn’t fully vetted and scrutinized and approved by the relevant US government agencies, and the US State Department.”

MY INFERENCE

My inference is that during the 1996–97 period, the then US State Department officials played a double role. First, they had to cover the *derriere* of the scandal-ridden Clinton administration so that Clinton-Gore ticket’s chances of re-election for the second term against Dole-Kemp ticket was not fumbled. Secondly, they also had to provide ‘business opportunities’ for the ‘gun-for-hire’ companies like MPRI. The outcome was the inclusion of LTTE to its ‘foreign terrorist organization’ list in 1997. The oft-suggested reasons for this 1997 American action against the LTTE, such as the ‘long record of

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LTTE’s atrocities’, Lakshman Kadirgamar’s active international campaigning for strictures against LTTE and the Sinhalese expatriate community’s powerful backing of some US Congressional leaders are merely half-truths.

How did Pirabhakaran cope with this setback? During the past seven years, he did not take any rash and impulse-oriented decisions to confront the American policy. In this, he had shown maturity in leadership. He knew who his adversaries were (and are), and Americans are not in his list of adversaries. One probably wonders what he could have thought on the 1997 labeling as ‘foreign terrorist organization’ by the US State Department. For him, that label is a painful thorn in his flesh. A guerrilla warrior who has survived in jungles also would have learnt something about how to extricate the thorn without compounding the pain.

17

A Ramanujan in Military Science

“The greatest men of the Renaissance commended themselves to the powerful by their skill in scientific warfare. When Leonardo [da Vinci] wanted to get a job from the Duke of Milan, he wrote the Duke a long letter about his improvements in the art of fortification, and in the last sentence mentioned briefly that he could also paint a bit. He got the job, though I doubt if the Duke read as far as the last sentence. When Galileo wanted employment under the Grand Duke of Tuscany, it was on his calculations of the trajectories of cannon-balls that he relied. In the French Revolution, such men of science as were not guillotined owed their immunity to their contributions to the war effort.”

—BERTRAND RUSSELL ¹

dA VINCI (1452–1519) and Galileo (1564–1642) — the two brains who set the tone for the dominance of science in the Western hemisphere — were contract scientists whose thoughts enriched the military science of their eras. This trend has continued until now. Enrico Fermi (1901–54) and his colleagues, who split the atom in 1942, were intellectual descendants of da Vinci and Galileo. There’s nothing to be ashamed of in dabbling with military science. The downfall of Tamils during the past 500 years in the Indian subcontinent was due to the fact that Tamils were not encouraged by external (colonial and missionary) and internal (societal and religious) forces to think in terms of military science. Pirabhakaran made a change in Tamil thinking.

Pirabhakaran is a scientist — albeit an unconventional scientist. *His speciality is military science.* A stale wisecrack on Pirabhakaran is that he did not have a tertiary education. But corollary to that wisecrack is that, the island where Pirabhakaran was born did not have (and even now doesn’t have) a proper military science program at the university level.

Ceylon had its ceremonial army of course, but the cerebral power of its ranking leaders was so abysmal that they couldn’t even execute successful military *coup dé-tat*, not once but twice in the 1960s. When Pirabhakaran came of age in 1972, there were no ranking military thinkers (or defence analysts in current parlance) in the island to brag about. Here is the history of the

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post-independent period’s Sri Lankan army until 1972, as it appeared in the Sri Lankan army website:

“The Army Act was enacted in parliament on the 10th of October 1949 which is recognized as the day, the Ceylon Army was raised. The Army was to be comprised of a Regular and a Volunteer force and the initial requirement was to raise the following units in the Regular and Volunteer Forces.

The Regular Force:

- An artillery Regiment to guard the coast and the airspace of the Island.
- An Infantry Battalion to mainly assist the police in internal security duties, for static guards and ceremonial duties.
- A small detachment of Signals to provide communications.
- An element of the Service Crops [sic!] for supply transport and barrack services.
- A new ordnance Depot
- An Electrical and Mechanical Engineer Workshop
- A Medical element to handle the British Army hospital in Colombo and the Medical Reception Centre at Diyatalawa.
- A Works Services element for repair and maintenance of buildings.
- A small Military Police section to maintain discipline
- A Recruit Training Depot

The Volunteer Force:

- An Artillery Regiment
- An Engineer Squadron
- An Infantry Battalion
- A Medical Unit
- A Service Corps Company

There were no formations and all units were directly functioning under Army Headquarters. Temporary field headquarters formed at the time of a requirement as it was done during the 1958 communal riots. The first field formation was raised in 1963, to prevent illicit immigration from South India. This headquarters was known as Task Force Anti Illicit Immigration (TAFII), which was disbanded in 1981. In May 1972, when Ceylon became the Republic of Sri Lanka, all Army units were renamed accordingly.”²

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

Thus, Pirabhakaran was a self-taught military scientist, like what Ramanujan was for mathematics. Ramanujan is renowned for his mathematical calculations. Similarly Pirabhakaran has proved his mettle in military calculations. Ramanujan’s mathematical caliber couldn’t be assessed by his ordinary peers. The same was true for Pirabhakaran’s military caliber.

Neither Ceylon nor the greater India (encompassing both Pakistan and Bangladesh) did generate a ranking military leader, of international caliber, in the past 200 years. Pirabhakaran has been called names by his tub-thumping political adversaries and power-peddling journalists; a ‘megalomaniac’, ‘a ruthless killer’, ‘a tyrant’, and ‘a terrorist’ are few of these. These labels fit perfectly even to democratic, street-smart politicians like Truman, Johnson, Nixon, J. R. Jayewardene and Premadasa when they waged war.

WATSON’S RULES FOR SUCCESS IN SCIENCE

James Watson is a revered name in biomedical sciences, since he was one of the co-discoverers of the double helical structure of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) in 1953. He also gained a reputation as a brash, no-nonsense guy who broke the accepted norms and conventions of scientific world. In a talk delivered on March 2, 1993, to honor the 40th anniversary of his famous discovery, he was in his flair. He introduced his five rules for success, as a scientist. These are,

- Rule 1:** *To succeed in science, you have to avoid dumb people.* In the game of science — or life — the highest goal isn’t simply to win, it’s to win at something really difficult. Put another way, it’s to go somewhere beyond your ability and come out on top.
- Rule 2:** *To make a huge success, a scientist has to be prepared to get into deep trouble.* Sometime or another, people will tell you that you’re not ready to do something. If you are going to make a big jump in science, you will very likely be unqualified to succeed by definition. The truth, however, won’t save you from criticism. Your very willingness to take on a very big goal will offend some people who will think that you are too big for your britches and crazy to boot.
- Rule 3:** *Be sure you always have someone up your sleeve who will save you when you find yourself in deep s...* [four-letter word, rhyming with ‘hit’].
- Rule 4:** *Never do anything that bores you.* Constantly exposing your ideas to informed criticism is very important.
- Rule 5:** *If you can’t stand to be with your real peers, get out of science.* It’s very hard to succeed in science if you don’t want to be with other scientists. You have to go to key meetings where you may spot key facts that would have

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escaped you. And you have to chat with your competitors, even if you find them objectionable.³

Of these five rules for success proposed by Watson, from the past 20 years of Pirabhakaran’s deeds, one could infer that he has adhered to Rules 1, 2, 3 and 4 with conviction. His adherence to Rule 5 is a toss up.

Avoiding dumb people: Pirabhakaran routinely avoided the dumb people such as those who represented the Indian Intelligence Agencies and the Sri Lankan politicians.

Getting into deep trouble: Pirabhakaran got into deep trouble by deciding to ‘test’ the skills of his LTTE against the Indian army.

Having someone at hand for protection: Pirabhakaran had two great patrons to protect him in his war against the Indian army. They were MGR (an individual) and the Tamils (a population) living in the North and East Eelam.

Not doing anything that is boring: Pirabhakaran has learnt by historical experience that the round table conferences, ‘All Party Colloquia’, Constitutional amendments, Commissions and peace negotiations with the third degree politicians are time-wasting strategies which deny and postpone the political rights of people whom he represents and thus they have been boring for him.

BAPTISM BY FIRE IN 1987–90

One tough decision Pirabhakaran took to gain stature among his peer military scientists, was the one he made in October 1987 to confront the Indian army which had landed in Eelam, following the Jayewardene-Rajiv Gandhi Agreement of July 1987. That was the war which heralded Pirabhakaran’s arrival among the elite ranks as one of the top military strategists of his era. It was baptism by fire. None of the Sri Lankan army’s generals has the distinction of fighting a foreign army and emerging as a victor in such an encounter. Thus, the source of anti-Pirabhakaran venom spilled by the Sinhalese analysts since 1990 derives from Pirabhakaran’s success in puncturing the armor of the Indian army.

First I reproduce a 1991 essay of mine ‘LTTE’s War with the Indian Army’ on the LTTE’s performance against the Indian army, between October 1987 and March 1989. Then, I will comment on (a) how it was substantiated by the later observations of other participants who played direct roles in this war and had contact with Pirabhakaran, and also (b) how the outcome of In-

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dian army’s confrontation with LTTE, affected the LTTE’s performance in the 1990s.

MY 1991 ESSAY⁴

“George Kohn, the compiler of the standard reference book, *Dictionary of Wars* (Facts on File Publications, New York, 1986) wrote in his introduction, “*War has a long and intriguing history and has been a prominent feature of human existence ever since the day when rival men — and women — decided to settle their differences by use of force. In many instances, this history of a people is the history of its wars.*” Only the naïve can doubt the truth of these statements.

India’s first military encounter against a foreign adversary was recorded as that of Alexander’s Asiatic campaign (329–325 BC). The Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka became the battle field for India’s latest military encounter in 1987. Since the Indian army’s war against Prabhakaran’s Tamil Tigers lasted almost two and a half years (October 1987 to March 1990), it is time to review the outcome of this war. Already so many military experts, political pundits and journalists from India have presented ‘India’s version’ of the most unexpected military encounter the Indian army had to face in its post-independence era.

The performance of the Indian army in Sri Lanka was no better than the performances of India’s hundreds of athletes who have participated in the Olympic Games since 1948. Both the athletes and the Indian army men in Sri Lanka shared one common denominator. They failed to produce, gold, silver or even bronze-medal winning performances. But the lack luster performances of India’s athletes and army men have never deterred the post-mortem specialists in India to offer face-saving excuses, reasons etc. etc. to hide their agony.

To analyze the performance of the Indian army (I prefer this usage than the euphemistic, Indian Peace Keeping Force) in Sri Lanka, we first have to reminisce on how this army fared in the earlier wars it faced since 1947. A capsule summary of India’s wars, culled from the authoritative book, *War in Peace: Conventional and Guerrilla Warfare since 1945* (edited by Sir Robert Thompson, 1985) is given below.

(1) Sino-Indian War

Date: October–November 1962

Outcome: Chinese seizure of disputed border region.

Casualties: India; 1,400 killed and 4,013 captured. China; unknown.

(2) Indo-Pakistan War of 1965

Date: April–September 27, 1965.

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Main engagements: Lahore.

Outcome: UN policed ceasefire.

Casualties: India; 2,212 dead, 7,636 wounded and 1,500 missing. Pakistan; estimated 5,800 plus dead.

(3) Indo-Pakistan War of 1971

Date: December 3–16, 1971.

Main engagements: Dacca.

Outcome: Independence for Bangladesh.

Casualties: India; 1,426 dead, 3,611 wounded and 2,149 missing. Pakistan; unknown.

To these three, should be added the Siege of Sikh Golden Temple, which occurred on June 6, 1984. Casualties: Indian troops, 55 killed. Sikh militants, 500 plus killed and 1,500 plus captured.

Compared to these short military encounters of the Indian army, their mission against Prabhakaran’s Tamil Tigers became the most protracted one. Though it is a bitter pill to swallow for many, Prabhakaran emerged as a victorious military commander in the most vigorous and mentally bruising battle he faced till 1989.

Between October and December 1987 (the first three months of the war), after a bloody fighting, the Indian forces took *military control* of the Jaffna region and the Tamil Tigers retreated to the jungle hideouts in the Mullaitivu, Vavuniya, Mannar and Trincomalee districts. Yves de Saint Jacob’s AFP news report from New Delhi published in the *Mainichi Daily News* of Japan (27 January 1988) informed that by January 1988, 350 troops had died and that the war against Tamil Tigers was costing India ‘some 4 million dollars a day’. After another 15 months of war, Barbara Crossette of the *New York Times* (May 10, 1989) informed the world that, ‘more than 900 Indians have been killed and many thousands wounded’. And these were the ‘official figures’ released from the Indian side.

The secret of Prabhakaran’s survival in times of turbulence (against mind-numbing odds stacked against him) was dependent on three important factors. These are,

- his uncanny knack of outsmarting the adversaries in most unpredictable ways,
- patronage of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MGR,
- his support and rapport from the Tamil masses in the Northern and Eastern provinces.

Let me expand on these three factors which helped Prabhakaran to fight the Indian army with confidence.

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

1. OUTSMARTING THE ADVERSARIES

Only outstanding leaders are blessed with this character trait. In this century (20th), leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Mao Tse Tung, Marshal Tito, Fidel Castro and Yaser Arafat had this character trait. They were able to survive so many depressing moments (which would have sapped the vigor of ordinary mortals) because they were blessed with this trait. When fighting a war with an adversary, one has to bring the enemy to your own terms to manipulate the events thereby turning the disadvantages to one’s strengths. Imagine, if Mahatmaji had played according to the rules set by the British high command in London, he would never have won independence for India. Instead, Mahatmaji set his own rules of combat with his adversaries and outsmarted the mighty fire power of the British army.

Prabhakaran dictated his own terms of combat in dealing with his adversaries. As a result he was able to bruise the bloated egos of so many politicians as well as career soldiers during the past 7 years. Who have not bitten the dust against the tactical manoeuvres of Prabhakaran? — Rajiv Gandhi, J. R. Jayewardene, J. N. Dixit (ex-Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka), Lalith Athulathmudali, Gen. L. Sundarji (India’s Chief of Army staff), Maj. Gen. Harkirat Singh (Commander of the Indian troops in Oct. 1987), Lt. Gen. Depinder Singh, the manipulating officers of the Indian Intelligence (Research and Analysis Wing), the Chiefs of Sri Lankan Armed Forces and the Officers of the Sri Lankan Intelligence Service.

2. PATRONAGE OF MGR

MGR’s patronage was vital for Prabhakaran’s strategy against his Sri Lankan adversaries and Indian army. During the first three months of the intense combat against the Indian army, the Tamil Tigers fought valiantly with the moral support provided by MGR. Regarding MGR’s critical support for Prabhakaran, one of the reliable Indian journalists, Salamat Ali wrote in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (February 4, 1988) as follows:

‘While supporting New Delhi’s policies, MGR continued to back the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, much to the dismay of the Indian Government. . . . MGR also persuaded New Delhi that because of its size the LTTE should not be totally ignored. In carrying out New Delhi’s instructions on the militant groups, MGR went far beyond his brief in the local handling of the LTTE. However, the central government did not consider it prudent to antagonize MGR over the issue of his special favours to the LTTE. When MGR learned that the July 1987 Indo-Sri Lankan peace accord was nearing completion, he tipped the LTTE which moved most of its arsenal to secret hideouts in northern Sri Lanka. MGR also told the LTTE that all militant groups would be disarmed by the Indian Peace-Keeping Force, so they too hid their arms, which later had to be searched out by the Indian troops after a prolonged campaign. Although the LTTE has been engaged in combat with Indian troops since October, MGR kept his close links with it. His statements on India’s

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Sri Lanka policy were deliberately vague enough to yield differing interpretations by the LTTE and New Delhi. Until MGR’s death, the LTTE’s speed boats used to hurtle between Tamil Nadu and Jaffna’s northern coast with impunity almost every night.’

All the parties involved in the Eelam conflict (Tamil Tigers, Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils, UNP politicians and the Indian decision-makers) were aware that MGR would not last long following his debilitating stroke in October 1984. But they also did not anticipate the unexpected turn of events in MGR’s failing health within a couple of days prior to his death on December 24, 1987. The death of MGR was indeed a major blow to Prabhakaran.

Following MGR’s death, even J. R. Jayewardene cocksurely predicted the demise of Tamil Tiges. The *Time* (January 11, 1988; Asian edition) reported that, ‘he (Jayewardene) is confident that the 35,000 Indian troops brought in under a joint accord with India will soon ‘finish’ the Tigers’. But Prabhakaran’s rebels recovered from the loss of MGR and they survived the whole of 1988, while Jayewardene retired in disgrace.

3. SUPPORT OF TAMIL PEOPLE

How much support and rapport, Prabhakaran and his youthful rebels had among the Tamils of Northern and Eastern provinces is distinctly visible when we compare the two reports published, one at the beginning of the war (October 1987) and the second one after 18 months, in March 1989.

Angus Deming and Ron Moreau reporting for the *Newsweek* (October 26, 1987) wrote, ‘... they [Tamil Tigers] may also have lost the battle for the hearts and minds of Jaffna Tamils, many of whom support the peace accord and have grown weary of the Tigers’ violent ways. As a result, says one Western diplomat in Colombo, ‘the Tigers don’t have a long-term defensible position in Jaffna city. It’s only a matter of days before they either have to surrender or try to escape’. That was the view of the Indian military tacticians. But, their expectations did not materialize even after pounding the lives and limbs of tens of thousands of non-combatant Tamils living in the Eelam territory’.

Barbara Crossette’s article entitled, ‘If the War has ended, why are so many dying’?, published in the *New York Times* of March 9, 1989, told the continued support Prabhakaran’s rebels enjoyed amongst the Tamils.

‘... The Tigers, almost unbelievably, have not lost public sympathy, despite their terrorist tactics and the destructions that came in their wake. Over and over again, a visitor to Jaffna hears the Tigers complimented for ‘never letting us down’. Quietly, the Tigers are still a presence in Jaffna town, in villages elsewhere on the peninsula and on surrounding islands. If Indians control the roads by day, Tigers have the ability to cut them by night... Indian troops, fearful of driving alone on the peninsula’s road, roar along in convoys, scattering local people with angry glares and the brandishing of automatic weapons’.

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THE OUTCOME

Prabhakaran and his rebels had to tackle the Indian army in three phases; (a) open warfare, (b) guerrilla operations, and (c) a political campaign for popular support. Based on the initial outcome of the open warfare (October–November 1987), the Indian army and Indian news media announced ‘victories’ and now it is apparent that their boast was premature and a hollow one. Once the Indian army gained military control during day time (while losing the popular support of the Tamil masses) in the Jaffna region by fire power and air-strike, they were lost about their next move. They presumed that mere show of tank strength could cage the Tamil Tigers but they were sadly mistaken. On paper, it looked like that the Indian army would have disarmed the Tamil Tigers within five days (That was was the original estimate of Rajiv Gandhi). The Indian military brains estimated this on the duration of their Indo-Pakistan Wars of 1965 and 1971.

The strength of Tamil Tigers, on paper, amounted to 5,000 plus. Hence the initial landing of 15,000 Indian soldiers in August 1987. This was based on the accepted rules of conventional war that the Indian army needed a 3:1 advantage in manpower and equipment to take on a garrison in prepared positions. Then the agony of the Indian military tacticians became evident when they had to bring reinforcement in excess of 100,000 men. Even this proved futile.

What Rajiv Gandhi’s military advisers failed to calculate was that Prabhakaran’s hard-core army of 5,000 plus was given solid cover by more than a million non-combatant Tamils of Northern and Eastern provinces. Prabhakaran also followed another maxim of Mao’s guerrilla warfare: ‘*Strategy is to pit one man against ten, but the tactics are to pit ten men against one*’. In the final analysis, the Indian army was outwitted and out-fought by Prabhakaran’s Tigers. Who will disagree with the comments of one Theepan, a Tamil Tiger fieldcommander, ‘We are elated to fight the Indians; the whole world admired us for the fight we have given the world’s fourth largest armed forces’? (*Time*, Dec.19, 1988).

The British weekly *Economist* harbors no love for the Tamil Tigers. It’s Sri Lankan correspondent always reports with contempt about the mission on which Prabhakaran has embarked. However, on the first anniversary of the LTTE-Indian war, the *Economist* (October 22, 1988) came to its senses and presented a somewhat accurate appraisal of the result. Otherwise it would have lost its credibility as a critical commentator of contemporary events. The title of the story was, ‘Rajiv gets lost on a Tiger hunt’. Some excerpts are worth recording for the benefit of those who have not read it.

‘More than 500 of its [India’s] 50,000 soldiers have been killed, almost all of them by the Tamil Tiger guerrillas. Three times that number have been wounded. . . . And there is the incalculable damage to the army’s pride from its failure, despite more than a year of effort and a vast superiority of arms, to

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subdue the Tigers.... The Tigers have lost some 350 men since the fighting resumed in earnest last October, and now have around 2,000 in the field’....

“Tigers are not alone in believing that one day they will get their Tamil Eelam. Some of the Indian officers fighting them believe so too. They have experienced the Tigers’ tenacity in battle and have interrogated Tiger prisoners. They reckon the guerrillas could go on fighting indefinitely.”

The *Economist* continued its analysis further.

“Even those who do not accept that bleak view now suspect that the Tigers cannot simply be wiped out, as it was once thought they could be. If the Indians cannot do it, the Sri Lankan army, which is half the size of the Indian force in Sri Lanka, seems unlikely to.”

In recent decades (if not centuries), no military general from Sri Lanka had the courage to take on the might of an Indian army. But Prabhakaran took the challenge in a most daring manner and had surprised many of his critics. The *Time* magazine (April 3, 1989; Asian edition) had written the non-partisan verdict of this war. In its cover story on ‘Super India: The next military power’, there appeared a box-feature, with the caption, ‘Sri Lanka: Case Study of a Disaster’. The last three sentences of the analysis read:

‘Some 800 Indian soldiers have died at the hands of the Tigers. India still has 100,000 troops and paramilitary forces committed to the Sri Lanka operation, yet it has failed to put down the guerrillas. The simmering conflict may not be India’s Viet Nam, but it provides the lesson for New Delhi that even an emerging superpower must recognize its limits’. That certainly was grudging acknowledgement of the victory for Prabhakaran’s army.

Almost a year later, when India withdrew the last of its troops from Sri Lanka on March 24, 1990, Barbara Crossette of the *New York Times* openly acknowledged the LTTE’s victory over the Indian Army (March 25, 1990). She wrote,

‘The defeat of New Delhi’s policy is now complete. Not only has India lost the battle with the Tamil Tigers, at the cost of about 1,200 Indian lives, but it has also lost any hope of direct influence over the Sri Lankan northeast, particularly the strategic port of Trincomalee, whom an Indian-installed provincial government, intended to blunt the Tigers’ political potential, collapsed this month’.

So, in the final verdict, of the three phases which consisted the Indo-LTTE war (1987–90), the LTTE won the two phases (guerrilla campaign and the popular support for political campaign) after back-tracking in the first phase (open warfare). It was the longest war the Indian army has fought since India’s independence. However, the Tamils cannot feel happy about the victory, since it has been achieved at too great cost. The tragedy of the Indo-LTTE war summed up in statistics (only a partial one) should read as follows:

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- India: 1,200 plus killed and many thousands injured (‘official estimate’),
- LTTE: 1,000 plus killed and an equal number injured,
- Tamil civilians: 5,000 plus killed and injured.”

To reiterate, in 1991, I identified three factors which were important for Pirabhakaran and LTTE’s survival against the Indian army’s campaign. These were, Pirabhakaran’s innate intelligence, patronage of MGR, and the mass support from the Eelam Tamil population residing in the North and East of the island. To my satisfaction, J. N. Dixit (Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka from 1985 to 1989), who was one of the chief Indian protagonists in charge of organizing the Indian army’s campaign, also confirmed the significance of all three factors in his memoirs, *Assignment Colombo*, in 1998. Though I stated in 1991 that the number of Tamil civilians dead was 5,000 plus, subsequent research shows that this figure need to be upwardly revised to 6,000 plus.

J. N. DIXIT’S ASSESSMENT

Among a dozen of books which have appeared describing the Indo-Sri Lankan affairs of the 1980s, Dixit’s book stands out prominently for more than one reason. First, it appeared in 1998, after the deaths of many of the prominent players of that period. These include (in chronological order of death), MGR, Amirthalingam, Uma Maheswaran, Rohana Wijeweera, Ranjan Wijeratne, Rajiv Gandhi, Athulathmudali, Premadasa, Gamini Dissanayake and J. R. Jayewardene.

Secondly, Dixit’s rank as one of the main protagonists of that era as well as his frankness in penning the political motives of such dead political players provide *gravitas* to his book, which are not found in other books of authored by academics and analysts. Of course, Dixit’s book has its spins and serious omissions, the most glaring one being the non-mention of civilian casualties in Eelam during the Indian army’s offensives; it has its minor factual errors; and it also has its garnish of ‘We did the best thing — We did the right thing’ bombast. Despite these limitations, Dixit did not mince his words, in describing Pirabhakaran’s blessings. He noted the talent of Pirabhakaran — the leading military scientist of Tamils — as follows:

“The LTTE’s emergence as the most dominant and effective politicomilitary force representing Tamil interests was due to the following [Dixit lists six] factors. First, the character and personality of Prabhakaran who is disciplined, austere and passionately committed to the cause of Sri Lankan Tamils’ liberation. Whatever he may be criticized for, it cannot be denied that the man

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has an inner fire and dedication and he is endowed with natural military abilities, both strategic and tactical. He has also proved that he is a keen observer of the nature of competitive and critical politics. He has proved his abilities in judging political events and his adroitness in responding them.”⁵

What makes a great scientist is the possession of keen observational powers and Dixit’s assessment of Pirabhakaran is nothing but accurate. Dixit reiterated the success of Pirabhakaran in the following terms.

“I met the leaders of practically all Tamil militant groups during my four years in Colombo. Prabhakaran naturally stands out among them. Regardless of the criticisms and prejudices that I may have about this young man, I cannot help but acknowledge his deep idealism and his political and military skills. His commitment to the creation of a Tamil Eelam, in my judgement, is unalterable. He is taciturn not terribly articulate, but he is clear in his sense of priorities and precise in speech. Events over the years have shown him as an accomplished political strategist and military tactician, qualities strengthened further by his forbearance and his capacity for survival. The only time during the last one-and-a-half decades or so when his leadership and political survival was really in danger was when he was confronted by the IPKF. His surviving the IPKF operations was more due to the political contradictions affecting Sri Lankan and Indian policies than his personal capacities. But his surviving the IPKF and carrying on his struggle has made him a folk hero among his people. His hold on Sri Lankan Tamils may be partially due to the fear of the LTTE, but in recent years he has had widespread political support from Sri Lankan Tamils. In personal life he is austere, highly disciplined and totally committed. He is incapable of compromises and if he does, it has been and it is only for interim tactical purposes. He does not tolerate opposition and he has proved himself to be an accomplished guerilla commander. His political stature and credibility amongst the Tamils have increased over the years. He also has considerable support in Tamil Nadu. I do not see any prospect of his accepting a compromise with the Sinhalese government.”⁶

On the significance of MGR’s patronage to Pirabhakaran’s LTTE, Dixit had emphasized this vital point three times in his book, and Rajiv Gandhi’s disappointment to this phenomenon, as follows:

1. “Despite having supported Rajiv Gandhi in signing the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, he [MGR] remained committed to assisting the LTTE. This inclination of MGR was so fundamental that he continued to provide finances and logistical facilities to Prabhakaran even after the IPKF launched operations against the LTTE.”⁷
2. “He[Rajiv Gandhi] was disappointed that the late M. G. Ramachandran also continued to provide financial and logistical support to the LTTE, even after the IPKF launched operations against this organization.”⁸

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3. “It is a fact that Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. G. Ramachandran provided sufficient finances to the LTTE to purchase arms and supplies even after IPKF was launched against this militant group.”⁹

It needs no emphasis that Pirabhakaran was lucky to have a great and powerful patron in MGR between 1983 and 1987, which satisfied Watson’s rule no.3 for success in science. It is also evident that though LTTE has survived for 17 years since MGR’s death, many of the road-blocks it faced in the Indian political arena since 1988 was due to the lack of having a powerful patron in the mold of MGR.

18

Rajiv Gandhi-Jayewardene Accord

RAJIV GANDHI-JAYEWARDENE ACCORD OF 1987

THE RAJIV GANDHI-JAYEWARDENE Accord of 1987, which led to LTTE’s war against the Indian army, is an ideal example for a ‘Rashomon’ event (*see*, Appendix 1). An event occurred, in which quite a few participated and there was an observer. Then there were others who heard the story. When the event was later described by the participants, observer and the listeners, everyone delivered his or her own version and the truth became entangled on the description of the event, including what happened immediately before the event and after the event. Chronologically, I list some of the prominent versions, as they appeared.

1. The EPRLF’s version was presented by Hoole *et al.* in 1990.
2. President J. R. Jayewardene’s version was described by K. M. de Silva in the second volume of his sycophantic biography on the UNP leader, which appeared in 1994.
3. The Indian army’s version on its induction to Eelam was presented by Gen. Harkirat Singh in 1997.
4. Sri Lankan army’s version was also presented by Major General Lucky Algama in 1997.
5. India’s official version came in the form of Dixit’s memoirs in 1998.
6. Panrutti Ramachandran, who was MGR’s right-hand man during that period, presented MGR’s version in 2000.

MAJOR GENERAL LUCKY ALGAMA’S ASSESSMENT:

Lucky Algama lost his life in December 1999, at the campaign platform of the last Presidential election in Sri Lanka. He was a major player in the Sri Lankan army during UNP’s rule. In October 1997, he was interviewed in London by Thilak S. Fernando, who had posted this interview in his website, with the note, ‘an interview which never found its way to a Sri Lankan newspaper’. Excerpt:

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Fernando’s question: ‘During the period of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in the North and East of Sri Lanka, the strength of their columns were reported to be in the region of 85,000 cadres. Yet they could not capture Prabhakaran! What was the Sri Lankan Army’s role during that period’?

Algama: ‘The strategy of the IPKF was to saturate the captured areas with their troops. They could do that because their manpower was enormous. If they wanted to capture Prabhakaran, definitely there were ample opportunities to do so. However, they did not capture him because their arrival on Sri Lanka soil was for a completely different purpose — due to the wrong foreign policy adopted by the Sri Lankan Government at the time. Our foreign policy appeared to be detrimental to India at the time, therefore, the IPKF came only to safeguard India’s interests and certainly not to solve Sri Lanka’s problems’. ¹

PANRUTTI S. RAMACHANDRAN’S ASSESSMENT:

Of all the versions presented on the Rajiv Gandhi-Jayewardene Accord, this version seems to have closest alignment to what Pirabhakaran and his patron MGR would have thought about it in July 1987.

“...Though the accord contained some positive aspects, it was inherently defective. The problem was between Sinhalese and Tamils of Sri Lankan origin in Sri Lanka. The accord should have been between them, and not between India and Sri Lanka. India can be a guarantor at best to see the implementation of any such agreement. Unfortunately, the accord was more like a pre-arranged marriage by parents without consulting the daughter, the eventual bride. Moreover there was a clause in it, putting the onus on India to disarm the LTTE, within two days of signing of the accord.

The accord was shown to the then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MGR, almost as a *fait accompli*. He was asked to bring round the LTTE for this arrangement. In fact the LTTE raised at that time a pertinent question, as to why they should vouch for an agreement between India and Sri Lanka. On behalf of MGR, I took the onerous responsibility of trying to convince the LTTE. I prevailed upon the LTTE that there were aspects in this to be looked into. For the first time, the Government of Sri Lanka recognised Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka as Tamil homeland. Secondly in the past whenever Tamils entered into agreements with the Sri Lankan government, it always went back. But this accord allowed India to be a guarantor. Third, an interim government for the Tamil homeland was incorporated which gave legitimacy to LTTE and allow it to form a government. And furthermore it was only an interim arrangement.

When everything went as planned, the Sri Lankan government stabbed India by arresting LTTE cadres, who ultimately committed suicide under the custody of Sri Lankan army. The IPKF presence in Sri Lanka could not save their lives. Naturally LTTE was unwilling to go by the accord. **Instead of pacifying or renegotiating with the LTTE, Rajiv ordered IPKF to disarm**

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them. That was the fateful decision taken at Delhi in which I too participated. I was asked to leave the meeting because of my strong protests against the decision (emphasis added). Immediately, I met G. Parthasarathy at his residence in Delhi and appraised him of what happened in the meeting; he said, “this boy (he was referring to Rajiv) is immature; Everything is gone; Nothing can be saved.” His prophecy came true. The intention of the Indian government to “disarm LTTE within 24 hours” almost went on for two years, ending in a historical tragedy, including the death of Rajiv Gandhi. . . .”²

AN [UNIDENTIFIED] INDIAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCY’S ASSESSMENT

Apart from J. N. Dixit, even the operatives of Indian Intelligence Agencies had recorded the benefits of MGR’s patronage to Pirabhakaran and LTTE in one of their reports in mid-1980s. Ten years later, the 1997 Jain Commission Report on Rajiv Gandhi Assassination had made this public by reproducing an excerpt of an unidentified Indian Intelligence Agency, relating to Pirabhakaran and ‘other prominent personalities of the LTTE during the period of 1981–86’. This report makes interesting reading in that, it was written from the angle of a spy (field officer) who was keen to find a ‘mole’ among the leading LTTE members. To quote,

“What helped Prabhakaran most in the early stages was the total support given by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister [*i.e.*, MGR]. Prabhakaran was always very respectful towards MGR and used the right phrases and right gestures. He admired MGR for the immense popularity he evoked in the Tamil masses and wanted to emulate him. On the other hand, Prabhakaran was seen as a real hero. Enormous funds were made available which helped LTTE to sustain themselves until they were in control of Jaffna peninsula and started collecting taxes. On one or two occasions arms shipments were reportedly cleared and this gave a decisive edge to the group by the end of 1984. This support added to the edge Prabhakaran had in his leadership and the ability to invoke a kind of mad and total loyalty in his followers. He has a self-constructive strain in him which he has successfully passed on to some of his close followers. If driven to a corner, Prabhakaran is capable of committing suicide rather than face humiliation. He has a love for guns and his face is said to glow when he sees a good weapon. He would always carry the latest pistol available in the world market, and is a good shot too.”³

Now, to the assessment on Pirabhakaran’s closest company within LTTE and search for a ‘mole’ amongst them. From the cited evidence of Kittu being in Madras, it appears that this spy report was originally written after the attack on Kittu, which happened on March 31, 1987. One should overlook the stilted English description, since it probably was written by a field officer of RAW who was on a mole hunt.

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“At the moment, Prabhakaran does not carry any threat to his leadership. Only two persons could have posed a threat. Of those, Kittu is now in Madras to get an artificial leg, and though he is consulted on all matters his disability and absence from the scene are big handicaps. In the early days when Kittu wanted to marry his girlfriend, Prabhakaran prevented it on the ground that a revolutionary should be wedded to the revolution, though he himself fell in love with one of the fasting girls of Jaffna University who were brought to Madras by the LTTE, and got married to her. Kittu continues to hold this against Prabhakaran.

Mathiasri [referring to Mahendrarajah alias Mahathaya] could claim seniority even over Prabhakaran as he has continued with the Tigers while Prabhakaran briefly joined TELO. Unlike Prabhakaran, Mathiasri is very ambitious and the way Mathiasri has taken precedence over Dileep Yogi (who joined the movement only after 1983) has not gone unnoticed. Other persons who are considered to be very close to Prabhakaran would include Raghu, personal bodyguard of Prabhakaran, and Thilagar, a political adviser, and Shankar alias Swarnalingam who helped the LTTE in procuring arms and other equipment from abroad. Anton Balasingham, the political adviser (he is no doctor and does not hold a Ph. D.) is more a spokesman who, as he himself had remarked, is there to justify the action rather than advise on actions to be taken. Balasingham, after taking his post-graduate degree in Jaffna, briefly dabbled in journalism before taking up a regular job in UK High Commission. In the 1970s he went over to UK and in due course obtained British citizenship. He lost his wife in London and married the Australian nurse who was attending to her in the hospital. He is known to be shrewd and has slowly eliminated all other intellectuals who could have given sensible advice to Prabhakaran. Except for Balasingham, Prabhakaran is surrounded by a group of school and college dropouts. At this moment the rank and file is well-knit as the LTTE has the muscle and money which would be over an estimated 15 crores of Sri Lankan rupees. The powerful motivation for attainment of Eelam is no longer present and the problem would be how to keep the cadres together with an alternative motivation. This is a major problem for the group.”⁴

Readers should take note of Mahathaya’s profile as presented in this Indian Intelligence wallah’s description and especially the comment ‘only two persons’ (Kittu and Mahathaya) could pose a threat to Pirabhakaran. By aligning this field report which was made public in 1997 via the Jain Commission Report, with the already exposed fact that in July 1989, the RAW officials had planted a news report in the *Hindu* newspaper about the death of Pirabhakaran in the jungles of Vanni [see, Chapter 1], it appears difficult to contradict the accusation on Mahathaya that he did turn into a Benedict Arnold of Eelam.

COL. JOHN TAYLOR’S ASSESSMENT:

Col. John Taylor was one of the first officers assigned to the IPKF, and in 1997 he reminisced to the Rediff.Com (India) his impression on the con-

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frontation with LTTE. Col. John Taylor’s observation is interesting in that he describes how the Eelam Tamil public provided ‘tremendous mass support’ to the LTTE. His words on the quality of RAW’s intelligence (both in literal and figurative senses) speak for themselves. Excerpts:

“By the time the Indian Peace Keeping Force was inducted after the India-Sri Lanka Accord, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam had emerged a strong militant group on the island. They had wiped out all opposition, both Tamil and Sinhala. They had full control of the North and East. They were running a parallel government. The administration and judiciary were with them.

The LTTE was both loved and feared by all. When I was in Sri Lanka, the only Sinhala north of the Elephant Pass were the Sri Lankan troops stationed there. Only Tamils were safe in the area. Such was the total control of the LTTE, because of their mass appeal. . . . Many critics have labelled the IPKF’s role on the island as India’s Vietnam. The Sri Lankan Tamils, fed on LTTE propaganda, boasted of giving the fourth largest army in the world, a bloody nose. Nothing can be further from the truth.

The IPKF had successfully eliminated the middle order leadership of the LTTE and broken their stronghold over the Jaffna peninsula. The LTTE was forced to take refuge in the jungles of the North and East. The Elephant Pass was open for the first time after the LTTE had taken control of the Jaffna. Movement of goods from the South, East and West was made possible after a long period of time. However, the IPKF operations were not a complete success. We were unable to unite the different Tamil groups, mainly because of the intransigent attitude of the LTTE. It wanted the whole pie or nothing.

Anyone with a military background will tell you that for an army to be successful in an operation of the size and magnitude in Sri Lanka, it must have excellent intelligence, freedom of action to plan and execute its operations, and sound logistic support. . . . We were aware of the LTTE’s domination over other militant organisations, but we were not aware of their innovative tactics, resourcefulness, tremendous mass support and, most importantly, their excellent intelligence network.

Let me give you two small examples of their subtle yet fatally successful methods of passing on information. Whenever an army patrol left their camp or post, the nearest temple or church would ring their bells to indicate how many men were in the patrol. If the bell chimed six times the strength of the patrol was six, and so on. Only later did we realise the truth of Hemingway’s classic *For whom the Bells Toll*: they were tolling for us.

Passing through a village or township, a small boy or girl would run ahead to the end of the street, pass information about the patrol. The next messenger would be cycle-borne. Thus the message went ahead — messengers changing every 150 metres or so. Even if they were intercepted, the boy or girl only knew his portion of the route. No one person knew the ultimate destination.

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While passing messages on their [LTTE] radio sets, they switched frequencies continuously. So the intercepts were just one line of a coded message. This was something we were learning for the first time, and the hard way too.

The Research and Analysis Wing was in charge of collation of intelligence. The less said about them the better. The intelligence agents were afraid for their lives and hardly dared to venture out of their rooms. All the information they passed on was acquired from the army. Things should have been the other way round. Unfortunately Rajiv Gandhi mainly accepted the advice given by RAW and other intelligence agencies, and decided to induct the IPKF. What we heard on the grapevine was that the RAW advisors had told the PM, ‘We will have Prabhakaran in our custody within 72 hours’. This was never confirmed, but was an indicator of our poor intelligence assessment...”⁵

MAJOR GENERAL HARKIRAT SINGH’S ASSESSMENT:

Major General Harkirat Singh served as the first commander of the Indian army’s campaign in Sri Lanka. His views are lucid and he shoots straight. Thus it is refreshing to digest this lengthy interview from a man who kept silent for ten years. Though Pirabhakaran turned out to be his adversary, this Indian soldier paid proper respect to the tenacity of Pirabhakaran. This 1997 interview is also notable for many of its revelations:

1. How Pirabhakaran was treated in New Delhi before Rajiv Gandhi left for Colombo to sign the July 1987 Agreement?
2. How the Indian authorities armed the EPRLF during August 1987 which negated the spirit of LTTE’s surrender of weapons?
3. What caused the suicides of LTTE leaders Kumarappa, Pulendran and another dozen cadres?
4. On High Commissioner Dixit’s orders to ‘Shoot Prabhakaran —shoot Mahathaya’,
5. On Pirabhakaran’s security cover.

In the following lengthy excerpt⁶, I have only deleted the infrequent Hindi interjections in his responses, and altered the spellings of the names of individuals and places to their conventional forms.

“One early morning in 1987, Indian army’s 54 Division landed in Sri Lanka from Secunderabad. At its head was Major General Harkirat Singh, the Indian Peace Keeping Force’s first commander. General Singh first tried to buy peace with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. When that failed, he plunged his men into a blood war. And India suffered horrifying casualties.

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After the infamous killing of Indian soldiers on the Jaffna University football ground under his command, New Delhi inducted Lieutenant General A. S. Kalkat. Thus, it slowly began relieving General Singh of his charge. Within a year, he returned to India. General Singh has been subject to much criticism. But, except for an interview immediately after his retirement, he has kept his counsel. A decade after those terrible days, he completed his memoirs on Lanka, wherein he blames key individuals involved in the IPKF operation for the unprecedented loss of life, and questions several long-held beliefs.

In a candid interview to Josy Joseph, he accuses several people — including then Indian army chief General K Sunderji and high commissioner to Colombo J N Dixit — and admits that “chaos” reigned in the jungles of Sri Lanka where the Indian troops faced humiliation.

Q: How did the IPKF, sent to enforce peace, get involved in a bloody fight with the LTTE? Do you personally believe that it could have been prevented?

Singh: One afternoon I was in my operations room when then vice chief of army staff (S.F) Rodrigues came. Later he became [army] chief. He talked of hard options. I advised him against it. I told him, If you adopt hard options you would be fighting for the next 10 to 20 years. And this will lead to insurgency and there is no stopping it. You are fighting in Nagaland, Mizoram, all over. This will be another. And sure enough, it has not ended to date. And it won't end.

Q: Why?

Singh: I have all regards for Sri Lanka. The Tamils have sacrificed [a lot], the LTTE is highly motivated and there is one aim: Eelam. Independence. Till they get independence they are not going to stop...

Q: So you actually opposed what you went out to do?

Singh: Actually [yes]. And, you know, [General Rodrigues said], ‘No, no, no... don't get cold feet. We will take care of them.’ I said, ‘They have fought their entire lives in the jungles’. I have flown over the jungles with Mahathiah, the number two man to Prabhakaran, in my helicopter. We flew over the jungles of Vavuniya and he explained to me how they fought against the Sri Lankans all these years. So they knew each inch of the land. We would push them out of Jaffna, they would get into the jungles. Then you would be fighting them for the next 10 years.

Q: You had no intelligence inputs?

Singh: All these people who were in Delhi, I am afraid, they visited Sri Lanka because it was a foreign country. They went back without any hard intelligence. They had no intelligence to give me about terrain, about enemy. I had to buy tourist maps in Hyderabad before I went into operations. And I had to borrow a Sri Lankan photocopying machine to make copies for my staff.

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Only one officer, now he is a general, Menon, he got hold of some maps, because he was my staff officer. He was my brigade major once upon a time. He said, ‘Sir, we have only these maps. You please take them, you will need them. He was very nice, he gave me a dozen maps’. For army a dozen maps is nothing. Every platoon commander has to have a map, a section commander has to have a map.

Q: So you went in with a tourist map?

Singh: We went in with a tourist map. We didn’t know the geography of this country at all, except that it was an island country. That is it. What it was inside, my God, you couldn’t see A to B, it was such thick foliage...

Q: What were the options given to you?

Singh: It was wavering. Like this: if there is a coup in Colombo, how will we reinstate [then Sri Lankan president] Jayewardane? Somebody came out with some kind of plan. All right. If we have to favour the LTTE, then how will we land in Sri Lanka? If we are to favour Sri Lankans, how will we land in Sri Lanka? After all, you just cannot land, you are going overseas, you are going by sea, going by air. So various options had to be discussed. This kind of scenario we were working on. War was never thought of. Nobody told us that behind-the-scenes there was an Accord being worked out.

Q: You were not told that the Indo-Lankan Accord was being worked on?

Singh: Of course not. What happened was, I was going back to Secunderabad. As I arrived at the airport, all my staff were lined up there. I said, Why are you all here, only my ADC is supposed to be here. They said, ‘Sir, first flight is to take off at 1 o’clock tonight’. I said, ‘For where?’ ‘For Sri Lanka’. I said, ‘It is 10 o’clock when I arrived and we are on a six- eight hour notice’? Then my staff informed me, ‘Sir, the Accord has been signed in Sri Lanka, the prime minister is there, he rang up the army commander Depinder Singh to move a division to Sri Lanka’...

Q: Your brigade commanders agreed to it?

Singh: They had no option, had to agree. Mentally we were prepared because we had been talking about the Operation for sometime. Say, we may be talking about it for a month, but there was no intelligence given to us. I should have got a proper intelligence summary, this is the terrain, this is the enemy strength. I should have been given a proper operational instruction.

When you are going into the blue in army terminology, a proper operational instruction must be given. A proper overseas command must be formed. Nothing was done. The air force was commanding its own troops, army its own troops, navy its own troops. Who is there to co-ordinate? Nobody. Everybody went independently, there was no joint

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command. It was a tri-service operation, air force, navy and army involved, but there was no joint command. There should have been a single command to take this full force across.

Q: Each one on his own?

Singh: Everybody did his own and we landed there. And we landed there like a refugee camp I saw in Assam, Chabua, when we were fighting the Chinese. Everybody was just being inducted, nobody knew anything. Anyway, I met the Sri Lankan brigade commander, went to his operations room and he told me what it was all about.

I said, Have you seen the Tigers, LTTE? He said, ‘Never. I sit inside my bunker and at last light I have APCs [armoured personnel carriers] outside my bunker. Why should I go and see the LTTE?’ I said, ‘You have been there for a long time. Alright, let us do one thing, you take me to the LTTE, I want to establish contact with them’.

We established contact. Kumaran [Kumarappa], who got killed in the boat tragedy, he was the Jaffna commander, very nice chap, he came in a car and took me and one of my brigade commanders, who got killed in Srinagar, Fernandes, he got blown off by a mine aimed at the ammunition depot. We both went with Kumaran. Mahathiah was standing outside a bungalow. He said, ‘General, I am not prepared to talk to you’. I said, ‘Why? I have come here with a message of peace, goodwill’. He said, ‘Unless you bring back Prabhakaran, we will not talk to you’. I said, ‘Where is Prabhakaran’?

I didn’t even know that. They kept the army absolutely in the dark. Prabhakaran was in the Ashoka Hotel in Delhi. Now I know the room number also, 512 or 522. And he was to see the prime minister, before the prime minister went in for the Accord. Anyway he saw him, the PM gave him certain assurances, and before he could say ‘Jack Robinson’, the prime minister was in Colombo, signing the Accord. Prabhakaran learnt it on television that the Accord had been signed and they were not party to it. It was one reason why the LTTE never accepted the Accord and India’s stand.

If we had taken the LTTE into confidence, they would have known the whole thing, their terms would have been put across to Jayewardene, and the situation would have been different. Dixit was in a great hurry to get the Accord signed, with his name up. He became foreign secretary; he got the award later. But he never studied the mood of the people, especially the JVP. And since he didn’t study the mood of the people, there was an attempt to assassinate the prime minister. . . . Then I spoke to Depinder. I said, ‘Prabhakaran must come back if you want me to talk about surrender of weapons. That was the main issue’. He picked up the Sri Lankan phone, spoke to Delhi. Then he went back to Madras and pursued the matter. He did a good job.

The next day Prabhakaran’s aircraft landed in Jaffna with Prabhakaran and his bodyguards, his wife and children, Kittu (whose leg was blown

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up) who was his right hand then. The air force pilot wanted a receipt from me saying that I received these souls safely. Then I was told that you will ensure that he reaches safely to Jaffna town and handed over to his people. I said, Fine. We ensured that. We put him and the others in various APCs so that if one is blown off, the other is alive. We took them through the Sri Lankan lines to Jaffna.

I told my staff, take a receipt from Mahathiah that he has received Prabhakaran. These are normal formalities. After all, Prabhakaran is not a small man. He is the leader, a charismatic leader of the LTTE. His life is very precious. And a very simple man. No bullshit about him. His wife lived with three saris — one she wore, one she washed and one was ready to wear. That is all. They never drank Coca-Cola. They offered us Coca-Cola, but never drank it themselves. They drank that *goliwala* soda.

Q: So that was your first encounter with him?

Singh: After all that I said, ‘Prabhakaran, we must meet’. He said, ‘General, tomorrow, 11 o’clock’. And we landed in the football ground of the Medical College, Jaffna. The entire area was manned by LTTE guns. I got down from the helicopter and looked around. I walked till I met Prabhakaran. He was standing outside a conference hall. He took me to his office. We spoke for five hours. I had to convince him that he should surrender weapons.

Q: And he was convinced?

Singh: He gave it in writing. I can show you. The only letter he gave in writing. I flew to Colombo showed it to [then Indian high commissioner to Colombo J N] Dixit. His words: ‘General what you have achieved the nation will appreciate. And I speak on behalf of the prime minister of India’. These were his words to me at that point of time.

Right. The letter was flashed all over. Surrender ceremony was fixed for 5th of August. Surrender started. Prabhakaran said, ‘I won’t come, my political officer will come’. Quite right. Atal Bihari the Indian prime minister doesn’t go for surrenders, it is his minister who goes. So, Prabhakaran didn’t come. All the big shots of Sri Lanka were there. Aircraft was there, propellers on.

Attygalle [then Sri Lankan defence secretary] said, ‘My orders are that I have to take the first weapon to Colombo and give it to Jayewardane’. The surrender took place. A token surrender. Yogi [Prabhakaran’s representative] took his pistol and gave it. Then vehicle after vehicle the LTTE came, piled up the whole area with ammunition, guns. *Bahut accha tha*. Later on, all ran into trouble.

Q: Why?

Singh: Because they did not stop arming the EPRLF [Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front]. RAW was doing it, Ministry of Foreign Affairs knew about it, Dixit knew about it, but they couldn’t stop it.

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With the result that handing over arms by 21st of August came to a virtual standstill. And the whole thing took an ugly turn. They started anti-IPKF demonstrations. Who is to answer? The general officer.

My God, thousands of young girls and children used to come in front in whites and later on what used to happen? When they used to come we used to be careful, they used to go to the ground and behind would be Tigers, with guns. That is how they used to take out our people. You couldn’t kill them because there were children in the front, women in the front. We were always fighting with our hands tied behind our backs.

Q: Did you tell the army headquarters that the EPRLF was being armed?

Singh: Of course.

Q: What was the reaction?

Singh: Nothing. No reaction. [Indian army chief] General [K] Sunderji never said anything. In the army headquarters there was a core group headed by defence minister, three chiefs and a few senior officers. They used to take decisions, decisions are given to me by the staff officer. Decisions, if I question, the answer will come, ‘These are orders from higher echelons — Higher echelons’, that is the famous answer we got. ‘Higher echelons’.

Q: What happened after the surrender came to a standstill?

Singh: There was a lot of problems. Ethnic riots broke out. They killed a lot of Sri Lankans, tortured them. Between Tamils, Sinhalese, Tamil Muslims. We did the spade work to stop it. But then the Thileepan fast happened. We tried our best. I went and tried to meet him. LTTE chaps told me, ‘General, the people’s emotions are so high that if you appear on the scene they might create a problem’. They asked me to stay there. I wanted to go and tell him, Give up. How will he give up? ‘Unless the assurances given by the prime minister of India are fulfilled I am not giving up’, he said. I kept requesting the high commissioner, ‘Come and meet, come and meet, come and meet’. He dragged his feet, he delayed it, he didn’t come. Finally he came when the man was dead. We should have saved his life, one life.

Then the boat tragedy, I was in a meeting with Mahathiah and Prabhakaran. You know, when we go for a meeting, they used to have two video cameras focused on us, tape recorders, everything. With great difficulty we had a thing like this [*he points at this correspondent’s recorder*]. The poor brigade commander used to keep that recording, then give it to his PA, and then send it to the army headquarters. Whether anybody took action on what our reports were, I don’t know.

Q: Even after the riots you were in touch with Prabhakaran?

Singh: Oh yes. I never gave up with Prabhakaran. He is a leader of the LTTE. I had all the time to meet him because I knew he was the only

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man who could solve the problem. Nobody else. Otherwise, you take up arms, and we took arms and look what happened.

Q: And what exactly happened during the boat tragedy in which the LTTE cadres committed mass suicide?

Singh: Yes, I was having a meeting with him, I came down from the boat. Mahathiah had come down a little later. Kumaran (Kumarappa), and Pulenderan (the Trincomalee leader), they were in the boat.

Mahathiah said, ‘General, I want to talk to you’. I had a major who could translate. Prabhakaran spoke to me in English many a time. He appeared well-read. He [Mahathiah] said, ‘At all cost these people [who were surrounded by Lankan troops] must be released. IPKF is here to protect the LTTE, and they should not go to Colombo. Otherwise, they will be tortured’.

They were 17, four we were able to save. So instead of going to Colombo, we flew them from the naval base to the Jaffna airbase. Now, the *tamasha* started. There were LTTE, around them were the Indian troops, around us were the Sri Lankan troops, around them were the Indian troops, around them the APCs of Sri Lanka. Now tell me, if you try to fight, there would have been a conflict between the Sri Lankan and Indian troops. Of course, the orders were very clear to the [Sri Lankan] brigade commander, otherwise get into the helicopter and reach Colombo, relinquish the command.

Anyway I was told, ‘You go to Trincomalee and prevent reinforcement of Trincomalee by Sri Lankans. Deny the airport to them’. I reached Trincomalee, and we took over the control tower, commandos were deployed, no troop movement was allowed. It created lot of ill-feeling with the Sri Lankan troops. In the meantime, I had said that it was high time that Dixit, who was on leave in Delhi, go to Colombo, and mediate their release in the boat. Depinder Singh also flew...

Q: So how did the boat tragedy end?

Singh: I was guarding the airfield. And all of them came, Depinder, Dixit and some other staff officers. They landed there, they could not convince Jayewardane, and he was too clever for them. Too clever... Depinder next day flew into Trincomalee and told me, ‘Hand over, let them go and do whatever they want. Let us go and have a cup of tea with them, with the three chiefs’. They were staring at me. This man created all the problems.

Anyway, we had a cup of tea. At 2 O’clock I get a message, ‘Why is the G-O-C [General Officer in Command] IPKF interfering in the constitutional activities of Sri Lanka?’ These were the exact words. This message came all the way from the force headquarters in Madras. And, ‘Please lift your siege in Jaffna, Let the Sri Lankans do what they want to’. I was upset. I was in Trincomalee; they were in Jaffna, my staff officers, everybody was taking charge of everything. I spoke

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to my Colonel G S Hoshier Singh. He said, ‘Anyway we have got ambulances, cars, 13, 14 of them, the hospital is all geared up to flush poison’. Our troops withdrew, the Sri Lankan troops charged, and these fellows swallowed cyanide. Those who chewed, they died on the spot, those who swallowed were saved. This created chaos in the Indo-Sri Lankan entity. That the Indian army, IPKF, could not save them. Now this man blames me. This Dixit...

Q: What was Dixit’s approach to your attempts to buy peace with LTTE?

Singh: Once he said, ‘*Shoot Prabhakaran, shoot Mahathiah*’. I said, ‘*Sorry I don’t do that*’. Those were his orders. When they came to me at 12 O’clock at night for some work, he said ‘*Shoot them. General, I have told you what I have ordered*’. I said, ‘*I don’t take your orders. And we are meeting under a white flag, you don’t shoot people under white flag*’.

Q: So who messed up during the boat tragedy?

Singh: The responsibility is entirely on the diplomats, entirely on the [Sri Lankan] army headquarters. Otherwise, for me to save those people was no problem. I would have just put them into few APCs and smuggled them out. The Sri Lankans would have just looked on. We would have taken them out, we had all the troops there. No problem.

Q: What did you feel when the orders came to leave the LTTE men to their fate?

Singh: I felt terribly bad about it. Because Kumaran’s wedding was attended by one of my brigadiers. Pulenderan was also there. A dreadful man. Wanted for 34 murders by [Gen. Cyril] Ranatunga. Every day he used to tell me, ‘General, Give me Pulenderan’ I used to tell him ‘I won’t give you Pulenderan, he will travel with me in my Jeep’. And they [the LTTE] were very cordial. They would take me anywhere. I had lot of time for them.

Q: Specifically, did Dixit fail?

Singh: Dixit had the backing of the Prime Minister of India. He had a free hand in the affairs of Sri Lanka. He could have thumbed the table and told Jayewardane, ‘Sorry you have to do it. And if you don’t do it, you know what the results will be. There will be riots, ethnic killings.’ Dixit could have done it. There was no question about Jayewardane not listening to him. Dixit may be a High Commissioner, but he was a High Commissioner of great standing. When you have the backing of the boss, you will be on the top of the world. You can make any statement to these people.

Q: Could you tell us precisely what happened once the 17 Tigers swallowed cyanide?

Singh: Riots all over. The entire Jaffna was red. We had to move, take up defences. We had no defence stores. Remember, we had no defence

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stores. We went with rifles. We did not have supporting weapons, we did not have our defence stores. . . barbed by mines, pickets around your positions so that nobody assaults the infantry without a stop. We were in naked barracks. I had stopped even tents, because aircraft as it is were few.

We carried our weapons and ammunition. We improvised wire around us, put electricity on that so that nobody crosses over at night. We had to improve everything, there was nothing till the war started and things started coming. And all the time they wanted us to fraternise with the LTTE. All Madras battalions were flown into Sri Lanka. So that we had more Tamil-speaking people. So that we spoke to the LTTE, spread the message of goodwill, ‘We are here to protect you. Surrender your weapons’. They were no fools. They knew that the Sri Lankan police was totally ineffective. The Sri Lankan police was completely finished, yeh? If they surrendered their weapons who would protect them?

Then they said, ‘No, we will give 20 rifles for the protection of Prabhakaran, 15 for Mahathiah. . . . Jayewardane himself said this’. And Prabhakaran knew he could not survive with 15 people. He used to have three-tier security around him. If Prabhakaran is here, here [the innermost ring] will be the suicide people who will sacrifice their lives. The next ring will be the fighters and the third ring will be for early warning. We could never lay hands on him even during the war once he left Jaffna. I got him only once where he said, ‘Now, I am not going to survive, all commanders are independent and will take over’ . . . when we did that bloody parachute drop.

Q: You mean the attack in the university campus?

Singh: Yeah. That was also a tragedy.

Q: But what exactly happened?

Singh: What happened? I planned with nine helicopters. I needed nine helicopters to land the troops. When the hour came, when the flight had taken off to mark the landing zone, the next flight had taken off to land the people to secure the landing zone, I am told, ‘Sorry, helicopters are not available hereafter’.

Q: Who said that?

Singh: The air force. Why are helicopters not available? They have gone to the east, there is some exercise going on. But my requirement was nine helicopters, it was accepted by [Lieutenant General] Depinder Singh. [Lieutenant General A S] Kalkat had confirmed that your plans are approved. And now you are saying the helicopters are not available? It is too late!

It was too late for an operation: half on the ground, half in the air. Bad luck. But that chap of a major who landed there in the third flight. . . Five flights went in, he landed in the third. Out of the five, one had a hole in it, so it never came back. Anyway, this major of the

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17 Sikh Light Infantry, he did not dig down. In army, the moment you land, the first requirement is to give yourself protection. So that you can fire your weapon and don’t get shot. Whereas the commandos got into the barracks. They told the chap, You also come into the barracks. He said, ‘No, no, my commanding officer is going to come. So I must meet him here’. At that time Prabhakaran said, ‘I have had it, I am not going to survive’. We had surrounded his headquarters. All the commandos were behind the back. And we were very happy because this intercept was taken by the Sri Lankans. The Sri Lankans were our interceptors, incidentally. We had no interception set-up. And we had a good rapport with the Sri Lankan [army] people; they were ready to give us all intercepts.

Q: The Indian soldiers were killed after they entered the campus?

Singh: Yes, they never went into the campus. They went to the football ground. Open space. Prabhakaran came there and kicked one chap. ‘Let him survive to tell the story’ he said. All the others were killed. And so many people are dead, 24 people are dead... If it was a success, it would have been a success, what a great success! Prabhakaran captured! It is unfortunate that persons were killed...

Q: You were worried after the boat tragedy?

Singh: One should not worry about this and that. That is OK. The boat incident was a diplomatic failure, diplomatic-political failure. The IPKF had nothing to do with it. I can write in bold letters that even if an open court is held people will talk about it. Operations, we had planned and we had executed them. But our aircraft support at the last minute was called off. In place of nine helicopters, we were given five and four in the second sorties. So we had to ground operations to link with that. That upset the whole thing, we suffered casualty...

Q: All that because you had no idea of the LTTE?

Singh: Only that we didn’t know their dispossession. Their caches. They had buried all their weapons, they had buried all their ammunition, they had buried all their supplies, they buried their money. And they knew where to dig. Their caches were all over. Not like us. We had a long administration tail. Even live goats were being sent. You can’t fight a war like this...

Q: So from word go it was flawed?

Singh: They should have had a proper war game. They should have known which troops to send. They should have known the terrain in Sri Lanka. Not that we rescinded it, we were pretty happy. I had in my mind that we would have the settlement by December and be back in Secunderabad. But then the whole critical political failure. We had no political backing. There should have had a civil-military liaison office. They should have come from the beginning. All IAS, IFS officers came

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much later. All political problems, it is not for the army to handle. We don’t handle political problems, we only fight.

Q: At the end of it all, when you were transferred out in an year, you felt humiliated?

Singh: No. Why should I feel humiliated? No question. I never felt guilty. It is this [then Indian high commissioner to Colombo J N] Dixit. When I refused his orders it was Dixit who went and spoke to the chief. . . .

Q: But people humiliated you?

Singh: Nobody. Even Dixit did not dare to talk to me. I will take off his pants. Really, I have not forgiven him. **He has done the greatest damage. . . .**

Q: Was the [IPKF] withdrawal rightly timed?

Singh: The IPKF should have never withdrawn. Why should they be withdrawn? Why they got withdrawn? Because [then Sri Lankan prime minister] Premadasa wanted them to withdraw. At what cost have we come back? **We lost 1,500 to 2,000 people.** All the weapons we imported, we handed them over to the EPRLF. He had no business to do that, [Lieutenant General] Kalkat. The IPKF boarded the ships, the EPRLF was annihilated by the LTTE, and all the weapons were taken away. EPRLF was put into a ship and rehabilitated in some island off Orissa. They deserted Jaffna. And Jaffna is back with the LTTE. . . .

Q: Will the fight in Sri Lanka go on?

Singh: They are going to fight. We have parallels in Nagaland. Troops were inducted in 1957, now how many years? Still, fighting. . . . Every day they are getting killed. This will carry on. The LTTE is not a simple soul to crack. A hard nut. Lead by Prabhakaran, a highly-motivated man. He has only one aim, Eelam. When India went in, they didn’t want them [LTTE] to win independence outside the [Sri Lankan] constitution because it had problems in Kashmir etc. They didn’t want Trincomalee to become Diego Garcia, because there were oil wells there. I don’t see any peace in the near future.”

Dixit (diplomat), RAW (Indian Intelligence Agency), and Indian soldiers Col. John Taylor and Maj. Gen. Harkirat Singh represented different faces of India. They worked against the interests of Pirabhakaran. However, their assessments of their encounters with Pirabhakaran and LTTE, project unanimous conclusions; *i.e.*, Pirabhakaran has been a highly motivated strategist, who is innovative and talented. He possesses exceptional survival and resilience skills. However, it took nearly 10 years for their wisdom to be released to the public.

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PIRABHAKARAN’S ASSESSMENT AND A RETROSPECTIVE SUMMARY

Pirabhakaran’s assessment of the performance of LTTE against the Indian army appeared in the *Time* magazine⁷(see, Chapter 1). Retrospectively speaking, how did Pirabhakaran’s LTTE fare against the Indian army? Indians present a face-saving excuse that if they were allowed to stay a few more months, they would have ‘finished’ their work in disarming the LTTE, but Premadasa’s government spoiled this job. Sri Lanka’s politicians and its army men (who were only spectators), harboring an ample dose of jealousy that Pirabhakaran had gained more stature by his confrontation with the Indian army, insist that if not for Premadasa’s back-handed help, LTTE would have been history by 1990.

The strategy adopted by Pirabhakaran was similar to what Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap did in Vietnam in the 1960s. As Giap reminisced his famous strategy to Stanley Karnow in 1990,

“We were not strong enough to drive out a half-million American troops, but that wasn’t our aim. Our intention was to break the will of the American Government to continue the war. [Gen.] Westmoreland was wrong to expect that his superior fire power would grind us down. If we had focused on the balance of forces, we would have been defeated in two hours. We were waging a people’s war — America’s sophisticated arms, electronic devices and all the rest were to no avail in the end. In war there are two factors — human beings and weapons. Ultimately, though, human beings are the decisive factor. Human beings! Human beings!”⁸

Pirabhakaran was shrewd enough to learn from an Asian military genius and innovate the methods to his environs 15 years later. Like what Giap did to the American government, Pirabhakaran decisively broke the will of the then Indian government. Pirabhakaran also adopted Mahatma Gandhi’s strategy and modified it to the 1980s. Wrote Gandhi⁹, about his strategy against the British army,

“The British wants us to put the struggle on the plane of machine guns. They have weapons and we have not. Our only assurance of beating them is to keep it on the plane where we have the weapons and they have not.”

Pirabhakaran’s success against the Indian army was achieved by blending the strategies of Gandhi and Giap to his advantage. If tactical alliance with Premadasa helped his goal, he was bold enough to give it a try.

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PIRABHAKARAN’S ‘JUDGEMENT’

LEAVE IT TO Bertrand Russell for explaining in simple sentences, the distilled essence of principles in logic and life. Here is one of his gems about what we usually call as ‘judgement’ — a gift, few leaders are blessed with.

“One of the most important parts of education, and one of the most neglected, is that which teaches how to reach true conclusions on insufficient data. As a logician I am conscious of uttering what is, in strict logic, mere nonsense when I say this; nevertheless all success in practical life depends upon ability to perform this apparently impossible feat. The successful general is the one who guesses correctly what his opponent will do; the successful organizer is the one who can choose good subordinates after brief interviews. Even the successful man of science makes a guess which afterwards is verified. In politics, the data are hardly ever sufficient to enable a rational man to reach a reasoned conclusion, but they are often such as to enable a man who is both rational and shrewd to reach a sagacious conclusion. To do this, requires the scientific absence of bias and power of hypothetical thought, but it requires also something else — that quality which is vaguely called ‘judgement’.”¹

Every word of this short paragraph is pregnant with meaning. Russell describes the traits of a successful general, a successful organizer, a successful man of science and a successful politician. One can assess for himself, how Pirabhakaran levels up with Russell’s attributes on ‘judgement’ a leader is worth possessing. Since his ascent, Pirabhakaran’s judgement has served him well in countering the (a) patricians’ guiles of J. R. Jayewardene and Indian power brokers, (b) street-smart toughness of Premadasa, and (c) pseudo-peacenik’s charm of Chandrika Kumaratunga.

IMPLICATIONS OF INDO-LTTE WAR (1987–89)

One could trace three major outcomes of the Indo-LTTE War to Pirabhakaran. These are,

- (1) International Recognition to the LTTE,
- (2) Expansion of the Sri Lankan Army, and

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(3) Harassment of Pirabhakaran by India’s Intelligence operatives
Implications-wise, among these three outcomes, the first one was positive; the second one was neutral; and the third one was negative. Two reasons allow me to mark the second outcome (Expansion of the Sri Lankan Army) in the neutral column. First, LTTE also benefited to an extent from the capture of arms stored in the military camps which fell to them, thus subsidizing their own armament purchase budget. Secondly, it accelerated the process of ‘breaking the will of the Sinhalese foot-soldiers’ to fight an unwanted war, despite the prodding by desk-top generals and the jingoist vultures of their society. Now, let me present my assessment on each of these outcomes.

(1) INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION TO THE LTTE

How does one assess international recognition? — Many scales exist. Some of the recognized ones include, a Nobel prize, an Olympic gold medal, a cover story in an international magazine, and a photo-news feature in the first page of the *New York Times*. Pirabhakaran has neither received a Nobel prize nor won an Olympic gold medal. But, he has been featured as cover stories in international magazines (*Asiaweek*, *Far Eastern Economic Review* for example) more than once. Pirabhakaran’s photo also has appeared in the first page of *New York Times* once. That was on August 5, 1987 accompanying a news feature of Seth Mydans from Jaffna, covering Pirabhakaran’s address to Eelam Tamils at the Suthumalai Temple.² Commenting on the Rajiv Gandhi-Jayewardene Peace Accord of 1987, the editorialist of the *New York Times* mused,

“... The first test is whether Tamil guerrillas holed up on the Jaffna Peninsula will honor their promises and yield up their guns to Indian peacekeepers. Then comes the second test: whether the Sinhalese majority is reasonable enough to resist unreasoning attacks on the pact as a sellout. Manifestly, pitfalls abound, but at least they are visible and, with a modicum of sanity, avoidable.”³

The *New York Times* editorialist was naïve to expect such ‘a modicum of sanity’ among the politicians and the Intelligence agencies of India and Sri Lanka. Thus, both tests mentioned by him failed miserably, and the political game of ‘Going for Broke in Sri Lanka’ is still being passionately played out in Colombo.

For the first time, a London reference tome carried a very brief entry on Pirabhakaran, as one of its 20,000 notable and news-worthy individuals. To reproduce,

“Pirubhakaran, Vellupillai; Sri Lankan guerrilla leader; born 26 Nov. 1954, Velvettithurai, Jaffna peninsula; married; one son, one daughter; joined Tamil

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movement 1970; founded Tamil New Tigers guerrilla movement (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam since 1976) 1972.”⁴

Pirabhakaran was neither a Cabinet minister nor a titular head of Sri Lanka; he was neither an author nor a banker; he was neither an entertainer nor a Nobel. Still, he made it to the *International Who’s Who* on his own merits as a ‘guerrilla leader’. Also, one of the earliest dictionaries to include a description on Pirabhakaran’s movement was *The Penguin Dictionary of Third World Terms* (1992)⁵. This compact dictionary provided descriptions on 251 eminent persons, institutions, organizations, ideas, movements and terms which became prominent in the Third World since 1945. LTTE receives a liberal one and a half page recognition in this dictionary, under the term ‘Tamil Tigers, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)’. This recognition was made, obviously due to LTTE’s relevance in the South Asian politics since mid-1980s and its confrontation with the Indian army during the 1987–89 period. It is interesting to note that none of the other Sri Lankan political leaders received any recognition in this dictionary. Compared to the entry on ‘Tamil Tigers’, there is a half-page entry on ‘non-aligned movement’ and an eight-line entry on ‘Bandung Conference’.

Other movements which received recognition in this dictionary include, ANC [African National Congress], ‘black consciousness’ of South Africa, ‘black power’ of Malcolm X, Eritrean liberation movement, FDR-FMLN [Frente Democratico Revolucionario-Frente Farabundo Marti de Liberacion Nacional] of El Salvador, FLN [Front de Liberation Nationale] of Algeria, FRELIMO [Frente de Libertacao de Mocambique], Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional of Nicaragua, FRETILIN [Frente Revolucionario de Timor Leste Independente], Gandhism, Garveyism of Marcus Garvey, Guevarism, indigenismo in Latin America, intifada, Movimiento 19 de Abril of Colombia, Maoism, Mau Mau of Kenya, Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria of Chile, Malayan Races’ Liberation Army, New Jewel Movement of Grenada, Nkrumahism, New People’s Army of Philippines, Pan Africanism, Zimbabwean liberation movement, Zionism. I list these more than 20 movements to indicate that LTTE, as its detractors and adversaries want to deny, is a liberation movement and shares quite a number of distinct features which are common to many of its sister organizations formed in the 20th century in other countries. In the eyes of their oppressors, all these movements (many of which were older than LTTE) carried the label of ‘terrorists’.

(2) EXPANSION OF THE SRI LANKAN ARMY

When President J. R. Jayewardene retired in 1988, the Sri Lankan armed forces stood at the following level.⁶

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Total armed forces: some 48,000, including active reservists.

-Army = 40,000 including recalled reservists;

-Navy = 5,500;

-Air Force = 3,700.

The Paramilitary component consisted of Police Force = 21,000 (including the Special Task Force consisting of 2,000-man anti-guerrilla unit); -Home Guard = 18,000;

-National Auxiliary Volunteer Force = 5,000.

Subsequently, Feizal Samath, reporting for Reuters in 1990 observed:

“Five months after Tamil guerrillas launched a major new offensive in their bid to set up a separate homeland, Sri Lankan government troops are still struggling to crush the rebels. When they broke off peace talks with the government in June [1990] many felt the war would end in a month. But the Tigers took on the army in face-to-face battles.... ‘From now it is all-out war. We will annihilate the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, take over the east and then go for the north,’ Deputy Defense Minister Ranjan Wijeratne told Parliament in June. ‘We will fight them till they retreat to the Indian Ocean and our Navy will wait for them there,’ he said. But Wijeratne’s battle scenario never came to pass.... The war has eaten into Colombo’s meager financial resources. Defense spending has risen to seven billion rupees (\$175 million) this year. Other government funding has been cut.”⁷

In late 1990, one dollar was equivalent to 40 Sri Lankan rupees. Five months later, S. Sivanayagam, wrote a satirical editorial on the expansion of the Sri Lankan army. Excerpts:

“Have you noticed? — the plethora of Army Generals that Sri Lanka has been producing lately? With pips, stars, medals, ribbons and the whole trappings?... How did Sri Lanka manage to give birth to so many Generals within such a short period? The answer probably is ‘Field Marshal’ Prabhakaran!... Apart from the 1958 riots in which the army did a creditable job in putting down Sinhala mob terrorism, it had seen very little action. Until Junius Richard Jayewardene began his war against the Tamils, the only possible army casualties, if at all any, could have come only through cirrhosis of the liver, by hitting the ‘bottle’ hard! Who would have ever thought that the country today, yet without any signs of foreign invasion, would become chockfull of prattling Generals, not only overseeing action on the Front, but even chit-chatting at cocktails at Canberra, Ottawa, London?

... The Generals know, and we know, that army recruits, trained hastily and sent to the battlefronts in recent times are not at all suitable ‘war material’. There were several instances, at Mankulam and recently at Mannar, where they simply dropped their arms and fled. One cannot blame them, because

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thousands of youths unemployed for years, joined the army for a monthly income, not to fight a war and die, but to live and support themselves and their families....

The point to be realised is, that behind every artillery piece, there is a man, and behind that man (or woman) there is a commitment. If every Tiger casualty is a determined, willing sacrifice, every soldier who dies is an unwilling casualty, or a helpless victim. Unfortunately, the Generals have to talk war, because war is their business; and bread and butter...”⁸

In 1992, the *Asiaweek* magazine presented the increase in Sri Lanka’s defence expenditure from 1982 to 1992 as follows:⁹

Year	Defence (\$ million)	% of Government Expenditure
1982	52.9	2.90
1984	90.4	4.29
1986	207.0	8.32
1987	360.0	14.68
1989	246.9	9.42
1990	256.8	8.94
1991	403.7	12.37
1992	348.9	12.00

Two years later, the same *Asiaweek* magazine commented,

“Sri Lankans have a sense of exhaustion. Now in its eleventh year, the war between government troops and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who are fighting for a separate state in the north is slowly bleeding the country. Keeping the guerrillas at bay costs \$1 million a day and siphons off most of the rewards of the country’s burgeoning economy. Strain on the army has a taken a harsh toll. Suicide and desertion are common...”¹⁰

Chandrika Kumaratunga, the crafty politician that she is, exploited this sense of exhaustion felt by the Sinhalese by donning the peace mask. But what happened since 1994 is best told by the bulging numbers of army generals and their foot soldiers. At the end of 2000, the Sri Lankan armed forces has bulged to suck in even the rowdy elements among the Sinhalese. The numbers recorded by the U. S. State Department tallied as follows:¹¹

Army (including the Army volunteer force) 120,000; Navy 17,000; Air Force 18,500; Police Force 60,000; Home Guards 15,000.

G. L. Peiris, the then Deputy Defense Minister, while presenting the Budget Appropriation Bill in the Sri Lankan parliament on February 8, 2001, recorded that the military spending for the year 2001 had leapt to 63 billion

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rupees (US \$720 million, at the currency exchange rate of \$1 = 88 rupees). This staggering amount, according to the *Ceylon Daily News* report of Feb. 9, 2001, was being split into four components:

- Army (120,000) gulping 29.2 billion rupees (\$331.8 million)
- Navy (17,000) swallowing 8.3 billion rupees (\$93 million)
- Air Force (18,500) burning 10.7 billion rupees (\$121.6 million)
- Police (60,000) and Home Guards (15,000) partitioning 12.4 billion rupees (\$140.6 million)

Thus, the Sri Lankan ‘composite’ army (consisting of army, navy and air force personnel numbering 155,500 individuals) began to bill itself as the biggest ‘employer’ in Sri Lanka.

In business terms, the health of an employer is certified as ‘good’ if it generates revenues. But the status of Sri Lankan army is equivalent to that of a perennially sick person. What was responsible for the Sri Lankan army to be assessed in such contemptuous terms? — a larger share of credit should go to Pirabhakaran’s ‘judgement’. One should also not discount the ineptitude leadership of Anuruddha Ratwatte and paranoia of Chandrika Kumaratunga.

In his October 1997 interview to Thilak S. Fernando, Major General Algama confirmed some of the observations made by S. Sivanayagam. Excerpts:

“Fernando: After the PA [People’s Alliance] Government came into power 35 retired Major Generals were recalled and promoted to top ranks. Didn’t that bring about discontent within the Army?”

Algama: It was a political exercise which led to a certain amount of discontentment. Beyond that I won’t be able to comment on that. As for me, I feel that I performed my duty to the full by the country. Unfortunately certain high ranking elements in the army decided to exhibit pseudo-loyalties to the new administration and discredit others. In the process certain officers were identified with certain political parties and I was branded as a political stooge of the UNP due to professional jealousy. Not only that, they involved me in a coup case also!

Fernando: Is there any truth in the Coup case?

Algama: Absolutely none. The coup story has been primarily hatched by the Military Intelligence. It was only when investigations commenced that I realised it was something which had emerged from within the army. In fact, I have made an appeal to President Kumaratunge to expedite the inquiry and take disciplinary action against me if I have done any wrong...”¹²

Though a snippet, what was revealed by Major General Algama is interesting about the functioning of Sri Lankan army’s ‘military intelligence section’ and how much the Sri Lankan commander-in-chief relied on it.

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‘PEACE-BALLOON’ GIMMICKS OF PRESIDENT CHANDRIKA
KUMARATUNGA

Pirabhakaran’s judgement in deflating the ‘peace-balloon proposals’ of President Chandrika Kumaratunga was criticized vehemently by the partisan press in Sri Lanka and elsewhere, since 1995. In an interview she gave to Arjuna Ranawana for the *Asiaweek* magazine, Kumaratunga commented about Pirabhakaran. To quote,

“Ranawana: The army is closing in on the Tigers, and you say you will push through constitutional reforms by November [1997]. How important is this period for Sri Lanka?”

Kumaratunga: It is a very critical time. The military and the political solutions go hand in hand — a two-pronged attack on the ethnic problem. I came in on a promise to bring peace. Within 10 days of taking office, I wrote to [Tiger leader] Mr. [Velupillai] Prabhakaran inviting him to hammer out a peaceful solution. We had a ceasefire, but he broke all agreements within eight months. Not long after, we presented the proposal to devolve power to the regions, which is the political solution to the problem. We have gone a long way to making devolution a reality. I have taken a personal responsibility in taking this to every nook and corner of the country, to every type of people. Such public discussion of a law or amendment is unprecedented in our history. You cannot have peace without devolution of power, without the sharing of power. It is also tied up in the proposed new constitution with larger guarantees for human rights and for wider democratic practices, including the abolition of the executive presidency.

Ranawana: But the Tigers have not responded to your constitutional reform proposals.

Kumaratunga: When we were having discussions with the LTTE, I exchanged 44 letters with Prabhakaran, the first time he ever wrote to any politician in the south. I kept inviting him to agree on dates to start discussing our political proposals. He kept refusing, dodging [the issue], going around it, circumventing it, never agreeing to it. He kept asking for more facilities. All of these we gave, because he kept saying it was going to facilitate the lives of the ordinary people. We wanted to remove all the obstacles that the last government had faced for the normal functioning of civilian life in the north and east. He misused all that. Now we control much of the north and east and have access to the Tamil people there. We have found that a crushing majority would vote with the devolution proposals. The same crushing majority also keep telling us: please do not allow the LTTE to come back. We want to rehabilitate the LTTE. We hope that a democratic LTTE will go back to Jaffna along with the rest of the Tamil leadership and participate in the democratic process.

Ranawana: Many Tamils believe that Sinhala-dominated governments are willing to grant concessions to them only so far as there is military pressure on

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the government by the LTTE. They fear that if pressure from the Tigers disappears — if they are defeated — your government will no longer grant such concessions.

Kumaratunga: I don’t agree. There used to be some truth in that, but not anymore. Not under this government. This government has done massive work to re-fashion the people’s thinking. The attitudes of the majority Sinhala people have totally changed. The Tigers became a reality because previous governments had a different attitude toward the whole ethnic question. The Tamil people felt they had no alternative but to take up arms against the government, which not only turned a blind eye to their problems but used force against innocent Tamil people in the most heinous fashion one could imagine — thinking that was the solution. The Tamil people felt that somebody like Prabhakaran — who, in my opinion, is a ruthless, inhuman murderer— should be supported because they had no other solution. But Prabhakaran and his terrorist politics are totally irrelevant today.”¹³

A short letter of mine, criticising President’s Kumaratunga’s ‘War for Peace’ campaign, was later published in the same magazine. My response was:

“I challenge your [*Asiaweek*’s] statements that President Kumaratunga has ‘curtailed state repression and engineered something of an economic turnaround.’ In September [1997] it was announced that Sri Lanka is seeking \$500 million loan to revive its unpopular move to increase the price of bread — another election pledge up in smoke. I wish that you had asked more penetrating questions of the President. For example, from where does she allocate money for Sri Lanka’s spiraling defense budget which stood at \$836 million in 1996?

If the Sri Lankan army is ‘winning’ the war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), why are there over 20,000 deserters, despite repeated amnesty offers? Aren’t these deserters better Buddhists who (by following the preaching of the Enlightened One) teach something to the Sri Lankan commander-in-chief, who gloats that ‘the military and the political solutions go hand in hand?’ What happened to her pre-election pledge of abolishing the executive presidency?”¹⁴

CHANDRIKA KUMARATUNGA ASSESSED IN 2001

In the last quarter of 2001, the partisan press which had serenaded Chandrika and pilloried Pirabhakaran during 1995–97, turned around and unabashedly exposed the facade of Chandrika’s peace mask. ‘*Arrogance of Power*’ — screamed an editorial caption in the *Island* newspaper of Colombo (see below the excerpts, Editorial 1). ‘*Authoritarian disdain*’ — lamented the self-righteous *Hindu* newspaper of Chennai. (see below the excerpts, Editorial 2)

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Editorial 1:

“Innumerable reasons can be cited for the collapse of the People’s Alliance government within one year. They could all be summed up in a single expression — arrogance of power. President Kumaratunga and her government simply did not give a damn about what was said about her and her government and proceeded to rule on the presumption of being blessed with eternal power. . . .

The 1994 election manifesto’s pledges were soon forgotten. Pledges such as to bring down the cost of living, cleanse public life, conduct a transparent government, end political interference in the public service and end abuse of power by politicians, all fell by the wayside. Its ventriloquism on the North-East conflict — promoting anti-war campaigns such as the island-wide Tawalama campaign while at the same time appealing for recruits for the armed services and escalating the war, not only resulted in military disasters but also took for granted that the masses were naïve enough to believe their propaganda. . . .”¹⁵

Editorial 2:

“...the President Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, has once again acted with authoritarian disdain for political propriety by dissolving parliament with unseemly haste in a cynical attempt to confound her opponents. . . . It is evident that she has soft-pedalled in respect of several economic and political policies including her one-time preference for a quick and fair resolution of Sri Lanka’s national question about the rights of the Tamil people.”¹⁶

With eggs on their face, these editorialists confirmed Pirabhakaran’s judgement of Chandrika’s ‘peace-balloon proposals’ as nothing but hot air blown by a debutant, but crafty, second-generation politician. Pirabhakaran was correct in calling in 1995 that Chandrika, as far as Eelam Tamils were concerned, was merely a naked empress. A reader’s letter was aptly captioned by the *Island* newspaper as ‘The balloon has burst’. Excerpts:

“My companion seated on the same bench started off with a veritable pithy statement — ‘*Balloon eka pipuruwa*’ — the balloon has burst. . . . All of those who ran the show, from the apex, centre and periphery exerted their energies to inflate the balloon. With nothing substantial, but just a volume of hot air — ‘*Ralu Hulang*’.

Swollen pride, false utterances, deceptive tactics, incessant ‘mafia’ talk from a spokesperson nicknamed ‘mafia man’ multiple-duplicity and contradictory views were the order of the day and these would gather greater momentum once again in the run upto the upcoming elections as well. They inflated their balloon to such unlimited uncontrollable extent that it burst with a bang — exploded with cataclysmic sound and fury. . . .”¹⁷

Chapter 19. Implications of Indo-LTTE War

(3) HARASSMENT OF PIRABHAKARAN BY INDIA’S INTELLIGENCE
OPERATIVES

This negative outcome of the Indo-LTTE war has continued since 1991. It can be explored under three main themes, namely (a) anti-LTTE propaganda in the Indian news media, (b) January 1993 piracy by the Indian Navy against LTTE in international waters leading to the tragic deaths of Kittu and his associates, and (c) Criminal Case No. 329/91, implicating Pirabhakaran in the conspiracy to murder the former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. All three themes are inter-related and available literature remains scattered.

20

‘Pol Potist’ Label: Facts and Fantasy

‘It is difficult to say what truth is, but sometimes so easy to recognize a falsehood.’

— EINSTEIN

(in a letter to Jeremiah McGuire, October 24, 1953.)

MARGARET CARLSON wrote a one page commentary entitled, ‘The Busybodies on the Bus’ for a 1991 *Time* magazine cover story. An excerpt:

“American society’s busiest busybodies are in the press, where, under cover of the US Constitution, they expose, scold and ridicule public figures, and sometimes win Pulitzer Prizes for it. In the putative national interest, reporters have taken on the roles of mother superior, party boss, neighborhood snoop and cop on the beat... in its police function the press relies on less on the Constitution than on the Ten Commandments, although not all of them. ‘Thou shalt not steal’ is much less interesting than ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’...”¹

This commentary elegantly touches on the game of Pirabhakaran-watching practiced by Pulitzer prize winning journalists. One should add that the ‘Busybodies & Crybabies’ syndrome is not endemic to Americans. Indian as well as Sri Lankan power brokers also suffer from this character malady. Chandrika Kumaratunga, the current Sri Lankan President has suffered from this malady since her ascent to power in 1994.

PIRABHAKARAN: AS SEEN BY JOSEPH LELYVELD

In the aftermath of September 11 (2001) incidents, Joseph Lelyveld, the editor of *New York Times*, contributed a feature entitled ‘All Suicide Bombers are not Alike’ to the *New York Times* magazine. He was introduced as ‘a writer and editor for the *New York Times* for nearly 40 years’. His Pulitzer prize-winning book was, *Move Your Shadow* (1986). To comprehend the September 11 horror experienced by the Americans, he had traveled to Gaza, Cairo and Hamburg and filed his story. Here is what, Lelyveld wrote, comparing the Japanese *kamikaze* fighters of World War II and the Black Tigers of Eelam.

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“At first the kamikazes volunteered to die for the emperor, under the impression that their hopeless missions could turn the tide of battle in the Pacific and save Japan from invasion. Off Okinawa in 1945, more than 1,000 dived to their deaths over 10 weeks, taking with them some 5,000 American sailors (a toll roughly equivalent to that taken by the two airliners in Lower Manhattan on Sept. 11). As it became clear that the war had been lost, the Japanese command continued to make suicide its tactic of last resort, sometimes telling young recruits being trained to serve as human guidance systems on bombs and torpedoes little more than that their missions might be ‘dangerous’.

In the widely overlooked struggle of the Tamil minority for an independent homeland in Sri Lanka, the role of Hirohito is played by the movement’s shadowy leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, who has dispatched more suicide missions than anyone else now on earth. The leader offers an ethos of sacrifice rather than a promise of heavenly rewards, stressing the suffering of the Tamils and the oppression of the majority Sinhalese when he dines with Black Tigers — those Tamil Tigers who have volunteered to die — before sending them off on missions from which there can be no return. Like them, he is said to wear a cyanide capsule around his neck to avert capture and torture by government forces. In the best of times, Tamils have a high suicide rate, unlike Palestinians (whose suicide rate is well below that of Israelis or ours). But Tigers who appear to be unstable or depressed don’t get taken into the elite Black Tigers units whose members are convinced, it seems, that they can do something really useful with their lives by ending them. Often they operate as squads, one bomber following another in order to hit the emergency forces that rush to the scene of the first bombing. It’s doubtless just an odd coincidence but striking, nevertheless, that in the mid-1990’s Prabhakaran’s suicide bombers hit the twin towers of the World Trade Center in Colombo. Yet, in September, the Tamil Tigers branded the attack in New York ‘a colossal human tragedy’ and ‘brutal crime’. They then launched one of their patented seaborne suicide attacks on a troop carrier.

The world views of the Japanese, Tamil and Palestinian suicide bombers were as distinct as the contexts in which they operated...”²

While I agree with Lelyveld that the world views of the Japanese *kamikaze* pilots and Tamil Tigers are ‘distinct as the contexts in which they operated’, I disagree with his comparison of Hirohito and Pirabhakaran. I know something which Lelyveld is not privy to. First, unlike Lelyveld, I have lived, studied and worked in Lanka for 28 years and Japan for 16 years. I also have lived in USA for 6 years. Secondly, unlike Lelyveld, I am fluent in Japanese and Tamil languages. This brings me to the point made by Margaret Carlson in 1991 (cited above) that Pulitzer prize alone doesn’t grant instant knowledge or wisdom to a journalist, however reputed he is, to comprehend the world beyond his reach.

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Lelyveld also made another self-prattling statement: “*Wondering in the days after Sept.11 how self-annihilation had gone from being a tactic for spreading gory mayhem on a local scale to a weapon of mass destruction, I started reading up on kamikazes and the Black Tigers of the Tamil movement in Sri Lanka.*” This is a strip-tease act, on the part of Lelyveld. He does not reveal ‘what materials did he read’? He also does not reveal whether he read the Japanese literature on *kamikazes* and the Eelam Tamil literature on Black Tigers. I doubt. Suppose how much credibility I will get, if I’m unlettered in English and try to analyze the thoughts and maneuvers of MacArthur during the Second World War and Korean War from what is available in Tamil and Sinhalese languages.

One should not be harsh on Lelyveld. He has, at least linked (without any justification) Pirabhakaran to Hirohito, whom Japanese revered. But the fallibility award for linking Pirabhakaran to a (now) reviled Asian figure should go to John F. Burns, another Pulitzer prize-winning journalist contributing to the *New York Times*. His 1995 feature, ‘Asia’s Latest Master of Terror’, is widely touted in the anti-Pirabhakaran websites of the Sinhalese groups.

PIRABHAKARAN: AS SEEN BY JOHN BURNS

First I provide the few sentences of the observation from John Burns, related to Pirabhakaran. Then, I explain why the portrayal of Burns suffers from lack of reality. According to Burns,

“It is a safe bet that not too many people outside Sri Lanka and its neighbor India know much about the Tigers; fewer still would recognize their leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran. But they should. He has shown a blood thirstiness in dealing with opponents that has been compared with some of the cruelest figures in recent Asian history, including Pol Pot of Cambodia. Mr. Prabhakaran, who is 40 years old, leads a movement whose deeds in scale, pale alongside the genocide committed by Pol Pot’s Khemer Rouge in the 1970s; the Tigers have never had more than 10,000 fighters, and their victims number 25,000 at most. But what they lack in scope, they make up in brutality as they fight to separate Sri Lanka’s Tamils, a Hindu minority, from the Buddhist majority. . . .”³

My criticism of John Burns is based on the following issues. First, he doesn’t state who compared Pirabhakaran to Pol Pot. He throws in a smear statement, ‘He [meaning Pirabhakaran] has shown a blood thirstiness in dealing with opponents that has been compared with some of the cruelest figures in recent Asian history, including Pol Pot of Cambodia’. Reader is not provided with the information whether this comparison was offered by Pirabhakaran’s adversaries or by an unbiased observer. Secondly, Burns failed to mention who did the counting on LTTE’s ‘25,000 victims’, and what percentage of

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these victims are Sri Lankan armed forces. [see, Chapter 13]. Thirdly, Burns failed to comprehend that LTTE is mainly composed of Hindu and a noticeable percent of Christian youth; but Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge were composed of 99 percent Buddhists. Pirabhakaran is a Hindu. Pol Pot was a Theravada Buddhist. This fact is hidden by the Sinhalese commentators and the anti-LTTE scribes of India.

SOURCES WHO TAGGED THE ‘POL POTIST’ LABEL ON PIRABHAKARAN

Since John Burns failed to identify the source who tagged the ‘Pol Potist’ label, I did a search and found two references in 1990 and 1991. One is H. L. D. Mahindapala, ex-editor of *Colombo Observer* and a fart-catcher to President Premadasa. The other one is Narasimhan Ram, the current editor in chief of the *Hindu* newspaper. *inferno in island paradise* to the *Insight* magazine wrote,

“Balasingham says the organization (LTTE) is socialist but has lately been trying to distance itself from its formerly avowed Marxism. ‘The Marxist rhetoric is just an excuse to settle a one-party state with Prabhakaran at the head’ says M. Mahindapala, the editor of the Colombo-based *Observer* newspaper. ‘The history of Marxism has shown that, instead of the dictatorship of the proletariat, it becomes the dictatorship of the party, which becomes the dictatorship of one man. In that way, the LTTE could create a state like Pol Pot’s.’”⁴

During 1989–90, Pol Potism of Sri Lankan kind was unleashed by the then ruling elites in Sri Lanka, who while parrot-mouthing Buddhism killed innocent Buddhists, Hindus, Christians and Muslims. Mahindapala held a noticeable rank in the power elite circle as a torch carrier for the Premadasa-brand of Pol Potism. Thus Mahindapala appears as a probable source for John F. Burns’s comment on Pirabhakaran. Once this ‘Pol Potist label’ appeared in the *New York Times*, though softened by Burns with a negating note [**‘a movement whose deeds in scale, pale alongside the genocide committed by Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge’**], Mahindapala continued to perversely distort this negating note by repeating in his diatribes from Australia, where he resides now, that *New York Times* had called Pirabhakaran as the current Pol Pot of Asia. Though he was an editor of *Colombo Observer*, he failed to comprehend exactly what John Burns had written in his 1995 opinion piece. I criticized Mahindapala’s distortion on Pirabhakaran in a short letter which appeared in 1995. Excerpts:

“As a Prabhakaran-wacher, I thank H. L. D. Mahindapala for bringing to my attention, the *New York Times*’ feature (May 28, 1995) of John Burns

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on Prabhakaran (*Lanka Guardian*, Oct. 15). In it, Prabhakaran’s blood-thirstiness in dealing with opponents has been stated as comparable to that of ‘some of the cruelest figures in recent Asian history, including Pol Pot’. Even if one takes this opinion on its face value, one wonders who are the other cruelest figures in recent Asian history, whom John Burns had in mind. If one takes a body count of innocent victims (not military opponents), Mao Ze Dong, Indira Gandhi, Suharto and Ranasinghe Premadasa should enter this cruel leaders Hall of Fame without any difficulty. Isn’t Prabhakaran, then in good company?

Unlike Mahindapala, I do not consider the *New York Times* as the oracle of the twentieth century. I provide a few examples where this venerable newspaper had to eat crow. These are culled from the book, *The Experts Speak; The Definitive Compendium of Authoritative Misinformation*, by Chris Cerf and Victor Navasky (1984). A *New York Times* editorial ridiculed in 1921 the attempts on rocket propelling by space science pioneer Robert Goddard as one who ‘seems to lack the knowledge ladled out daily in high schools’. In Nov.5, 1932, the same ‘unimpeachable source’ of Mahindapala, predicted the re-election of the then President Herbert Hoover over Franklin Delano Roosevelt. On July 14, 1972, the same *New York Times* commented that Senator Thomas Eagleton as a ‘casting director’s ideal for a running mate’. Few weeks later it was revealed that he had undergone psychiatric shock therapy and was dropped by the Democratic Presidential candidate George McGovern. If the *New York Times* could not predict developments correctly about the events within the USA, how reliable is its assessment on events in Sri Lanka?

As to verbal abuse from opponents, Prabhakaran is not the first rebel leader to be sneered at by his contemporaries. Almost 200 years ago, the father of America, George Washington was roasted by *Philadelphia Aurora* as follows: ‘If ever a nation was debauched by a man, the American nation has been debauched by Washington. If ever a nation was deceived by a man, the American nation has been deceived by Washington. Let it serve to be a warning that no man may be an idol’. Does Mahindapala know that quite a large segment of American citizens who were loyal to the British Crown were chased by Washington’s patriotic gang to Canada and West Indies? One who cites *New York Times* for support should also bother to learn the revolutionary history of America...’⁵

Apart from Mahindapala, the other journalist who has used the ‘Pol Potist’ term pejoratively to Pirabhakaran from early 1990s is N. Ram. In a feature, ‘Understanding Prabhakaran’s LTTE’, Ram wrote: “LTTE leadership has a distinct Pol Potist streak in its character, methods and, above all, disregard for human life⁶.” Ram was one of the busybodies who believed that the Rajiv Gandhi-Jayewardene Accord of 1987 was the manna to Eelam Tamils. He also espoused the line that LTTE was the nauseating fly in this political *manna*,

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prepared by the India’s power elites for consumption by Eelam Tamils. But, as the following excerpt from the *Hindu* newspaper editorial shows, even in mid-1988 LTTE was not considered as ‘terrorists’ by the *Hindu* news establishment in Chennai, where Ram is attached. Here, Pirabhakaran was prefixed with a positive adjective ‘resourceful’.

“It might be too much to claim that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, generalised by the resourceful Mr. V. Prabhakaran, is close to being brought to its knees. The Tigers clearly retain at least a residual military capability and a substantial political influence. However, there can be no serious doubt that they have been tremendously weakened, for reasons which are perfectly obvious. They have lost not merely their major staging bases but also most of the sanctuaries; nowhere are they safe from the highly mobile strike capability of the IPKF; and they will face a quite hopeless situation if the present mode of hostilities continues much longer. It would be a serious political mistake to regard the Tigers as some kind of liberation movement capable of waging a form of inexhaustible guerilla warfare through winning the hearts and minds of the people; it would be equally unsound to write them off as a political force, or consider them ‘terrorists’...”⁷

Thus, it is safe to infer that when Pirabhakaran became unavailable to be tapped as a ‘source of information’ or as a ‘puppet’ to the designs of India’s policy makers and intelligence operatives, he came to be tagged with the pejorative ‘Pol Potist’ label by Ram. The assassination of JVP leader Rohana Wijeweera in late 1989 by the Sri Lankan army made this shift in name-calling convenient and fashionable. However, Dayan Jayatilaka (a pal of Mahindapala) in his blinded support to the Premadasa-brand of Pol Potism, had valiantly attempted to shift the Pol Potist label from his political mentor Premadasa to Rohana Wijeweera.⁸

POL POT REGIME AND THE POST-1970 SINHALESE GOVERNMENTS

Contrary to Mahindapala and Ram, I view that the similarities between Pol Pot and Pirabhakaran are akin to the similarities between salt and white sugar. But the similarities between the post-1970 Sinhalese governments and Pol Pot regime (April 1975–Jan.1979) are like that of lime and lemon. Let me list the similarities.

1. Who prided themselves as pious Buddhists? Pol Pot’s henchmen and the ruling elites of Sri Lanka.
2. Who were supported by the Communist China with aid and arms? Pol Pot and the Sinhalese governments.

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3. Who received the official sanction for their actions from Uncle Sam? Pol Pot and the Sinhalese governments.
4. Who killed their own ethnics in numbers exceeding 20,000, in the name of socialism? Sirimavo Bandaranaike regime in alignment with the Communist Party, during the April 1971 insurrection. In fact, this exhibition of state-sponsored terrorism pre-dated Pol Pot’s rule in Cambodia by merely 4 years, and could have inspired Pol Pot’s gang to an extent, considering that Sirimavo Bandaranaike received support from China for extinguishing the JVP rebellion.
5. Who recognized the Pol Pot’s regime in Sri Lanka? Again, Sirimavo Bandaranaike’s socialist power brokers recognized Pol Pot’s regime between 1975 and 1979. When Mrs. Bandaranaike organized the 5th Non-Aligned Movement’s Conference in August 1976, guess who represented Pol Pot’s regime for that conference? The current leader of Cambodia, Hun Sen, who was then the foreign minister to Pol Pot’s regime. Subsequently Hun Sen parted company with Pol Pot and returned to power as Vietnam-backed leader of Cambodia. That’s another story.

The link between the noxious strand of Theravada Buddhist activism cum half-baked communism in Pol Pot’s Cambodia and Bandaranaike’s Sri Lanka is a virgin territory for exploration. 95 percent of the Cambodian population practises Theravada Buddhism, and 70 percent of the Sinhalese also practise Theravada Buddhism. Power-holders in both countries have been nominally these Theravada Buddhists. But the loud-mouths of Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhism such as Susantha Goonetilleke and Nalin de Silva, for whom Pirabhakaran appears as a demon, would never bother to explore this theme for obvious reasons of discomfort. In this context, the following excerpts of a 1999 newsreport makes interesting reading.

“Ambassador [Karunatilake] Amunugama made an official visit to Phnom Penh where he met Cambodia’s Foreign Minister and other high ranking government officials. He also paid a courtesy call on the high ranking Bhikku Sangha of Cambodia and expressed his gratitude personally for accepting the Sri Lanka invitation and attending the Buddhist Conference last year. Currently, Sri Lanka educators are providing consultancy service and educational administrative techniques in regenerating Pali and Buddhist education to the bhikku Sangha and Buddhist women. . . .

Recalling his first overseas visit as Cambodian Foreign Minister, Mr. Hun Sen has expressed his pleasant memories of the Non-Aligned Nations Summit Conference held at the BMICH in Colombo in 1976 presided over by

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Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike. His meeting with Sri Lankan leaders of the day is considered absolutely beneficial for Cambodia, the Prime Minister has said. . . .”⁹

This comment by Hun Sen is quite appealing considering that he visited Colombo in 1976, as a 25-year old Foreign Minister of Pol Pot regime. That was supposed to be his first overseas trip. But one can read more from that remark, related to what was happening in Cambodia then. Also, it somewhat reinforces the fourth point I had stated above on state-sponsored terrorism as well. Nuon Chea (who was Pol Pot’s deputy, and then ranking above Hun Sen) declared in 2001 that,

“I was not a big person in the Khmer Rouge. I was in charge of education, not the military. *I fulfilled my duty to my nation and to Buddhism.* Anyway, how do you know that all the skulls in the killing fields stem from the Khmer Rouge period? Many people died during [local coups], the US bombings and the Vietnamese invasion. No one thinks about that.”¹⁰

Nuon Chea sounded much like President Chandrika Kumaratunga’s elderly uncle, in denying his nefarious role during Pol Pot’s regime. The bottom line is Pol Potists were noxious Theravada Buddhists *cum* half-baked Communists, but Pirabhakaran is neither a Buddhist nor a Communist. Theravada Buddhism is a great religion and many millions in the world practise it strictly according to the book. But the combination of Theravada Buddhism *cum* half-baked communism in the hands of ruling power elites was a noxious mixture. It was covertly supported by China. It poisoned the fields of Cambodia during Pol Pot’s regime and the southern Sri Lanka in 1971, followed by the torturing and killing of Tamils, which began with incarceration of Tamil youth who opposed the 1972 Republican Constitution of Sri Lanka. While Pol Pot’s regime was lording it over the innocent Cambodian peasants between 1975 and 1978, Eelam Tamils also suffered in 1977 following the general election. The newly anointed J. R. Jayewardene government accused the defeated SLFP-CP sympathizers as instigators of terrorism against the Tamils, who had voted for a plebiscite on Eelam in the Northern and Eastern provinces. But the apologists for the Buddhist ruling elites ignored the evidence that the ‘Indian Tamils who were living in the Central provinces of Sri Lanka and who did not vote for a plebiscite on Eelam were tortured and killed by the Pol Potist elements among the Buddhist community in Sri Lanka.

Another vital parallel between the Pol Potists in Cambodia who destroyed the educational elements in the society between 1975 and 1978 and the Theravada Buddhists in Sri Lanka was seen in the ‘**bibliocaust**’ (**book burning**) practised by the Buddhist hooligans during the 1977 torture against the Eelam

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Tamils. The ‘trial run’ for the 1981 Jaffna Public Library bibliocaust was conducted in the houses and rented apartments of Colombo suburbs where Tamils lived. Personally, I mourned the loss of my friend M. K. Eelaventhana’s valuable book collection on Eelam Tamil heritage. [see, chapter 41 for additional analysis on bibliocaust in Sri Lanka.] It is nothing but awful that journalists and analysts like N. Ram and Praful Bidwai who began tagging LTTE idiotically, with the ‘Pol Potist’ appellation in early 1990s, are ignorant of the fact that Pol Potism in Sri Lanka practised by the Theravada Buddhists *cum* half-baked Communists ante-dated the ascent of Pirabhakaran. That is why, China patronized the Pol Potist ruling elites in Cambodia and Sri Lanka equally. Ruling elites of China never patronized Pirabhakaran, though next to Giap, he became the best exponent of Mao’s teachings on warfare in Asia.

21

1989: The Year of Indian Intrigue

*“A statesman is an easy man — He tells his lies by rote a
journalist makes up his lies and takes you by the throat”*

— W. B. YEATS

(his 1938 poem: *The Old Stone Cross*)

ROTE LIES

WHEN IT COMES to the spread of lies, William Butler Yeats was apt in his assessment of statesmen and unscrupulous journalists. In my search for the origin of ‘Pol Potist’ label on Pirabhakaran, I came across two more relevant citations, which substantiate my viewpoint (*see*, Chapter 20). In fact, the Pol Potist label was first tagged to Rohana Wijeweera in 1988, an year before his assassination. Read the following excerpt from a report by Marguerite Johnson.

“While most Sri Lankans think the JVP is the only force that could break Jayewardene’s iron clad on power, they do not view it as an alternative. Privately, some politicians compare the JVP’s elusive leader, Rohana Wijeweera, to Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge head widely held responsible for the deaths of more than 1 million Cambodians between 1975 and 1979. Even in its stronghold in the South, the savagery of the JVP generated more fear than support...”¹

Wijeweera’s profile was a carbon copy of Pol Pot’s profile. Both were bred in the milieu of Theravada Buddhism *cum* half-baked communism. While Pol Pot went to France for his higher studies and absorbed the leftist ideology, Wijeweera made his pilgrimage to Moscow. Later, both Pol Pot and Wijeweera became fanatics of the Chinese brand of communism. Thus, the comparison of Wijeweera to Pol Pot is not without some merits. Only after the assassination of Wijeweera in November 1989, the Indian hacks, especially N. Ram, began an insinuation campaign against Pirabhakaran, by tagging LTTE as Pol Potist. This campaign gained momentum following Rajiv Gandhi assassination in May 1991. Steve Le Vine’s report, originating from Madras, for the *Newsweek* magazine reiterates this point.

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“... To Indian police, the careful plotting of the murder and the cold calm of the killer point to the Black Tigers, a suicide-attack unit of Sri Lanka’s notorious rebel group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The Tigers deny responsibility, but the Gandhi assassination has nonetheless embellished their reputation as one of the world’s most dangerous and disciplined guerrilla armies. ‘There is no one like them’, says N. Ram, a Madras journalist who has studied the Tamil rebels for years: ‘They are totally self-sacrificing’.

The Tigers are also ruthless. Their international network of moral and financial support is more sophisticated than the Irish Republican Army’s. Their brutality approaches that of Cambodia’s Khmer Rouge or Peru’s Shining Path...”²

Those journalists, comparing Pirabhakaran to Pol Pot in brutality, also sheepishly exhibit their ignorance in numbers. Though it may sound ghoulis, let me compare the deaths attributed to Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge and Pirabhakaran’s LTTE to prove the fallacy perpetrated by number-challenged journalists. Pol Pot, who was the head of Khmer Rouge, is blamed for the death of at least one million Cambodian citizens (of a population of 7 million) between April 1975 and December 1978. If for argument-sake, Pirabhakaran has to be placed in the same ranks with Pol Pot for ‘brutality’, Pirabhakaran’s LTTE should have killed 2.7 million Sri Lankans from its current population of 19 million. As I have estimated (see, Chapter 13), the total number of military and civilian deaths in Sri Lanka since 1983 stands around 74,807. Among these, LTTE is responsible for the death of nearly 2,300 Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim civilians. Thus, there exists an incomparable three-order difference (three zeros) in the number of persons killed by the LTTE and those who perished under Pol Pot. By recorded number of deaths during 1971 and 1989–90 periods, two Sri Lankan heads of state (Sirimavo Bandaranaike and Premadasa), who were also Theravada Buddhists, show convergence with Pol Pot in killing their own civilian ethnics than Pirabhakaran. As opposed to Ram and Le Vine, a high profile analyst C. A. Chandraprema *alias* Thadi Priyantha provided confirmation to my view that Rohana Wijeweera was a carbon copy of Pol Pot. Excerpts:

“One should remember that the terrorists who killed the most number of innocent civilians in this country [Sri Lanka] is not the LTTE but the JVP. The JVP’s record has not been broken by the LTTE and will not be broken even if the LTTE continues to fight and explode bombs until the year 2020. The LTTE has killed thousands of armed forces personnel but a lesser number of Sinhalese civilians. This is not due to any ‘principles’ on the part of the LTTE. During UNP times the civilian casualties of the LTTE were much bigger than the military casualties. But after the PA assumed power [in 1994], due to continuous bungling, soldiers were killed at the rate of thousands at

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one go thus increasing the number of military casualties as against civilian casualties.

When the LTTE attacked civilians, even though such attacks were far more numerous than the attacks on armed forces personnel, the number of persons killed was less than in the case of military targets due to the obvious reason of the greater concentration of military personnel whereas civilians are widely dispersed and only a few can be reached in a night raid on a Sinhala village. The most number of ordinary Sinhalese were also killed by the JVP and not the LTTE...”³

PIRABHAKARAN AND MAHATTAYA

One snippet in Steve Le Vine’s 1991 report which piqued my interest was the following blurb on Mahattaya.

“Prabhakaran sees traitors everywhere and quashes them quickly. He once decided his top deputy ‘Mahattaya’ Mahendrarajah was growing too powerful, and ‘[reportedly] made Mahattaya bow down to him on his knees 100 times’, according to a Tamil intellectual close to the rebels. The Indian police speculate that Prabhakaran, once friendly with Rajiv Gandhi, turned on him after peacekeeping troops dispatched by the Indian leader in 1987 began moving against the rebels.”⁴

Now, let me summarise the subliminal messages delivered in this *News-week* report, which appeared few weeks *after* Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination. The Indian Intelligence operatives had convinced themselves that LTTE was behind Rajiv Gandhi’s murder. First, the brutality of Tamil Tigers ‘approaches that of Cambodia’s Khmer Rouge’. Secondly, an unnamed ‘Tamil intellectual close to the [LTTE] rebels’ in Madras paints Mahattaya as a victim of Pirabhakaran’s bullying. This intellectual could have been one of the handlers of Mahattaya for the Indian Intelligence *wallahs*. Thirdly, the story leak that Mahattaya had been punished by Pirabhakaran suggests that Mahattaya would be extricated from the charges of involvement in Rajiv Gandhi assassination. This later turned out to be true.

The truth in the anecdote about Mahattaya being asked to do 100 ‘push-ups’ can be verified only with Pirabhakaran. I leave this issue to other investigators. However, when did Mahattaya fall out with Pirabhakaran and who precipitated this split are of interest to many. Before analyzing the implications of Rajiv Gandhi assassination to Pirabhakaran, the events of 1989 deserve recapitulation (*see*, Chapter 1).

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1989 — THE YEAR OF INDIAN INTRIGUE

The year 1989 is significant for Sri Lankans for multiple reasons. First, Premadasa assumed presidency in that year. Secondly, parliamentary elections were held after a lapse of nearly 12 years. Thirdly, Rohana Wijeweera was assassinated by the state’s law enforcement operatives. For Eelam Tamils, the year 1989 saw the notable assassinations of the following:

- July 13: TULF leaders Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran, in Colombo.
- July 16: PLOTE leader Uma Maheswaran, in Colombo.
- September 21: human rights activist Rajani Thiranagama, in Jaffna.

It is my premise that these four assassinations were inter-linked and circumstantial evidence and motives suggest that Indian intelligence operatives (Research and Analysis Wing) at that time were conspirators for these assassinations. Motives are manifold, which include,

1. Embarassing the LTTE leadership and creating confusion in Premadasa’s camp (Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran assassinations),
2. Protecting the release of embarrassing details on the ‘stage-managed’ 1988 Maldives Coup Plot (Uma Maheswaran assassination),
3. Protecting the image of Indian policy makers by means of neutralizing criticism on the human rights front (Rajani Thiranagama assassination),and
4. Covering up the IPKF’s military quagmire in Eelam.

As I indicated in Chapter 1, the assassinations of Amirthalingam, Yogeswaran and Uma Maheswaran occurred between June 1 and July 29. The then President Premadasa made his Battaramulla declaration on June 1, requesting the Indian army to leave the island by the end of July 1989. As also emphasized in Chapter 1, a premature obituary of Pirabhakaran also appeared in the Madras *Hindu*, following the murders of Amirthalingam, Yogeswaran and Uma Maheswaran, claiming that Mahattaya had ascended to the LTTE’s leadership. Narayan Swamy wrote how the Eelam Tamils were perplexed by the Indian intrigue. To quote,

“[Eelam] Tamils were confused by Indian policies and actions. While the militants were trained and armed to fight, the TULF was prodded to talk peace to Colombo. When the militant groups looked askance, they were told that the talks were a fake; when the TULF brass made queries, they were

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informed that peace was the ultimate goal and the militants were only being used to force Jayewardene to make concessions on the negotiating table. The TULF’s Amirthalingam played along, in the process angering his own supporters. Eventually he too felt let down by New Delhi and decided to befriend the Tigers. And the LTTE just gunned him down.”⁵

Narayan Swamy is partially correct. But he failed to elaborate on the significant facts about which section of LTTE assassinated Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran, and whether Indian intelligence operatives were behind it to embarrass Pirabhakaran and Premadasa, who at that time had developed cordial relationship. However, Narayan Swamy has opined about Pirabhakaran’s distrust of the Research Analysis Wing (RAW) of Indian intelligence operatives. Stated Narayan Swamy,

“It was the LTTE which the RAW never succeeded in controlling or manipulating. How did this happen? This is where Velupillai Prabhakaran’s Machiavellian qualities come to the fore. Prabhakaran used India (including RAW) as long as he wanted to; he never allowed anyone to use him. He considered India (Tamil Nadu in particular) important to his war designs and banked heavily on the south Indian state. The contacts and hideouts there proved useful to him for years. RAW thought it could control the LTTE by giving it weapons. It was wrong. Prabhakaran got into the good books of MGR. So no one could harm him in Tamil Nadu. . . . No member was allowed to interact with RAW officials without authorization.”⁶

ASSASSINS: MAHATTAYA’S PROTÉGÉS

Focus on the identity of the assassins of Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran is also helpful in solving the ‘Who did it?’ mystery. They have been identified as Vishu, Aloysius and Vignan. The chief assassin Vishu has also been identified as Mahattaya’s ‘right-hand man’⁷. All three were killed subsequently by the security guards who were posted at the residence of TULF leaders. Uma Maheswaran’s assassins were not identified immediately, but that job was attributed as the work of ‘PLOTE’s dissidents’. Hoole (the pal of Rajani Thiranagama) in his anti-LTTE diatribe entitled, ‘Suffocation of truth and its political implications’, mentioned the name of “Senkathir, a protégé of Mahattaya’s who was accused of being Rajini’s killer by the EPRLF.” On the fate of Senkathir, Hoole noted,

“During 1991 he [Senkathir] is said to have disappeared in a confrontation with the Sri Lankan Army near Vavuniya. But his body was not brought home. He was duly commemorated as a martyr in Nelliady. His own community was however strongly convinced that his death is an inside job. Others held that Senkathir had gone over to the Sri Lankan Army.”⁸

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Though Hoole was not sure about the fate of Senkathir, he had indicated that Senkathir was a protégé of Mahattaya. My curiosity was aroused by the coincidences of Mahattaya’s protégés tagged as assassins of Amirthalingam, Yogeswaran and Rajani Thiranagama, whose deaths occurred within a narrow span of less than ten weeks. Within this tumultuous ten-week period, there had also been an attempt on Pirabhakaran’s life by the RAW operatives, which failed. Now, to clarify the gray areas of the Indian intrigue, let me cite Rohan Gunaratna’s observations made in 1993.

“[Around April 1989] when news reached RAW that Premadasa had established a communication with the LTTE.... Disinformation specialists at RAW fed a story that Prabhakaran had agreed for peace talks with the Sri Lankan government due to a serious injury Mahattaya had suffered and therefore needed urgent medical treatment.

In order to confuse the Sri Lankan government, RAW generated a story that Prabhakaran had been killed. This received wide publicity in Sri Lanka and in India. News reports stated that the killing was an altercation over Prabhakaran’s dictatorial ways. RAW reported that Kopalasamy Mahendrarajah alias Ajit Mahattaya, the LTTE deputy commander had assassinated Prabhakaran. Disinformation specialists at RAW supported this claim by stating that the public were mourning at several places in northern Sri Lanka and garlanding Prabhakaran’s picture placed at public places. Further information was fed to the public through the media and other channels that an audio-cassette by Mahattaya announcing the death of ‘dear Brother’ had been released and that Mahattaya, the new commander of the LTTE, had called for a conference of the area commanders. The IPKF and individual military sources confirmed the slaying of the LTTE leader.”⁹

Though Gunaratna failed to specify exactly when this happened, this bizarre promotion of Mahattaya by the RAW operatives occurred following the assassinations of Amirthalingam, Yogeswaran and Uma Maheswaran. Gunaratna had further indicated what RAW operatives did to counter Premadasa’s Bataaramulla declaration of June 1, 1989. To quote,

“RAW proposed a three pronged plan of action to bring the situation under Indian control.

1. Stage anti-pullout demonstrations in the North and East and accuse the Government of Sri Lanka of breaking the Accord.
2. Point out that the capability of the LTTE of attacking Tamils still remains and that the Government of Sri Lanka is incapable of controlling the LTTE
3. The Citizens Volunteer Force (CVF) training to be augmented to make it a quasi army under Indian supervision and control Rajiv Gandhi approved the plan.”¹⁰

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From my understanding, what is of interest in relation to the assassinations of Amirthalingam, Yogeswaran and Ms. Thiranagama is the point (2), which was executed using Mahattaya’s protégés. Gunaratna has further indicated,

“A total of seven letters, of which six were made public by the Sri Lankan government, except the last letter of Rajiv Gandhi to Ranasinghe Premadasa, were exchanged between the Governments of Sri Lanka and India on the question of the withdrawal of the IPKF from Sri Lanka, from June 1, 1989 to July 7, 1989.”¹¹

Less than a week later, Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran were assassinated in Colombo by Mahattaya’s protégés!

COVERAGE OF AMIRTHALINGAM-YOGESWARAN ASSASSINATIONS

Three versions on the coverage of assassinations of Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran, as presented in three books are given below. Hoole *et al.*, who presented themselves as non-sympathizers of Amirthalingam’s politics, wrote,

“For reasons well understood in Colombo, the affiliations of their killers remained for months, officially at least, a mystery. By early 1990, however, the press in Colombo started treating people to conflicting reports in keeping with the general spirit of the times. The Colombo based Tamil daily, the *Virakesari*, carried reports according to which, at public meetings in the North and East, LTTE spokesmen gave reasons why they killed Amirthalingam. The English language press on the other hand, carried reports quoting senior LTTE spokesmen in Colombo, denying the LTTE’s having a hand in the killings. Interestingly, the denials and the affirmations sometimes appeared on the same day.”¹²

J. N. Dixit, India’s foremost policy wonk of that era, placed his spin cryptically as follows:

“The LTTE’s apprehension that Amirthalingam may wean away Sri Lankan Tamil public opinion to the democratic mainstream of Sri Lankan politics led to the LTTE killing him.”¹³

It appears to me that Dixit is cryptic about the conspirators of Amirthalingam’s assassination. This statement is more or less identical to the point (b) of RAW’s three-pronged plan, noted above. My analysis of the events in 1989, and the circumstantial evidence, point towards RAW operatives as the conspirators of Amirthalingam assassination. The RAW operatives used the Mahattaya’s wing of LTTE to accomplish this task to discredit LTTE. T. Sabaratnam, Amirthalingam’s biographer, presented the following details on the assassination.

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“There was a great deal of confusion about the political identity of the killers. Some said that Visu, who headed the LTTE political wing in Vavuniya after the disappearance of Dinesh, had left the movement. Others said that Visu was still with the LTTE. The LTTE London head-office, however, issued a statement denying any involvement. It condemned the murders and charged that forces inimical to the then LTTE-government talks had committed them to discredit the LTTE. ‘The LTTE learnt with deep distress the tragic demise of the TULF leaders. Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran. We suspect that diabolical forces are at work to discredit the organization and to disrupt the current peace talks between the LTTE and the government of Sri Lanka’.

The LTTE denial failed to remove the doubts of the people about its involvement. The great importance that the government attached to the current peace talks was reflected in the manner the government-controlled newspaper, *Daily News*, treated the story on 14 July [1989]. It said, ‘The authorities were checking on the possibility that an attempt was being made to falsely father the killings on the LTTE, high ranking officials said.’ ” ¹⁴

Sabaratnam had continued further:

“In August 1989, [Minister of State for Defence, Ranjan] Wijeratne brought Inspector General of Police Ernest Perera to meet the press. Perera said a person named William W. Mariyadasan of Anderson Flats, Narahenpita, had been arrested and that he had made a confession. He and Nadarajah Sathyanandan of Kashapa Road, Narahenpita, had identified the assassins when the inquest into their deaths were held on 21 July 1989. No relatives had come forward to identify or claim the bodies of the killers. . . .” ¹⁵

About what happened ultimately to Mariyadasan, was reported briefly by Sabaratnam as follows:

“Mariyadasan was indicted in the Panadura High Court. The police produced the confession they obtained from him under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The court accepted the confession as proper evidence and convicted Mariyadasan for 7 years rigorous imprisonment. But the Appeal Court held the confession inadmissible and discharged him on 9 February 1995. It held that the confession was in fact not given by Mariyadasan.” ¹⁶

Thus, the confusion on the ‘political identity’ of the assassins of Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran is understandable. For Sinhalese politicians and journalist hacks the ‘dead’ Amirthalingam became more useful to smear Pirabhakaran’s image, than the living Federal Party stalwart and TULF leader Amirthalingam who toiled for Tamil rights in his own limited ways until his death. For the RAW operatives, who sapped the Madras-exiled TULF leader from 1983 to 1988 like parasites feeding on a wounded host, a ‘dead’ Amirthalingam (in the hands of Mahattaya’s protégés) became a convenient handy whip to beat the LTTE.

22

Standing Up against India’s Imperial Itch

AMIRTHALINGAM: A VICTIM OF IMPERIAL INDIA’S ITCH

IT IS NOT AN exaggeration to state that the TULF leader Amirthalingam was a victim of Imperial India’s itch. Three months before Amirthalingam’s assassination, the editorialist of the *Economist* magazine derisively noted:

“India is even bigger than it looks. Its soldiers control a large part of Sri Lanka and keep order in the Maldives. It treats Bangladesh as supplicant. It leans arrogantly across Pakistan to give support to the Afghan government in Kabul, which is Pakistan’s enemy. Now it is trying to turn Nepal into a vassal....

The government of Rajiv Gandhi would claim that it is not expansionist: that its actions are neighbourly and helpful. In Sri Lanka it is trying to control the Tamil Tiger guerrillas; in the Maldives last year it intervened to prevent a coup. The charge that earlier India had supported Tamil demands for a separate state in Sri Lanka, and allowed the Tigers to train on its territory, is shrugged off as history. A suggestion that the Maldives coup was plotted by India to get its soldiers into the country is probably nonsense, but it is believed by some normally sensible people among India’s neighbours. Unhappily, today’s India is considered capable of acts usually associated with interfering autocrats....

Some reckon India is flexing its muscles simply because Mr. Gandhi’s government faces a difficult election this year. A united opposition could, just possibly, defeat Mr. Gandhi’s increasingly discredited Congress Party. An adventurous foreign policy is the last hope of a worried government....”¹

To this editorial, M. Rasgotra, who was then the High Commissioner for India in London, responded in kind. Being an employee of the Indian civil service, the then High Commissioner of India for UK had to respond, and his rebuttal letter was a vintage example of ‘We did the right thing bombast’ for which Indian diplomats had been potty-trained assiduously. First three paragraphs of this letter make delightful reading for its verbose parries on

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India’s imperialist tendencies and a vital statement on India’s stance regarding Eelam. Wrote Mr. Rasgotra:

“Sir — Your condemnation of ‘Imperial India’ (April 15th) is shocking in the immensity of its prejudice and the immoderation of its language.

What lurid imagery! ‘India’s new empire’; ‘India’s bureaucrats having authority over the entire sub-continent from Iran to Burma’; ‘Indian siege of Nepal’; ‘India garrisoned by its army of 1.2 m[illion] men’. And finally ‘Imperial India’. There was an imperial India — the India of Clive and Curzon, which conquered Burma, sent expeditions to Lhasa, waged wars in Afghanistan, ruled Ceylon from Madras and maintained not an ambassador in Kathmandu, but a resident. But all that ended with the Raj — a good 42 years ago. There must be some comfort in interpreting someone else’s present in colours of one’s own past.

You say, ‘earlier, India had supported Tamil demands for a separate state in Sri Lanka’. I dealt with the problem in its early phase from 1982 to 1985 as India’s foreign secretary. I took every possible occasion to make it clear to all concerned that India had no sympathy for Eelam. It had none then; it has none now. Indian soldiers are not there to ‘control a large part of Sri Lanka’. At great cost of money and Indian lives, they are trying to disarm the Tamil Tigers, who want to break up Sri Lanka with the force of arms.

I doubt anyone will take seriously your dark murmurings about India plotting the coup in the Maldives to get its soldiers into that country. The coup foiled, those soldiers got out pretty fast. A very few remain and they too will be out as soon as the Maldives government can relieve them. . . .”²

One should appreciate Rasgotra’s candor in stating that India had no sympathy for Eelam. But in my assessment, he had covered up two vital points. First, while overstating his importance in Indian policy making during the period [1982–85], Rasgotra had refrained from mentioning that he had a boss who made the ultimate decision on Indian policies. She was none other than Indira Gandhi. From 1969 until her death, she also dominated the Indian stage strutted by effeminate men politicians and policy wimps. She was also known as a leader who made decisions impulsively according to her whims. The RAW, the Indian equivalent of CIA or KGB, was her creation. Secondly, Rasgotra had overlooked the meddling of Indian intelligence operatives — the RAW personnel — in the Eelam issue. While Amirthalingam was exploited by the RAW personnel and in turn fell prey to their designs and paid with his life, Pirabhakaran was intelligent enough to outwit the RAW operatives by his quick reading of their minds.

Jayarajnam Wilson, a keen observer of Eelam Tamil politics for decades, had noted the scenario during 1983–86 as follows:

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“At various times, to my knowledge, Indian policy makers had contemplated intervention [in Sri Lanka], and plans had been drawn up to that end. This had given hope to the TULF and the leaders of the Tamil militant groups. Whether this was done deliberately in order to mislead the Tamil leaders can only be conjectured, but the result of such aid being offered was that the Tamil leaders placed all their eggs in one basket — the Indian one...”³

Wilson continued further:

“The Research and Analysis Wing of the Indian government (known as RAW, the counterpart of the CIA and KGB) was active in promoting this view, and its agents infiltrated the Tamil groups. Apart from obtaining valuable and confidential information, these agents set Tamil groups against one another so as to create a balance and thus prevent any one group from obtaining dominance over the others. RAW succeeded at first, but finally failed to prevent the LTTE from gaining the upper hand.”⁴

This is where, Pirabhakaran scored over Amirthalingam. Though being a confessed and practising Gandhian, Amirthalingam did not value the use of ‘silence’ and allowed RAW operatives to infiltrate his mind. If he had to be faulted for his mis-steps, it is because since 1981 rather than being an active leader, he played the role of a parrot in the Tamil folk metaphor *‘Ilavu kaatha Killi’* [the parrot which awaited for the cotton fruit to ripen]. He depended on the power of Indira Gandhi to liberate Eelam, and when she was assassinated on October 31, 1984, Amirthalingam’s dream got busted like the metaphorical cotton fruit.

Also, the timing of Amirthalingam’s assassination (when he had re-entered the Sri Lankan parliament after a lapse of more than five years, on the National List of TULF following his sojourn in Madras) suggests that India’s intelligence operatives would have felt uncomfortable about him ‘revealing’ bits of embarrassing information about their dealings with him in the parliament.

It is well known among the students of espionage, that Intelligence operatives wish to hide their tracks, and they are apprehensive about their ‘contacts and sources’ spilling the beans at inappropriate occasions. The trans-national arrest of Panama’s dictator Manuel Noreiga (a long-term paid source for CIA) by President George Bush Sr. (a former director of CIA, who had shared some secrets with Noreiga) to keep him silent and at distant from public glare was a best example. Similarly, the elimination of PLOTE’s Uma Maheswaran following Amirthalingam’s assassination in 1989 and even LTTE’s Kittu in 1993 by the actions instigated by RAW have to be viewed from this angle as well. Though I have refrained from commenting on why V. Yogeswaran was assassinated along with Amirthalingam, the answer could be that his was a ‘collateral damage’ as described in military lingo.

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RAW’S ‘DRY RUN’ ON TARGETING TULF LEADERS TO IMPLICATE
PIRABHAKARAN

It is my proposition that the double assassinations of Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran in 1989 in Colombo was not an isolated event. It was preceded by a ‘dry run’ (a term, the Indian sleuths came to tag on LTTE, following Rajiv Gandhi assassination in 1991) conducted in 1985 in Jaffna. Thus, one cannot ignore the victims of this ‘dry run’, namely V. Dharmalingam and M. Alalasundaram. Dharmalingam had served Eelam Tamils for 23 years as the MP for Uduvil (1960–1977) and then Manipay (1977–83). Alalasundaram was a nominated MP for Kopay (1981–83), following the death of S. Kathiravelupillai in 1981. Again, the attempted scapegoat for the killings of Dharmalingam and Alalasundaram was none other than Pirabhakaran.

I present two versions which have appeared on the assassinations of Dharmalingam and Alalasundaram. The first version is from Narayan Swamy, the Indian journalist, since the circumstances of this assassination has been covered by him in relative detail. The second version is from Hoole *et al.*, who had pointed out the assassins.

Narayan Swamy described:

“On September 2 [1985], two young men went to Alalasundaram’s house and requested for character certificates. As Alalasundaram turned to go inside, the visitors pounced on him and dragged him into a waiting car. The kidnappers then went to a marriage which Dharmalingam was attending and told him that Alalasundaram wanted to see him. When he came near the car, he too was pushed in and the young men vanished with the two politicians.

Dharmalingam’s body was found the next day near a cemetery with a bullet in the forehead. A handwritten note found nearby said: ‘This is the punishment for those who betray the Tamil race and those who pawn Eelam, especially the TULF’. It was signed: ‘Tamils with Self-Respect’. Alalasundaram’s body had two bullet wounds in the chest and arms and was recovered from Jaffna town.

The killings sent shock waves throughout Tamil areas, in particular Jaffna. Dharmalingam was one of the most respected Tamil politicians who had quit the TULF and joined the more radical TELF, but had been expelled. He was a man of simple habits, known for his generous heart, his only luxury being a cycle. He was known to have helped many poor children get admitted into schools by paying for their education. People approached him with all kinds of problems. Alalasundaram, an advocate of the Supreme Court, was also politically active in Jaffna. When he was killed, he hardly had any money worth speaking of. He had to sell his wife’s jewellery when his daughter wanted a bicycle.

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The Indian government expressed shock and distress. Dharmalingam’s son, Siddharthan, who was with PLOT, blamed the killings on ‘one of the groups that comprise the Eelam National Liberation Front’. Gandhi complained that, ‘certain Tamil extremists were killing other Tamils’. The TELO joined in the growing condemnation, and in a statement hoped ‘that no organization involved in the liberation struggle was involved’. Strong rumours attributed to both the Sri Lankan government and Indian intelligence, pointed the accusing finger at the LTTE, which had two years previously shot at Alalasundaram in the leg on alleged charges of corruption. The Tigers vehemently denied the accusation. Initially, few believed them...”⁵

Now, to the analysis of Hoole *et al.*:

“It was well known that Prabhakaran, the LTTE leader, and Sri Sabaratnam, the TELO leader hated each other. The assassination of TULF MPs Mr. Dharmalingam and Mr. Alalasundaram of 2 August 1985 [Note: August is an error. September was correct], is an example of the methods by which one militant group tried to score over the others. Mr. Dharmalingam and Mr. Alalasundaram were amongst the TULF MPs who continued to reside in Jaffna. On the basis of testimonies given by several persons who had talked to TELO exiles in India, it is believed that this is how it happened. The LTTE leader Prabhakaran reportedly made a strong threatening speech against the TULF. Sri Sabaratnam, the TELO leader, then gave secret instructions to his men to assassinate the two MPs expecting that Prabhakaran would get the blame and discredit. As expected the LTTE was largely blamed.

In an independent testimony, a PLOTE sentry near Mr. Dharmalingam’s residence identified a vehicle in which the assassins came as belonging to the TELO.”⁶

While both Narayan Swamy and Rajan Hoole *et al.* had indicated that TELO was responsible for the assassinations of Dharmalingam and Alalasundaram, for reasons of propriety or convenience, they have not dugged further to inform on whose instructions TELO carried out this attack on the Tamil legislators. It was an open secret to Eelam Tamils that TELO had been turned into the puppet of RAW operatives, and as inferred by Rajan Hoole *et al.*, the motive for those two assassinations was to smear the image of Pirabhakaran who resisted being controlled by those RAW operatives.

RAW IN THE MOLD OF CIA

Like humans, institutions which are built by humans also, following birth, undergo the phases of infancy, adolescence, maturity and senility. The RAW was formed by prime minister Indira Gandhi in 1968, along the lines of the infamous CIA, which was constituted in 1947. The RAW had tasted success

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in its infancy stage when it ‘created’ Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971. Then, its turn of playing in the Sri Lankan field opened in 1983 due to the bungling of President J. R. Jayewardene.

In this context, before deducing why the RAW operatives could have been the conspirators for the assassinations of Dharmalingam and Alalasundaram, some background on the activities of RAW may not be inappropriate. Capt. S. H. Hali, a Pakistan analyst, had revealed a little about RAW’s activities based on a 1981 book ‘*Inside RAW*’ (Vikas Publishing, New Delhi) by Asoka Raina. According to these sources,⁷

1. The prime objective of RAW is to monitor the political and military developments in all adjoining countries, which have direct bearing on India’s national security and in the formulation of its foreign policy.
2. RAW has been organized on the lines of the CIA.
3. The functions of RAW vary according to the target. The main ones being, Collection of Information, Collation of Information and Aggressive Intelligence. The last category includes espionage, psychological warfare, subversion, sabotage, terrorism and creating dissension, insurgency and, ultimately insurrection to destabilize the target country.
4. The modus operandi of RAW include India’s foreign missions, Multinationals, Media, Collaboration with other espionage agencies, Third country technique — (*i.e.*, obtaining information and operating through third countries), and last but not the least, spotting and recruitment.
5. Under the recruitment category, Hali notes, “RAW operatives are on the lookout for local recruits to serve their ends. Acting on the Chanakyan principles, they tend to exploit human weaknesses for wine, women and wealth, and, at times resort to blackmail. Separatist tendencies and ethnic or sectarian sensitivities are also well known grounds for manipulation. . . .”

Capt. Hali’s description of RAW exploiting ‘human weaknesses for wine, women and wealth’ deserves note in relation to the assassination of President Premadasa, for which LTTE has been accused without definite proof, other than the correlational evidence that a suicide bomber was the assassin. This purported assassin Babu offering sexual favor to Premadasa’s *valet-cum-masseur* E. M. P. Mohideen was reported by the media⁸. While alive, Premadasa himself had suspected that RAW operatives were aiming for his life due to his well known antipathy against Indian policies in South Asia. With time, details related to this ‘sex trap episode’ enmeshing Premadasa assassination as well as who gave the order to the Colombo Municipal Council’s Fire Brigade to wash the scene of assassination thereby covering the vital forensic clues, have been hushed up by the Colombo media and the beneficiaries of President Premadasa’s assassination.

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In late 1950s and 1960s, CIA gained its notoriety by plotting the overthrows and assassinations of leaders who were perceived to be anti-American. Plotting the overthrows and assassinations of Indonesia’s Sukarno, Congo’s Lumumba and Cuba’s Castro had become part and parcel of the CIA’s clumsy history. These activities marking the adolescent phase of an Intelligence Agency, can be labeled as ‘adolescent itch’ of espionage. Like human adolescents, who crave for recognition from adults by indulging in adult activities such as smoking cigarettes, boozing, and patronizing prostitutes, some of the professional frolics of intelligence operatives also border on incredulity. Promoting assassinations in territories beyond its own land has become an ‘adolescent initiation rite’ for Intelligence agencies to receive ‘recognition’ among their peers.

Nathan Miller provided some examples such as the CIA making a pornographic movie with an actor wearing Sukarno mask and also spraying the TV studio with a chemical where Castro was to give a speech so that Castro would lose his charismatic appeal or dusting his shoes with a chemical to damage his beard⁹. There is paucity of such material for RAW’s activities, though Pirabhakaran may be willing to reveal some of the hilarious ‘deeds’ of RAW operatives in the future. But, the 47-year old K. V. Unnikrishnan, the RAW’s top field officer in Madras falling prey to the ‘honey-pot’ trap of CIA’s and Sri Lankan intelligence team in 1985–86 was an embarrassing episode in the annals of Indian intelligence operatives¹⁰. This was a classic case of a hunter being caught by his own trap.

PROBABLE CONSPIRATOR FOR THE DHARMALINGAM AND
ALALASUNDARAM ASSASSINATIONS

Salamat Ali reported that,

“Before his arrest [in 1987], Unnikrishnan headed the RAW’s operation in Madras and was directly in charge of Indian dealings with Sri Lankan Tamil militants based in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Although he was not part of the decision-making apparatus, as field coordinator of Tamil militants he was privy to most of the details of the secret negotiations involving New Delhi, Colombo and the militant Tamil groups.”¹¹

It is an easy guess that this Unnikrishnan could have been a probable conspirator for the 1985 assassinations of Dharmalingam and Alalasundaram. According to Salamat Ali,

“During a tenure in Colombo as the RAW’s representative six years ago [i.e., in 1981], he had become friendly with an unnamed US consular official and, together with him, engaged in several extra-marital affairs with unidentified women. Despite these sexual escapades, he was apparently a hen-pecked

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husband and his alleged American contact knew that Unnikrishnan was mortally afraid of his wife.

After his return to India, he was briefly stationed in New Delhi before moving to Madras. Sometime in 1985, a woman describing herself as a stewardess with Pan American Airways telephoned him from Bombay to say that his American consular friend had told her to contact him if she felt lonely. Unnikrishnan flew from Madras to Bombay and a liaison developed between the two. During 1985–86, she gave him complimentary air tickets to fly to Singapore. During those jaunts in Singapore, compromising photographs of the stewardess and her lover were taken...¹²

The ‘adolescent itch’ of organizing assassinations became unbearable for the RAW operatives by mid 1980s and the TULF leaders (Dharmalingam, Alalasundaram, Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran) became sitting ducks between 1985 and 1989. Unlike other young Tamil militants, only Pirabhakaran refused to tango to the tune of these RAW operatives, because he had a vision of his own.

The Sri Lankan link to the Unnikrishnan honey-pot trap has been provided by none other than J. N. Dixit. He is a seasoned pro that he doesn’t even mention RAW by name in his memoirs. Excerpts from *Assignment Colombo*:

“In some of my discussions with Lalith Athulathmudali in the first half of 1986, I felt that he was extraordinarily well informed about the personalities in our intelligence agencies and in the Ministry of External Affairs at headquarters who were dealing with Sri Lankan affairs. I reported these perceptions to Delhi. The general comment which I conveyed was that the Sri Lankan mission in Delhi and the Sri Lankan Deputy High Commission in Madras seemed to be very effective in gathering information and operational intelligence. In the event, my being impressed by the efficiency of the Sri Lankan diplomatic missions was misplaced. The Sri Lankan source of information was a senior operative of our own intelligence agency, Unnikrishnan, who had been subverted most probably by the Americans through a foreign lady working for Pan-American Airlines. His negative activities were discovered sometime towards the middle of 1986, which was followed by appropriate procedural action against him. The fact that the Sri Lankan Government’s advance knowledge about Indian policies and intentions clearly diminished after Unnikrishnan was neutralized proved that he was a major source of information to the Sri Lankans.”¹³

Like the military lingo, the diplomatic euphemism is also colorful. Kindly note the lingo used by Dixit such as ‘*negative activities*’, ‘*procedural action*’ and ‘*neutralized*’. It is reasonable to infer that in this honey-pot trap episode, only Pirabhakaran came out without a tarnished image, due to his innate intelligence and precautionary steps in keeping away from the RAW operatives.

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Thus, it is my contention that though technically the Indo-LTTE war came to a close with the departure of Indian army from the island in March 1990, the war of India’s RAW and other Intelligence agencies against Pirabhakaran’s LTTE has continued unabatedly. The Rajiv Gandhi assassination case trial (1992–99), capture of *MV Ahat* by the Indian navy which precipitated the death of Kittu in 1993, Interpol notices (1995) and other routine ‘assassination plots’ of LTTE released to the press were all manifestations of this continuing ‘undeclared war’ of RAW against LTTE.

23

Plots of RAW and Premadasa

DR. RAJANI THIRANAGAMA’S ASSASSINATION

DR. RAJANI THIRANAGAMA was an acquaintance of mine during my undergraduate years at the University of Colombo during 1974–75. Then, she was Rajani Rajasingam, a medical student who actively took part in the cultural activities of the Colombo Campus Tamil Society, for which I served as the President in 1975. She was an year junior to me, though I was in the Faculty of Science and she was affiliated to the Faculty of Medicine. Then, the Colombo Campus Tamil Society incorporated all the Tamil undergraduates belonging to the Medical, Natural Science, Social Science and Law faculties. It had a nearly 550-member strength. Thus, her assassination was of personal interest to me, other than its political and social significance.

According to the literature generated by Hoole, a leading anti-Pirabakaran activist, Dr. Rajani Thiranagama was assassinated on September 21, 1989 by the LTTE. First I quote his belief, as presented in his 1997 feature entitled, ‘Suffocation of truth and its political implications’. Then, I present the details from a 1990 report by John Merritt, British correspondent, which Hoole himself has cited [but not included in his feature] for shedding light into this unsolved assassination of the University of Jaffna academic. Hoole wrote:

“Even on the very day she [Dr. Rajani Thiranagama] was murdered, bicycle mechanics and tea boutique keepers were saying that it was the LTTE who killed her. . . . The commemoration lasting three days was fixed to begin two months after the murder, on November 21, 1989. Once it clearly dawned on everyone that the LTTE were the killers and that the Indian Army was pulling out, it fell to UTHR(J) to organize under its aegis, while the staff unions lent their support. It was an ambitious plan, a long fling and as it turned out, a game of brinkmanship. But it worked. . . .

The LTTE started showing an interest openly only when the delegates began arriving on November 20. . . . The commemoration ran its course as planned while the LTTE had to be content filming the proceedings for use in future intelligence work. Its nervousness about the proceedings was reflected in its long statement of denial distributed on the occasion after a two months silence, leaving little doubt as to who the killers were. . . .”¹

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There is something petulant and unprofessional in Hoole’s assertion that, “Even on the very day she [Dr. Rajani Thiranagama] was murdered, bicycle mechanics and tea boutique keepers were saying that it was the LTTE who killed her.” If ‘bicycle mechanics and tea boutique keepers’ [who were unidentified by names or locations — as characteristic of Hoole’s voluminous scribblings] are so certain, then one need not have any judicial inquiry of any kind to verify the truth. Now, to the description about a British acquaintance of Hoole, who came to cover the life of Rajani Thiranama. To quote Hoole again,

“In January 1990, on the initiative of an English activist who came for the commemoration and was active in the British Labour Party, the late John Merit of the *London Observer* arrived in Jaffna to ‘do’ a story on Rajini against the current situation in Jaffna. He had been fully briefed of what we knew. Himself a Roman Catholic, he posed the question to Bishop Deogupillai of Jaffna. ‘We killed Rajani?’ The Bishop replied that the people say it is a party close to the Indian Army. Merit responded, ‘Whom do you say Killed Rajani?’ ‘I have to believe what the people say’, said the Bishop. We were taken aback as John Merit was.

It was the time the Indian Army had begun its pull-out from Jaffna. I say this not to fault the Bishop. He was among the more solid figures in Jaffna, had absolutely no sympathy for the LTTE and the bad press he had received in the South over the years was totally undeserved. It was simply based on the paranoia reserved for any Tamil who spoke up against the actions of the state. . . .”²

By Hoole’s acknowledgement, Bishop Deogupillai “*had absolutely no sympathy for the LTTE.*” Even then, in his interview with John Merritt, the Bishop did not indulge in insinuation that LTTE was behind the assassination of Rajani Thiranagama, [probably since he wished to preserve his reputation]. Another point noted by Hoole also deserves attention. Even if a respected Tamil like archbishop Deogupillai (who doesn’t identify with LTTE) takes an independent stand of not demonizing LTTE in public, he or she will be smeared with ‘bad press in the [Sinhala] South’ of the island.

John Merritt’s report on Dr. Thiranagama’s assassination appeared in the *Observer*(London), of April 29, 1990. It was characterized by the typical colonial era condescension of British to brown-skinned Asians; even the caption ‘*The Battle for No Man’s Land*’ was somewhat pejorative. Records exist for Tamils to have lived in Eelam, even during the Norman invasion of William the Conqueror, marked by the Battle of Hastings (AD 1066). Thus, for a contemporary British caption writer to scribble the feature on Jaffna as ‘The Battle for No Man’s Land’ itself is rather sophomoric. For this report, Merrit

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had interviewed Rajani’s parents and archbishop Deogupillai, and they were not sure on who were the murderers of Rajani. One could guess that they were either ‘diplomatic’ in not pointing the fingers on the LTTE for reasons of personal safety or they really were not sure about Rajani’s assassins. However, Mr. Rajasingham, Rajani’s father, had pointedly accused the Indian army as well as Sri Lankan army for destroying many of Rajani’s writings, reports and their family possessions. The question arises, that if he was diplomatic enough, he wouldn’t have bothered to even accuse the Indian army or the Sri Lankan army directly in his comments to John Merritt. But he was forthright in mentioning how these two agencies have harassed them and Rajani.

As has stated by Rajan Hoole in 1997, Merritt’s trip to Jaffna was sponsored by the human rights activists with whom Rajani became acquainted, while in Britain. Thus, obligatory ‘appreciative notes’ for the unnamed ‘small group of people’ who were toiling under hardship as well as ‘depreciative notes’ for the violent-ridden LTTE, were sprinkled like raisins in the cake, for reader consumption. Also, Pirabhakaran’s name was not mentioned even once in the entire feature, though a couple of quotes from Anton Balasingham are noted. Despite these limitations, John Merritt’s report deserves notice, since it includes the views of Rajani’s parents and Right Revd. Deogupillai, the then Roman Catholic Archbishop of Jaffna, on who assassinated Rajani. Excerpts:

3

(A) VIEWS OF DR. THIRANAGAMA’S PARENTS

“Her mother still talks of Rajani in the present. ‘You see, my Rajani wants to see the killings stop and she has to side with those who don’t carry guns’. After church on Sunday Mahilaruppiam sits with her husband, Rajasingam, a former college and hospital administrator, on the long veranda now overlooked by an LTTE camp in a house commandeered from relatives who have fled abroad. She says: ‘We are frightened, so it is better not to be sure about who killed her. We are too old to leave. Perhaps there is no point in blame, we won’t get our child back’.

Rajasingam points to the LTTE camp: ‘For more than a year, before the Tigers were there, the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) occupied that property. They took away Rajani’s writings and the reports she had compiled on the killings. Before that, the Sri Lankan army came here and destroyed many of our possessions and took away our family photographs’. Government forces were hunting Rajani’s older sister, a former English tutor at Jaffna University and now a refugee in Britain, who was arrested with two doctors and a priest and accused of harbouring members of the LTTE. She was one of the few survivors of a subsequent prison massacre of hundreds of ‘suspects’.

Chapter 23. Plots of RAW and Premadasa

‘So you see, what does it mean to ask who killed our Rajani, when everyone is killing everyone?’ Rajasingam asks. ‘Rajani was perhaps too honest. She once left a university senate meeting in tears because the university authorities wouldn’t agree to an inquiry into the murders of students by government and Indian forces’...

**(B) DR. THIRANAGAMA’S ACTIONS AGAINST THE WISHES OF THE
INDIAN ARMY OPERATIVES:**

“Single-handed she [Rajani] had reopened the university two years earlier [in 1987] when it was occupied by the IPKF, often staying after curfew to organize repairs to the bomb damage. Eventually her colleagues were persuaded to return by her conviction that ‘we must show a will of our own to make our own future’. In a note to the vice-chancellor the day she returned, she simply stated: ‘There is no life for me apart from my people — so here I am’.

The Tigers had perhaps been the best hope the downtrodden Tamils had, the teeth — if not the voice — of the oppressed, the only group to offer effective resistance against genocide. Their appeal in the north and east of the island grew in direct proportion to the barbarity of the Indian and government forces. Rajani was active in exposing and documenting the atrocities, the limbs cut from live youths on saw benches, the crushing of heads under the wheels of armoured vehicles, immersions in acid, rapes and strangulations, the dismembered bodies draped from trees and telegraph poles and the bullet-riddled corpses smouldering on piles of burning tyres by the roadsides. But she became equally concerned with similar excesses by the Tigers and their role in the militarisation of the youth, as many of the LTTE’s young idealists died or grew disillusioned and left the country...

Popular support for the Tigers grew when the IPKF arrived to ‘keep the peace’ in July 1987. Their initials came to stand for ‘Indian People Killing Force’, as they massacred civilians, including those in hospitals and refugee camps, and subcontracted the butchery to bands of anti-Tiger, anti-government Tamil militias. These Indian-trained and armed groups added to the proliferation of paramilitary organizations throughout the island, groups with two things in common: a blind pursuit of murder that made everybody someone’s enemy, and the word ‘Liberation’ in their convoluted titles.

When doctors were too frightened to reveal an IPKF massacre at Jaffna Hospital in October 1987 which left 70 staff and patients dead, and were even afraid publicly to commemorate their dead colleagues, Rajani interviewed survivors...

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(C) MERRITT’S SUGGESTED MOTIVES OF LTTE FOR KILLING
DR. RAJANI THIRANAGAMA

After describing such actions of Dr. Thiranagama, Merritt also recorded that “Rajani came to be regarded as a traitor by the Tigers. Her mother says, ‘They used to say of her, ‘Even when an Indian soldier dies she will cry’ ’.” According to Merritt, what sealed the fate of Rajani was the planned publication of ‘*The Broken Palmyra*’ — the early copies of which had begun ‘to circulate underground three months before Rajani’s murder’. But Merritt tactfully omitted providing the vital answer in the affirmative. Rather, he had attempted to pry the answer from Rev. Deogupillai. The then spiritual shepherd of Jaffna’s 150,000 Roman Catholic flock had responded to the vital question as follows:

“ ‘They say the Indians or someone did it. She [Rajani] was a bit outspoken you know. It is no use complaining — nothing happens. The people know that’. But what is his own opinion? ‘I don’t have one’ he says. ‘It is best not to. Will you drink your tea’?”⁴

In sum, contrary to what Rajan Hoole believes, Merritt provided adequate details [especially via the impressions of Rajani’s father and Rev. Deogupillai] for pointing the accusatory finger of Rajani’s murder to the Indian Intelligence operatives. If there is truth in Rajan Hoole’s assertion that Senkathir, a protégé of Mahattaya, was the assassin of Rajani Thiranagama, it aligns well with the proposition that she was eliminated by the actions of Indian Intelligence operatives who forged links to the then Mahattaya faction of the LTTE.

MAHATTAYA’S ROLE AS A RAW’S MOLE: MY VIEW

On Mahattaya’s role as a RAW’s mole, I can only present what I had gathered from circumstantial evidence. In Chapter 18, I have cited an intelligence memorandum submitted by one of India’s intelligence agencies to the Jain Commission. This document, prepared by the sleuths around mid 1987, was made public in only in 1997. Unless documents of such confirmatory value surface, how and when RAW operatives trapped Mahattaya to neutralize Pirabhakaran cannot be determined precisely. But, one can surmise that by July 1989, when Amirthalingam, Yogeswaran and Uma Maheswaran were assassinated and there appeared the RAW-planted premature obituary of Pirabhakaran [see, Chapter 1], Mahattaya seems to have capitulated to the viles of operatives practicing the second oldest profession.

In this context, I quote from a published 1992 letter of mine, which criticised the views of N. Ram, the Chennai busybody *cum* journalist. Excerpts:

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“... Regarding his current status on the Eelam issue, Ram has observed, ‘Indian policy has become somewhat inert and inactive. So there is no question of my playing a role. Because I don’t play an independent role. It is part of a policy response’.

Ram uses words like ‘policy’, ‘assessment’ and ‘mistakes’ euphemistically to hide the role initiated and played by the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), the Indian counterpart of CIA and KGB. If Ram had stated openly on the failure of the RAW to infiltrate the LTTE (rather than referring to it passively as ‘For one thing they were not accessible’), and his relationship with the RAW, I would have admired his courage and conviction. His antagonism to the LTTE is understandable, if one separates the kernel from the chaff. LTTE was (and still is) the only Tamil militant group which the RAW personnel could not manipulate to dance according to the whims of the Indian policy mandarins...”⁵

In response to this communication, I received an unsolicited letter, dated 10 February 1994, from an anonymous Tamil correspondent living in Australia. This letter criticized me for my then naïve belief that LTTE was impenetrable to the spookish pranks of RAW. Excerpts:

“Dear Mr. Sri Kantha,

In your letter to the *Tamil Times* of 15 October 1992, you mentioned that LTTE was the only group which the RAW personnel could not manipulate to dance according to the whims of Indian policy mandarins. But if one were to go by a news item in *Kalathil* of 14 January 1994, LTTE’s second-in-command, Mahataya, his body guard Suresh and another person code-named ‘Engineer’ are now under investigation for their alleged clandestine links with the RAW.

Some of my friends, who were in Colombo during December ’93 – January ’94, on holidays, quoting people who had come to Colombo from Jaffna said Mahataya, Yogi, and 74 others are now kept under house-guard at Kalvayal, close to Chavakachcheri, for the said offence. In other words, your contention that LTTE was (and is?) an impenetrable monolith (if *Kalathil*’s statement was correct) has gone awry...”

My correspondent was entitled to his opinion on LTTE. But the question arises, whether Pirabhakaran was so dumb not to know about what was happening behind his back, to the organization he founded. Was he unaware of the premature obituary which was circulated by the RAW operatives to promote Mahattaya in 1989 and cause confusion among Tamils in Eelam and Tamil Nadu? The observation on Mahattaya by Rajan Hoole and his colleagues in 1990 is relevant here. To quote,

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“Mahattaya had a childhood steeped in want. He is very much a loner and is not much of a public man. Mahattaya is once said to have had serious differences with Prabhakaran. These appear to have been patched up. Those who befriended him in old times can perhaps claim a hint of loyalty that did not quite approach friendship. He would be suspicious of the kind of ties formed by Kittu.”⁶

Thus, to be fair by Pirabhakaran, considering the time lag between mid-1989 and end of 1993 [during which (a) he had allowed Mahattaya adequate media limelight in 1990 for Premadasa-LTTE peace negotiations, to speak on behalf of LTTE, (b) he had been publicised as the first accused by the Indian operatives in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial, without Mahattaya being named within the list of 41 accused persons presented to the public in May 1992, and (c) he had lost Kittu and his more than a dozen associates in January 1993 under suspicious circumstances in high seas in an encounter with the Indian navy], with hindsight one can infer that Pirabhakaran had knowingly or unknowingly tolerated the ‘clandestine links Mahattaya had with the RAW operatives’. If he had tolerated unknowingly, then it shows that Pirabhakaran trusted Mahattaya for a long time under much duress. If he had tolerated knowingly, then it suggests that he allowed sufficient length of time to accumulate proof for his actions on punishing Mahattaya and his associates.

V. SURYANARAYAN’S VERSION ON MAHATTAYA

Prof. V. Suryanarayan, a regular commentator to the *Frontline* magazine, can be labeled as one who is close to the RAW’s sphere of influence. In his 1999 analysis on the 1998 Heroes’ Day address of Pirabhakaran to the *Frontline*’s readers, he presented the view which can only be transcribed from the RAW’s files. This view is in divergence to what I have scrutinized. To quote:

“President Ranasinghe Premadasa held negotiations with the LTTE between May 1989 and June 1990. The two came together because they found a convergence of interests: to get the IPKF out of Sri Lanka. . . .

The honeymoon lasted only until the IPKF left the island on March 30, 1990. The vacuum left by the IPKF was filled by the LTTE, which gained complete control of the northeastern region. After the IPKF left, Prabhakaran put forward two demands — the dissolution of the North-Eastern Provincial Council and the repeal of the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution. The Government rejected the demands and the Second Eelam War broke out. A few months later Premadasa fell victim to an LTTE suicide squad.”⁷

The last sentence is factually incorrect, unless Suryanarayan’s sense of the phrase ‘few months’ extends to more than 33 months. To be precise, the

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Second Eelam War began in July 1990. Premadasa was assassinated on May 1, 1993.

SAJITH PREMADASA’S VERSION ON MAHATTAYA

On the negotiations President Premadasa had with LTTE during 1989–90, a 1998 revelation, emerging from the President’s son, Sajith Premadasa (now a UNP politician on his own rank), is worth noting.

Question by Roshan Peiris: “It is reported that a Presidential Commission is to be appointed to probe how your father gave arms to the LTTE. Any comments?”

Sajith Premadasa: “My father provided arms only to the LTTE when deputy Mahattaya was emerging as a rival of Velupillai Prabhakaran. My father’s aim was to get Mahattaya to subvert Prabhakaran. During World War II, Britain and the US gave support to German generals who opposed Hitler. My father was following a covert military strategy of attempting to defeat Prabhakaran from within.”⁸

This version was reiterated few weeks later in the *Economist* magazine in a two page, anonymous commentary. To quote,

“It was specifically the Tiger’s leader, Mr. Prabhakaran, some people in the [Premadasa] government decided, who was the problem; he should be killed. What happened then is disputed. Reportedly, Ranasinghe Premadasa, who had become president in 1989, arranged for the army to supply arms to the Tigers. For what? For dissident rebels to use against Mr Prabhakaran, says the former president’s son Sajith. For the Tigers to use against the president’s enemies, say some others. Whatever the truth, it was not Mr. Prabhakaran who suffered: Mr. Premadasa was killed by the Tigers in 1993.”⁹

While ignoring the judgmental claim in the latter half of the last sentence [for which no irrefutable evidence has been presented], if President Premadasa’s motives were to promote Mahattaya against Pirabhakaran, as commented by his son Sajith, then it reinforces two points. One, the sinister designs of RAW who had used Mahattaya to snoop on Premadasa’s strategy; the other was Premadasa’s much recognized expertise in double-crossing anyone, including Pirabhakaran, to advance his own agenda.

Being oblivious to this revelation, Chennai-based analyst Suryanarayan also penned the RAW’s promotional line that,

“The LTTE also used the period during which it carried on negotiations to carry forward its policy of annihilation of political opponents. Thus, TULF leader A. Amirthalingam was killed while the LTTE was holding talks with

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the Premadasa Government. The group even justified the killing. In an interview to Mervyn de Silva, Editor of the *Lanka Guardian*, Mahattaya justified the assassination of Amirthalingam and his party colleague Yogeswaran: ‘They were killed not because they held views different from that of the LTTE, but because they were acting as the agents of India; in short, traitors, collaborators’. Ironically, Mahattaya himself was executed by Prabhakaran on the charge of being ‘a RAW agent’.”¹⁰

Even in 1999, Suryanarayan omitted mentioning some secretive acts which RAW played between 1988–90. These include items such as:

1. Who propped LTTE’s political opponents like the EPRLF in 1988–90,
2. Who were behind the establishment of the Tamil National Army (TNA) in 1990,
3. Who promoted the Mahattaya leadership by planting the story of Pirabhakaran’s premature obituary in 1989, and
4. Who shielded Mahattaya’s name from being listed in the ‘LTTE accused list’ of Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial in 1992.

24

Rajiv Assassination: Paper Maze

MY PREVIOUS OBSERVATIONS

IF ONE IS PERMITTED to use a well-worn Indian movie metaphor, the Rajiv Gandhi assassination in May 1991 was a ‘mega-hit’ [*no pun intended*]. Its implications for many disciplines such as sub-continental politics, warfare, espionage, law and last but not the least forensic science, were of epic proportions. Only the assassination of the 35th American president, John F. Kennedy in 1963, can be comparable to Rajiv Gandhi assassinations for its multi-dimensional maze. Thus, from May 22, 1991, it had captured my interest. Between 1991 and 1994, I contributed seven brief letters to journals and newspapers¹⁻⁷.

These were my initial observations, based on the information which appeared in the public domain until mid-1992, related to the purported arrests and the charge-sheet prepared by the Indian investigators, in charge of the assassination.

Following the naming of Pirabhakaran as the first accused in the charge sheet prepared by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in India in May 1992, I wrote another brief letter to the *Lanka Guardian* commenting on the omissions of the charge sheet. Excerpts:

“What strikes me vividly is its selectivity and superficiality in regurgitating the political events which happened in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. For instance, nothing of the following has been included in this document;

- The role of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) in training the Tamil militant groups in Tamil Nadu.
- The assassination attempt on Rajiv Gandhi in Colombo, after the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord on July 1987.
- The training and arming of the Tamil National Army by the Indian Peace Keeping Force.
- Maldives invasion by the PLOTE mercenaries and the Indian “assistance in restoring peace.

Even for a non-lawyer like me, it is apparent that the so-called ‘Final Report’ resembles the field note book of a RAW agent, than a legal document.”⁸

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Then I felt that it would be prudent to wait for the ‘results’ to appear from the Indian investigations in court of law and the two appointed commissions. Since the final verdict at the Indian court of law on the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial was delivered in May 1999, and the findings of two appointed commissions (namely the Verma Commission and Jain Commission) had been released, albeit in truncated versions for public consumption, this assassination can now be critically studied for two reasons. One is to focus on how the name of Pirabhakaran was used by the Indian operatives (prosecution team, journalists who were fed by the Indian intelligence *wallahs*, publicity seekers like Subramanian Swamy and even the guardians of law) to advance their image and own agenda. A second reason is, from the standpoint of an analytical scientist, to highlight the paucity (or more probably, suppression) of *forensic details in the public domain, relating to the deaths of 18 individuals* in Sriperumbudur on May 21, 1991, which included the prominent victim Rajiv Gandhi and his purported woman assassin, named Dhanu.

As an example, the *India Today* magazine published a report by Anirudhya Mitra in late 1991 with the blaring caption, ‘Rajiv Assassination: Conspiracy Surfaces’; the titillating lead sentence was: “Investigations by the SIT and ‘Q’ Branch of the Tamil Nadu Police, reveal that Rajiv’s killing was part of a larger plot to form a greater eelam.” It carried the photos of Pirabhakaran and Pottu Amman, adjacent to this lead sentence. The box-story was on the ‘Letter Leads’, purported to be unearthed by the SIT officers.

SIT Evidence: Letter Leads

“Sivarasan may be dead, but he couldn’t carry the ‘clinching evidence’ with him. Investigators say at least two documents they have unearthed would ‘prove that the assassination was ordered by Pirabhakaran’.

The first clincher is a letter that the assassin, Dhanu, wrote to Pirabhakaran on May 10, 1991, from LTTE’s Kodungaiyur hide-out. Thanking Pirabhakaran for entrusting her with the ‘important’ task, Dhanu details her successful dry-run on V. P. Singh in Madras on May 8. The second piece of evidence is the letter — dated September 7 — from Santhan, who was the LTTE’s chief co-ordinator in India, to Pirabhakaran. It was intercepted when the Indian Navy arrested an LTTE courier, Irumburei. It shows him as being down, but still fighting. Excerpts: ‘My dear elder brother,

I am writing this letter amidst crisis. But we have not lost confidence. The CBI seems to have come to know everything about us following the arrest of so many of our members. All Pottuamman’s boys got nabbed and that eventually led to the death of Raghuvaran (Sivarasan)... The arrest of Chinna Santhan helped the CBI to know about who killed Padmanabha...

After seeing so many arrests, I had to distribute cyanide to all our boys...

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As a result of my instruction/order, 25 of us have died. The situation here is just like what it was in Jaffna during the IPKF operation. Like our people hated to give the Indian soldiers water, the same treatment is being meted out to our activists. I suggest that we have a smaller team to work here. I have waited several nights. . . . no boat has come. . . . How do I send goods? After the death of Rajiv, we were promised that boats will come once the election was over. But no boat came. . . .

Send boats and wireless sets before some more of us get caught. If I get wireless set, we can identify the arrival or the departure point. Or, tell Irumburei in detail. The arrest of Vardhan cut off my last link with you. Pottuamman’s boys do not carry my message to you. . . . The likely arrest of Kolatur Maniyam is worrying me as that would lead to many other Indians. The CBI cannot catch me. Have faith in me’.

Yours,
Santhan”⁹

It would come as no surprise that these two planted ‘Letter Leads’ were more likely forgeries. In my March 1992 column written to the *Tamil Nation*, I questioned the validity of the first quoted letter by Dhanu to Pirabhakaran, dated May 10, 1991. The second letter of Santhan to Pirabhakaran, dated September 7, 1991, was rejected as “not admissible in evidence” by Justice D. P. Wadhwa, in his supreme court verdict of 1999.

USE OF J. F. KENNEDY ASSASSINATION AS AN APPROPRIATE ‘CONTROL’

In the brief commentaries written in 1991–92, on Rajiv Gandhi assassination, I provided a comparison between the Kennedy assassination and Rajiv Gandhi assassination as well. Scientifically speaking, for study of any phenomenon, the investigator has to make use of a proper control. I have believed strongly that the parallels between the Kennedy assassination in 1963 and Rajiv assassination in 1991 make the Kennedy assassination as an appropriate control to compare and contrast the evolution of the ‘results’ and the incomplete nature of the evolved findings in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination. This is particularly so, related to the paucity of forensic details of the Rajiv assassination.

Now, to my parallels between the Kennedy and Rajiv assassinations, as I saw in 1992.

1. “At death, John F. Kennedy was the President of the USA, Rajiv had served one term as the prime minister of India and was awaiting a favorable election verdict to regain that position.
2. Both Kennedy and Rajiv were 46 years old, at the time of their tragic deaths.

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3. Both died in one of the southern states of their countries. Kennedy, in Dallas, Texas; Rajiv, in Sri Perumbudur, Tamil Nadu.
4. Reason for the visit to the southern states: Kennedy went to Texas, to prepare for his 1964 re-election. Rajiv was in Tamil Nadu, to campaign for the 1991 general election, to be re-elected as the prime minister.
5. Both suffered instant deaths: Kennedy, due to gun-shot wounds; Rajiv, due to bomb-blast.
6. Kennedy’s assassin was a 24-year old male, who was shot to death in an unexpected fashion inside the Dallas police station within 48 hours of his victim’s death. Details about Rajiv’s assassin, a female, is sketchy. Her age has been noted as ‘24 years’ and she met instant death like that of her victims.
7. Because the assassins did not survive longer, the attention was focused onto the person with ‘secrets’. In the case of Kennedy, it was Jack Ruby, whose real name was Jacob Rubenstein. He was seen close to the location of crime (eye witness evidence) and on Nov.24, 1963 (two days after the assassination of Kennedy), Ruby shot and killed Kennedy’s assassin. According to official records, Ruby died as a prisoner on Jan. 3, 1967, due to ‘prostate cancer’. In Rajiv’s assassination, the person with ‘secrets’ was one ‘Sivarajan’, whose real name has been traced by one journalist as Packiyachandran. He was also seen at the location of crime (photo evidence). According to the Indian police personnel, he committed suicide on Aug. 20, 1991.
8. The relationship of Jack Ruby with Mafia and Federal Bureau of Intelligence (FBI) has been probed from surviving documents. ‘Sivarajan’, who had been identified as the member of TELO till 1986, would have had contacts with the Indian intelligence agencies. This lead has not been pursued in detail yet.
9. The Warren Commission which investigated the murder of Kennedy concluded that a lone gun-man Lee Harvey Oswald killed the president. The federal institutions (military establishment, FBI and CIA) and the mafia were exonerated from the conspiracy. But the American public distrust this conclusion. In the case of Rajiv’s assassination, the Indian press and the investigating agencies (CBI, SIT and RAW) have alleged LTTE’s involvement. However, ‘the politicians, bureaucrats, academics and semi-official journalists who represent India’s political status quo’ (according to Steve Coll, in the *International Herald Tribune* of June 15, 1991) believe that ‘the CIA agents probably organized the plot to kill the former prime minister.

One should note that in the case of John F. Kennedy’s assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, so much personal information is known now. But, how about the female assassin of Rajiv Gandhi? Nine months have passed since May 21 of last year, yet nothing is known about her. The Indian press has given her a name, ‘Dhanu’. And the Dec. 15, 1991 issue of the India Today reported that

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the Special Investigation Team (SIT) had located ‘letter leads’ which ‘would prove that the assassination was ordered by Pirabhakaran’. According to this news report, ‘Dhanu, wrote to Pirabhakaran on May 10, 1991, from the LTTE’s Kodungaiyur hide-out, thanking Pirabhakaran for entrusting her with the important task’.

The humor in the ‘letter lead’ is that, the SIT and other Indian sleuths have yet to identify who this ‘Dhanu’ is. When was she born? Where did she live? Who are her kith and kin? Was she unmarried, married, divorced, separated? Nothing is known yet. She is not in the police files of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka.

Without knowing answers to all these vital questions, how did the SIT identify the purported letter the assassin has written as really an authentic one? To prove the veracity of this letter, they should first have in their hands other written documents which pre-date this purported May 10 letter. The SIT has not revealed how and where they obtained these authenticating documents, without identifying the person. If they truly succeeded in doing this, certainly the Indian sleuths can even bring Rajiv Gandhi back to life.”¹⁰

These comments and analogy were based on the then publicly available information as reported in the *India Today* of Dec. 15, 1991 and *before* the SIT filed its charge sheet on Pirabhakaran in May 1992. The letter from assassin Dhanu to Pirabhakaran, if there existed a genuine one, would have been the proverbial ‘smoking gun’ to link Pirabhakaran to the purported woman assassin of Rajiv Gandhi and hoist him as the prime conspirator. The fact that the SIT investigators produced such a ‘letter lead’ in December 1991 convincingly proves that they were indeed aiming to trap Pirabhakaran.

It is no surprise that the supreme court verdicts on the assassination trial delivered by the Justice K. T. Thomas, Justice D. P. Wadhwa and Justice S. S. M. Quadri delivered in May 1999, do not provide any evidence for such a letter from Dhanu to Pirabhakaran. Rather, two letters dated May 9, 1991 authored by Subha [the purported substitute female assassin] and Dhanu to “Dear Akila sister” and “Pottanna” were incorporated in the judgement of Justice Wadhwa, as “Exhibit for Prosecution-95” and “Exhibit for Prosecution-96.” The question arises then, whether the December 1991 revelation in the *India Today* magazine of an ‘existing letter’¹¹ from Dhanu to Pirabhakaran dated May 10, 1991 was a forgery.

A CHRONOLOGY OF INVESTIGATION INTO THE ASSASSINATIONS OF
RAJIV GANDHI

A chronology of investigation into Rajiv Gandhi assassination (court trial, Verma Commission and Jain Commission), as it evolved from 1991 to 1999, is given below.

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May 21, 1991: Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu. 17 others also lost their lives, including Dhanu (the alleged woman assassin) and Hari Babu (the freelance photographer). The names of other 15 are as follows: P. K. Gupta (personal security officer to Rajiv Gandhi), Latha Kannan, Kokilavani, Iqbal (superintendent of police), Rajakuru (inspector of police), Edward Joseph (inspector of police), Ethiraj (subinspector of police), Sundaraju Pillai (police constable), Ravi (commando police constable), Dharman (police constable), Chandra (woman police constable), Santhani Begum, Darryl Peter, Kumari Saroja Devi and Munuswamy.

May 27, 1991: Verma Commission (Justice J. S. Verma) was set up to inquire, “(a) whether the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi could have been averted and whether there were lapses or dereliction of duty in this regard on the part of any of the individuals responsible for his security; (b) the deficiencies, if any, in the security system and arrangements as prescribed or operated in practice which might have contributed to the assassination.”

Aug.20, 1991: Prime suspects Sivarasan, alleged substitute assassin Subha and five other accomplices ‘committed suicide’ in Bangalore. Thus, nine (including the alleged assassin Dhanu, photographer Hari Babu) who were alleged to have links with the Rajiv assassination had died.

Aug. 23, 1991: Jain Commission (Justice M. C. Jain) was set up to inquire, “(a) the sequence of events leading to, and all the facts and circumstances relating to, the assassination of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi at Sriperumbudur (other than the matters covered by the terms of reference for the Commission headed by Justice Verma)” and (b) “whether one person or persons or agencies were responsible for conceiving, preparing and planning the assassination and whether there was any conspiracy in this behalf and, if so, all its ramifications.”

Sept. 1, 1991: Pirabhakaran was interviewed by Chris Morris, the BBC correspondent, in Eelam.

Sept. 4, 1991: At 2115 hours, the BBC Tamil broadcast relayed the Pirabhakaran interview in which, the LTTE leader stated that “there is no connection between the assassination of Shri Rajiv Gandhi and the LTTE organization whatsoever. The Indian Government appears to tarnish their organization at international level” [Jain Commission report 1997, vol.8, chapter 49].

May 20, 1992: SIT of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) filed a 449-page charge sheet (Final Report) before the Designated Court in Madras, naming 41 persons as the accused. 26 among the 41 were Sri Lankan nationals. Pirabhakaran was listed as the first accused. Pottu Amman @* Shanmuganathan Sivasankaran was listed as the second accused. Akila @ Akilakka was listed as the third accused. The designated court Judge S. M. Siddick passed an order that none of the proceedings should be published; even the names and addresses of the coded witnesses were not allowed to be published.

*[@ refers to ‘alias’.]

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June 12, 1992: Verma Commission submitted its findings to the then Home Minister of India.

Aug.12, 1992: Tamil Nadu Special Investigation Team (TANSIT) filed a 12-page charge sheet (with 250 pages of supporting documents) in Padmanabha murder case, before the Designated Court on 26 accused. Pottu Amman was listed as the first accused. Accused 1 to Accused 17 were charged under criminal conspiracy, murder, attempt to murder etc. According to P. C. Pant, the Inspector General of Police, TANSIT, “there was no evidence to connect the involvement of the LTTE supreme Prabhakaran in this case and hence he had not been cited as an accused.” [*Hindu*, International Edition, Aug.22, 1992]

May 5, 1993: Pre-trial proceedings (arguments by the prosecution and defence lawyers) for the assassination trial began at the Designated Court, at the high-security Poona-mallee Court complex. P. Rajamanickam, the special public prosecutor who represented the SIT, narrated the facts of the case. Of the 41 charged by the SIT in May 20, 1992, three (Pirabhakaran, Pottu Amman and Akila) were designated as ‘absconding accused’. Twelve who had died among the 41 charged were designated as ‘deceased accused’. These were, S. Packiachandran @ Raghuvaran @ Sivarasan, Dhanu @ Anbu @ Kalaivani, Subha @ Nithya, S. Haribabu, Nehru @ Nero @ Gokul, N. Shanmugam @ Jayaraj, Trichy Santhan @ Gundu Santhan, Suresh Master, Dixon @ Kishore, Amman @ Gangai Kumar, Drive Anna @ Keerthy and Jamuna @ Jameela. The designated court judge S. M. Siddick listened to the prosecution case, in the presence of all the remaining 26 ‘available accused’.

Nov. 24, 1993: The Designated Court framed charges against the 26 accused. These proceedings were allowed to be covered by two news agencies — the Press Trust of India and the United News of India. The 26 accused who faced the trial were as follows:

Accused 1: S. Nalini (the only one who was present at the scene of the crime); Indian; arrested on June 14, 1991; confessional statement recorded on Aug.9, 1991.

Accused 2: T. Suthendraraja @ Santhan; Sri Lankan; arrested on July 22, 1991; confessional statement recorded on Sept.17, 1991.

Accused 3: Sriharan @ Murugan @ Thas @ Indu Master; Sri Lankan; arrested on June 14, 1991; confessional statement recorded on Aug.8, 1991.

Accused 4: Shankar @ Koneswaran; Sri Lankan; arrested on May 19, 1992; no confession.

Accused 5: D. Vijayanandan @ Hari Ayya; Sri Lankan; arrested on May 16, 1992; no confession.

Accused 6: Sivaruban @ Suresh @ Suresh Kumar @ Ruban; Sri Lankan; arrested on May 16, 1992; no confession.

Accused 7: S. Kanagasabapathy @ Radhayya; Sri Lankan; arrested on July 4, 1991; no confession.

Accused 8: A. Chandralekha @ Athirai @ Sonia @ Gowri; Sri Lankan; arrested on July 5, 1991; confessional statement recorded on Aug.29, 1991.

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Accused 9: B. Robert Payas @ Kumaralingam; Sri Lankan; arrested on June 18, 1991; confessional statement recorded on Aug.15, 1991.

Accused 10: S. Jayakumar @ Jayakumaran @ Jayam; Sri Lankan; June 26, 1991; confessional statement recorded on Aug.22, 1991.

Accused 11: J. Shanthi; Indian; arrested on May 16, 1992; no confession.

Accused 12: S. Vijayan @ Perumal Vijayan; Sri Lankan; arrested on July 8, 1991; confessional statement recorded on Sept.4, 1991.

Accused 13: V. Selvaluxmi; Indian; arrested on May 16, 1992; no confession.

Accused 14: S. Bhaskaran @ Velayudam; Indian; arrested on July 8, 1991; no confession.

Accused 15: S. Shanmugavadivelu @ Thambi Anna; Sri Lankan; arrested on May 16, 1992; confessional statement recorded on May 17, 1992.

Accused 16: P. Ravichandran @ Ravi @ Pragasam; Indian; arrested on Jan.6, 1992; confessional statement recorded on Feb.14, 1992.

Accused 17: M. Suseendran @ Mahesh; Indian; arrested on Jan.6, 1992; confessional statement recorded on Feb.14, 1992.

Accused 18: G. Perarivalan @ Arivu; Indian; arrested on June 19, 1991; confessional statement recorded on Aug.15, 1991.

Accused 19: S. Irumborai @ Duraisingam; Indian; arrested on Oct.9, 1991; confessional statement recorded on Dec.3, 1991.

Accused 20: S. Bhagyanathan; Indian; arrested on June 11, 1991; confessional statement recorded on Aug.5, 1991.

Accused 21: S. Padma; Indian; arrested on June 11, 1991; confessional statement recorded on Aug.7, 1991.

Accused 22: A. Sundaram @ Subha Sundaram; Indian; arrested on July 2, 1991; no confession.

Accused 23: K. Dhanasekaran @ Raju; Indian; arrested on Oct.13, 1991; confessional statement recorded on Nov.4, 1991.

Accused 24: N. Rajasuriya @ Rangan; Sri Lankan; arrested on Aug.28, 1991; confessional statement recorded on Oct.23, 1991.

Accused 25: T. Vigneswaran @ Vicky; Sri Lankan; arrested on Feb.4, 1992; confessional statement recorded on Feb.24, 1992.

Accused 26: J. Ranganath; Indian; arrested on Aug.28, 1991; no confession.

Jan. 19, 1994: The assassination trial began, with the examination of the witnesses. Proceedings were conducted in camera. Other notable statistics include: citation of 1,044 prosecution witnesses, examination of 288 prosecution witnesses, presentation of 1,477 documents by the prosecution amounting to almost 10,000 pages, presentation of 74 documents by the defence, presentation of 1,180 material objects by the prosecution.

May 5, 1997: Examination of 288 prosecution witnesses completed.

Aug. 1997: The Jain Commission submitted its Interim Report, consisting of 17 volumes, to the then Home Minister Indrajit Gupta. According to Prabhu Chawla of *India Today* (Nov.17, 1997), this interim report was 5,280 pages long, com-

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prising of 8 volumes of interim findings, and 9 volumes of annexures. The report carried the testimonies of 110 witnesses.

Nov. 5, 1997: Arguments in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial concluded at the Designated Court.

Nov. 8, 1997: Designated Court II judge Arumuga Perumal Adithan, acquitted 15 of the 17 accused in the Padmanabha murder case, since the prosecution had “not proved beyond any reasonable doubt” the allegations against them. Chinna Santhan was declared guilty for advising, abetting and facilitating the crime. Anandaraj was found guilty for harboring Gundu Santhan, one of the accused in the case. [as reported in the *Frontline* magazine, Nov.15–28, 1997]

Jan. 28, 1998: Designated Trial Court Judge V. Navaneetham (who had replaced Judge S. M. Siddick) delivered the judgment, convicting and sentencing all the 26 accused, who stood for trial, to death. According to the *Indian Express* of Feb.5, 1998, the judge delivered a 1,600 page verdict, which contained 10 pages of transcripts of messages exchanged between LTTE stations, primarily between March 22, 1991 and June 23, 1991.

Mar. 7, 1998: The Jain Commission submitted its Final Report, consisting of 2,000 pages.

Mar. 27, 1998: The Supreme Court stayed till ‘further orders’ death sentences of the 26 accused which have been imposed by the Designated Trial Court judge.

Sept. 1998: The Supreme Court consisting of three judges (Justice K. T. Thomas , Justice D. P. Wadhwa and Justice S. S. M. Quadri) began final hearing on appeals filed by all 26 accused, sentenced to death by judge V. Navaneetham.

May 11, 1999: Three judge bench of the Supreme Court confirmed the death sentence on Nalini (Accused 1), Santhan (Accused 2), Murugan (Accused 3) and Perarivalan (Accused 18). Death sentences to Robert Payas (Accused 9), Jayakumar (Accused 10) and Ravichandran (Accused 16), delivered at the Designated Trial Court, was altered to life imprisonment. Other 19 appellants were freed.

WADING THROUGH THE PAPER MAZE

The assassination investigation of Rajiv Gandhi generated documents which ran over 1,000 pages. A list is as follows: (1) The verdict of Trial Court judge Navaneetham — 1,600 pages, (2) Jain Commission: Interim Report — 5,280 pages, (3) Jain Commission: Final Report — 2,000 pages, and (4) Prosecution documents in the assassination trial — over 9,000 pages. It was impossible for me to get in my hand, every single page of these four documents. But, the three documents which more or less had distilled the essence of judge Navaneetham’s verdict (1,600 pages) and the submitted prosecution

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documents (exceeding 9,000) pages were studied attentively. These three documents were, namely,

1. Judgement of Supreme Court Justice D. P. Wadhwa
2. Judgement of Supreme Court Justice K. T. Thomas
3. Judgement of Supreme Court Justice S. S. M. Quadri

These judgements are made available in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) website of India, under the ‘Cases and Verdicts File’. To reproduce portions from the opening paragraph of the verdict, Justice Wadhwa:

“... A charge of conspiracy for offences under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act 1987 (TADA), Indian Penal Code (IPC), Explosive Substances Act 1908, Arms Act 1959, Passport Act 1967, Foreigners Act 1946 and the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act 1933 was laid against 41 persons, 12 of whom were already dead having committed suicide and three absconded. Out of these, 26 faced the trial before the Designated Court. Prosecution examined 288 witnesses and produced numerous documents and material objects. Statements of all the accused were recorded under Section 313 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Code). They denied their involvement. The Designated Court found them guilty of the offences charged against them. Thereafter all the accused were heard on the question of sentence. Designated Court awarded death sentence to all of them on the charge of conspiracy to murder. ‘A judicial massacre’, bemoaned Mr. Natarajan, learned senior counsel for the accused, and rightly so in our opinion. . . .”¹²

The mere fact that these three Supreme Court Justices, in their May 1999 verdicts, had overruled the (a) ‘judicial massacre’ on 22 of the 26 accused who stood for the trial, and (b) many other questionable conclusions of Designated Court judge Navaneetham, suggest that, one can bypass the 10,000-odd pages of legal muck-heap without any trepidation.

QUESTIONABILITY OF WIRELESS-RADIO INTERCEPTS

One significant point which needs emphasis in the verdict of Justice Wadhwa was his observation on the unreliability of the wireless-radio intercepts submitted by the SIT investigators to prove their involvement of LTTE in the assassination. The disinformation campaign promoted by the Indian intelligence wallahs since 1992 was gulped by Pirabhakaran’s opponents. For instance, the editorialist of the *Island* newspaper noted with glee that

“The only occasion when judicial proof was found of Prabhakaran was in the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, where Indian investigators were able to pinpoint the murder on the LTTE supremo and his intelligence chief Pottu Amman with radio intercepts.”¹³

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However, Justice Wadhwa in his verdict had doubted the validity of wireless-radio intercepts, as follows:¹⁴

1. “Suspicion however strong does not take the place of proof. Wireless messages are transmitted and received in coded language. It is nobody’s case that Robert Payas (Accused 9) knew the nature or the contents of the messages. It must not be lost sight of that LTTE had various activities and all LTTE men were not necessarily involved in achieving the object of conspiracy. Evidence shows that other LTTE activists who had come to India were also engaged in arranging houses for various purposes like housing the injured LTTE cadre, storing of medicines, etc.
2. “It appears to us that prosecution is looking at every circumstance with the proverbial jaundiced eye.”
3. “Prosecution also does not tell us the contents of the code sheets and how these were used by Murugan (Accused 3). Charge under Section 6(1A) of Indian Wireless and Telegraphy Act, must, therefore, fail.”

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Rajiv Assassination: the forensic angle

A ‘HEXAGONAL RASHOMON’

ALL THE COMPLEX details relevant to the Rajiv Gandhi assassination have not come to the surface even after a lapse of more than 13 years. Pirabhakaran, the leader of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), nominally residing in Sri Lanka, was framed as the first accused in the charge sheet produced by the SIT in May 1992 and later his status was designated as an ‘absconding accused’. I view the Rajiv Gandhi assassination as a ‘hexagonal Rashomon’. In the original *Rashomon* story of *Akutagawa*, popularized by movie director *Kurosawa, Akira*, a wife was raped followed by the murder of her husband [see, Appendix 1 for the *Rashomon* story.]. In the Rajiv Gandhi event of May 21st 1991, there was a murder of a leading man (coupled with 16 other tragic deaths) and a simultaneous suicide by a woman. The assassination of John F. Kennedy (hereafter abbreviated as JFK), which I take as a control case to analyze the Rajiv assassination, cannot match the complexity of Rajiv assassination, since the November 22nd 1963 event was only a murder of a leading man. The complexity in JFK case appeared on November 24, 1963, when the second murder (that of assassin) was committed.

The parallels between JFK and Rajiv assassinations are striking, if one equates USA and Cuba to India and Sri Lanka respectively. USA has had a troubling relationship with Cuba prior to JFK’s death, and the executive arm of USA had tried to assassinate the Cuban leader Fidel Castro, through its Intelligence agency CIA. India also experienced a troubling relationship with Sri Lanka prior to Rajiv’s death, and the executive arm of India had tried to ‘neutralize’ the Eelam Tamil leader Pirabhakaran, through its Intelligence agency RAW. Two additional features related to the puzzle of May 21, 1991 event deserve emphasis, which do not have parallels with the JFK assassination. First one being, apart from Pirabhakaran, mutual antagonism of Rajiv and the then Sri Lankan Sinhalese leader Premadasa was a complicating factor in solving the Rajiv assassination case. Secondly, unlike JFK, Rajiv did survive a humiliating assassination attempt by a Sinhalese naval rating in Colombo four years before his tragic death.

Chapter 25. Rajiv Assassination: the forensic angle

BENZENE ANALOGY

One can portray the Rajiv assassination as a ‘hexagonal Rashomon’, with six angles. These are namely, forensic science angle, political angle, judiciary angle, espionage angle, Eelam Tamil angle and Sinhalese angle. Benzene (studied in high school chemistry) is the optimal example of the hexagon structure. Thus, the benzene analogy is apt here as well. The six carbons of the benzene ring are linked with three double bonds and three single bonds and exist in a resonating form. Similarly, the six angles of the Rajiv assassination event can also be visualized as existing in a double bond — single bond combination with each other. In the benzene ring, it is not possible to point out which carbon is the leading carbon or for that matter, one cannot de-link a carbon from the others without destabilizing the entire structure. The alternating double bonds and single bonds in the hexagonal ring of benzene also apply well to the six angles of the Rajiv assassination. However, the Indian operatives in law enforcement and judiciary, for reasons of convenience and for covering their lapses as well as saving their butts, focused only on the LTTE angle. In this segment, I focus on the forensic science angle of the assassination and cover the other angles in the forthcoming segments.

THREE BOOKS

As of now, three books in English have appeared in India, which cover the Rajiv assassination as their main theme^{1–3}. There may be a couple of others, which were published in early 1990s in haste by hucksters to make a ‘quick buck’. These ‘quickies’ are not worth intense scrutiny, since they were published before the results of judicial inquiry. Thus, I would focus my attention on these three books. All three peddle their own spins. *Beyond the Tigers: Tracking Rajiv Gandhi’s Assassination*¹ was authored by a journalist Rajeev Sharma, with probable sponsorship (factual and/or financial) from the Indian intelligence operatives. The foreword to this book was written by Raja Vijay Karan, who was the Director of CBI, during the time of Rajiv’s death. *The Assassination of Rajiv Gandhi: Unanswered Questions and Unmasked Queries*² was ‘authored’ by Subramanian Swamy, who presumably delivered this book to save his butt. Swamy was the Minister of Law and Commerce in the lame-duck Cabinet of Chandrasekhar, at the time of Rajiv’s death. Recently, Karthikeyan, who led the Special Investigation Team (SIT), which was constituted to investigate the assassination, brought out his book entitled, ‘*The Triumph of Truth — The Rajiv Gandhi Assassination — The Investigation*’.³

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THE PROSECUTION WITNESSES

When the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial began, not much detail was known to the public about the prosecution witnesses. As one who was interested in the forensic science angle of the assassination, I had to wait till 1999 to find out the medical personnel who conducted the postmortem examinations of the victims. It was reported in the Indian news media that a total of 288 prosecution witnesses were presented. **Among these, only 144 receive citation in the judgements delivered by Justice Wadhwa⁴ and Justice Thomas⁵.** From the Supreme Court verdicts delivered by Justices D. P. Wadhwa and K. T. Thomas on May 11, 1999, I compiled the names and annotations of these 144 prosecution witnesses. Justice Quadri did not cite a single witness in his brief judgement.

I’m not sure that until now, anyone else took the trouble to compile a detailed list of prosecution witnesses. I felt that, considering the ‘secrecy component’ attached to this assassination trail during its ‘Designation Court phase in Chennai’, this list is an important item, in studying the intricacies of this particular assassination. The list of prosecution witnesses I had compiled is given below. The abbreviation PW stands for ‘Prosecution Witness’. This list is in increasing numeral order. Missing numbers denote that those witnesses did not receive any citation in the judgements of Justices Wadhwa and Thomas.

- PW-18 C. S. Ganesh, Music Director
- PW-19 D. Lakshmi Albert, Congress Party member & eyewitness on May 21, 1991
- PW-20 Dr. Ramadevi, Congress Party member & eyewitness on May 21, 1991
- PW-22 Sathyamoorthy, painter
- PW-23 Bharathi, nurse & sister of Bhagyanathan (20th accused)
- PW-27 Shanmugam, Congress Party member
- PW-29 Maragatham Chandrasekhar, Congress Party MP for Sriperumpudur
- PW-32 Anusuya, Sub Inspector of Police, Security, on duty at the Sriperumbudur meeting venue on May 21, 1991
- PW-34 Sundararajan Murali
- PW-35 Subramaniyan
- PW-52 V. Thiagarajan, Superintendent of Police, CBI
- PW-54 T. Soundara Pandian, worker at Ebenezer Stores, and employee of M.Utham Singh(PW-56)
- PW-56 M. Utham Singh, property agent and proprietor of Ebenezer Stores
- PW-57 K. Thiagarajan
- PW-58 S. Kalyan Krishnan, owner of Easwari Lodge
- PW-59 S. Raghu, of Studio Memory Makers, St.Thomas Mount, Madras
- PW-60 V. Kantha Raja @ Chokan, house owner and LTTE sympathizer
- PW-61 T. Panneer Selvam, Kavitha Driving School
- PW-62 P. Thirumathi Vimala, teacher

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- PW-63 K. Kottammal, employee of Tamil Nadu State Electricity Board & owner of No.153, Muthamil Nagar, Kodungaiyur, Madras
- PW-65 Mridula, a teacher & wife of Ranganath (26th accused)
- PW-67 L. D. N. J. Wijesinghe, Senior Superintendent of Police, Sri Lanka, & interceptor of LTTE wireless transmissions
- PW-70 Sowmya Narayanan, staff member of Telecom Department
- PW-71 M. Janarthanam
- PW-72 T. Ramamurthy, journalist
- PW-73 Devasena Raj, colleague of Padma (21st accused)
- PW-74 Meena, wife of T. Ramamurthy (PW-72)
- PW-75 N. Vasantha Kumar, artist who compiled the two volumes of ‘*Satanic Forces*’ for LTTE
- PW-77 Sankaran @ Gnani, journalist
- PW-78 T.P. Sittther, wireless operator, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India
- PW-81 Manivannan, videographer who made the tape of May 8, 1991 meeting addressed by V. P. Singh
- PW-82 J. Duraisamy Naidu, owner of No.12, Eveready Colony, Kodungaiyur, Madras
- PW-84 S. Mani, wireless decoder
- PW-85 D. J. Swaminathan, neighbor of Jayakumar (10th accused) at Kodungaiyur
- PW-86 M. Mariappan, houseworker of Shanmugham (diseased accused), Kodiakkarai
- PW-88 Delip Chordia, dealer at International Tyre Service, Mount Road, Madras
- PW-90 Rani, neighbor of Nalini (1st accused)
- PW-91 N. Moideen, salesman at Hindustan Training Co., Royapettah High Road, Madras
- PW-93 I. Suyambu, news correspondent & eyewitness of May 8, 1991 meeting addressed by V. P. Singh
- PW-94 A. K. Anbalagan, salesman at Poompuhar Handicrafts [Tamil Nadu Govt. Sales Outlet], Madras
- PW-95 R. Ravichandran, salesman at a showroom
- PW-96 N. Sujaya Narayan, colleague of Nalini at Anabond Silicons Pvt.Ltd., Madras
- PW-97 N. Chokkanathan, a distant relative of Bhaskaran (14th Accused)
- PW-98 Hashmuth S. Setal, owner of Barathi Cycle Company
- PW-99 Esylen Mantel, of Plot No.14, Eveready Colony, Kodungaiyur.
- PW-100 A. Ravindra Reddy, Manager, Komala Vilas Lodge
- PW-102 P. Veerappan, a travel agent for passports & renewal of old passports & visas
- PW-104 S. Vaidyanathan, a clerk at Sriram Travels
- PW-106 Y. R. Nagarajan, receptionist at Golden Lodge, Jaipur
- PW-107 Ramasamy, car driver
- PW-108 S. Santhana Krishnan, a friend of Hari Babu (deceased accused)
- PW-109 Jayakumari, a Sri Lankan national who arrived in India in 1986 through ‘proper channel’
- PW-111 Vijayendran, cinema actor
- PW-114 C. Vamadevan, a Sri Lankan travel agent
- PW-115 R. Ravi Srinivasan, a friend of Nalini (1st Accused)
- PW-116 M. Girija Vallabhan
- PW-117 R. Shankar, proprietor of Sriram Travels
- PW-120 V. T. Sundaramani, father of Hari Babu (deceased accused)

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- PW-121 Dr. Cecelia Cyril, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-124 Dr.M.N. Damodaran, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-127 Dr. Jishnu Mohan, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-128 Arulmani
- PW-129 Dr.N. Ramasamy, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-130 Dr.B. Santhakumar, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-132 Sasikala, teacher
- PW-133 Karpagam, relative of Suseendran (17th Accused) and wife of D. Shanmugasundaram (PW-208)
- PW-134 Dr. Veerapandian, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-146 Dr.T.S. Koshy, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-147 Dr. Amrit Patnaik, medical officer who conducted the postmortem on the dead body of suicide assassin Dhanu
- PW-149 Latha
- PW-150 Dr. Raja Venkatesh, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-151 K. Ravi Shankar, photo studio owner (owner of Hari Babu’s Chinon camera)
- PW-153 V. P. Raghunathan, manager of Union Motors, Salem
- PW-155 Dr. Kanagaraj, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-157 Lt.Col. Manik Sabharwal, bomb expert
- PW-162 Dr. A. Srinivasan, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-163 Dr. E. V. Yuvaraj, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-165 Dr. Ponnusamy, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-166 Dr. Poongothai, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-168 S.V. Krishnan, Sundaram Finance Ltd.
- PW-169 Dr. Saraswathi, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims and examined the injured
- PW-171 S. Sundari, girl friend of Hari Babu (deceased accused)
- PW-172 P. V. Francis, Commander in Indian Navy
- PW-178 A. Nageswara Rao, house owner of No.13, Park Avenue, Velan Nagar Extn., Alwarthirunagar, Madras
- PW-179 M. Gunathilal Soni, manager of retail textile shop ‘Queen Corner’, Puruswakkom, where a chooridar (orange and green color) was sold on May 11, 1991
- PW-182 Dr. Ramesh Kumar, medical officer who conducted postmortem of victims

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- and examined the injured
- PW-183 K. Varadarajan, autorickshaw driver at Thiruvallur
- PW-185 P. G. Abeykoon Bandara, Deputy Controller, Dept.of Immigration and Emigration, Sri Lanka
- PW-186 Brigadier Vivek Sapatnekar, IPKF Operations, Sri Lanka
- PW-187 P. S. Padmanaban, a student of Madras Institute of Engineering Technology
- PW-189 Gajalakshmi
- PW-194 Dr.R. Kuppusamy
- PW-195 R. Nagarajan, Congress Party member in Thiruvallur
- PW-196 Ramkumar, partner of Krishna Hotel, New Delhi
- PW-197 Dr. Claud Fernandez, dentist whose clinic was visited by Murugan (3rd accused) and Robert Payas (9th accused)
- PW-198 P. Ramalingam, brother in law of Hari Babu (deceased accused) and son in law of Sundaramani (PW-120)
- PW-199 V. Kannan
- PW-200 S. Meera
- PW-203 S. Chinnamani, a salesman at Metro Square, Pondy Bazaar, Madras
- PW-205 A. Parimalam, elder sister of Hari Babu (deceased accused)
- PW-206 Lokamatha, aunt of Ravichandran (16th Accused)
- PW-208 Shanmugham Sundaram, husband of Karpagam (PW-133)
- PW-210 M. Sankari, house owner and sister of Muthuraja (an LTTE activist)
- PW-211 K. Jagannathan
- PW-213 K. Periasami, a Dravida Kazhagam activist
- PW-214 M. Chandra, a maid in the neighborhood of Kalyani Nursing Home
- PW-215 Chamundeeswari, a resident of Sriperumpudur
- PW-217 unnamed husband of PW-206
- PW-218 E. Aanjanappa, owner of house in Puttan Halli
- PW-222 K. N. Mohan, car mechanic & owner of motor garage, Bangalore
- PW-223 R. Rajan
- PW-226 R. Janaki
- PW-227 K. Premkumar, a friend of Ranganath (26th accused)
- PW-229 R. Jayashankar
- PW-230 R. Selvaraj, driver of tanker lorry on June 27, 1991, from Mettur to Madras
- PW-231 V. Radhakrishnan, Customs Dept, State Government (Tamil Nadu) & a friend of Arivu (18th accused)
- PW-232 S. Syed Ibrahim, insurance surveyor
- PW-233 K. Bharathi, nurse
- PW-234 Mangaleswaran, in charge of Rameshwaram refugee camp
- PW-235 Rose D. Nayagam, in charge of Tuticorin refugee camp
- PW-236 R. D. Kalia, Police Inspector
- PW-239 P. P. S. Dhillon, Flight Commander of the Helicopter Unit, Port Blair
- PW-242 Kasi Anandhan, member of the Central Committee of LTTE
- PW-243 Dr. L. Thirunavukkarasu, medical officer who conducted postmortem on the deceased accused, who committed suicide
- PW-244 Dr. S. Rajendran, medical officer who conducted postmortem on the deceased accused, who committed suicide
- PW-245 S. Vasudevan, cashier at petrol pump
- PW-246 Dr. S. Maghivanan, medical officer who conducted postmortem on the de-

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- ceased accused, who committed suicide
PW-247 Dr.T. Sankughavel Samy, medical officer who conducted postmortem on the deceased accused, who committed suicide
PW-252 Dr. G. J. Srinivasan, Assistant Director, Tamil Nadu Forensic Science Laboratory, Madras, and owner of No.26, Sabari Nagar Extn., Porur, Madras
PW-254 Mohanraj, wireless expert & Officer in Charge of International Monitoring Station, Perungudi, Madras
PW-255 Aveek Sarkar, journalist who interviewed Rajiv Gandhi on July 30-31, 1990, for the interview which appeared in the Sunday magazine Aug.12-19, 1990.
PW-256 A. Selvaraj
PW-258 Vazhapadi K. Ramamurthi, President Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, & later Tamilzhaga Rajiv Congress
PW-260 Nagarathinam, attending laundry business in Kodiakkarai
PW-262 K. Ramakrishnan, handwriting expert
PW-266 Venkateswaran, Investigating Officer
PW-267 Ch. Gandhi, handwriting expert, who checked the handwriting of Sivarasan (deceased accused)
PW-271 P. P. Chandrasekara Nair
PW-273 K. S. Madhavan, Sub Inspector of Police, Tamil Nadu State Police
PW-280 Dr. P. Chandrasekaran, Director, Tamil Nadu Forensic Science Laboratory, Madras
PW-281 M. Narayanan, Deputy Superintendent of Police, CBI (one of the Investigating Officers)
PW-282 Velliapandi, Inspector, CBI
PW-285 R. Sivaji, Superintendent of Police, who arrested Santhan (2nd accused)
PW-288 K. Raghothaman, DSP, CBI, SIT, Chief Investigating Officer

Even Karthikeyan has remained mum on the identity of 288 prosecution witnesses, with the exception of Madhuran (the police inspector in charge of Sriperumbudur police station) and K. Raghothaman. Karthikeyan had indicated that Madhuran was the PW-1. But regarding the identity of the remaining witnesses, excluding Raghothaman, Karthikeyan could manage with only a blanket statement, “We produced 287 more witnesses — there was a governor of state, an ambassador of India, a senior army officer, political leaders, police scientists, senior journalists, doctors, police officers and large number of commoners from Sri Lanka and India.”⁶ What was his motive in hiding the identities of these PWs?

POSTMORTEM DETAILS OF DHANU AND RAJIV GANDHI

To the students of forensic science, the absence of a single research communication on Rajiv Gandhi assassination, in the public domain after a lapse of thirteen years is a real handicap. In comparison, at the end of the first ten year period (by 1974), the control case of John F. Kennedy assassination had generated over 10 research papers. As per records available from the Medline

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database, maintained by the National Library of Medicine of USA, over 35 research papers have appeared on the Kennedy assassination.

Among the 288 prosecution witnesses, 19 medical doctors (PW-121, PW-124, PW-127, PW-129, PW-130, PW-134, PW-146, PW-147, PW-150, PW-155, PW-163, PW-165, PW-166, PW-169, PW-182, PW-243, PW-244, PW-246 and PW-247) have been identified as those who carried out the post-mortem examinations of the victims, injured persons and alleged assassin (Dhanu) and deceased accused (Hari Babu) and on May 21, 1991 and deceased accused (Sivarasan, Subha and five other accomplices) on August 20, 1991. Dr. P. Chandra Sekharan, the then director of Tamil Nadu Forensic Science Laboratory was identified as PW-280. One wonders why not even one of these 20 qualified personnel in India who were at the proper place at proper time have not bothered to present the forensic evidence to their professional colleagues in an appropriate professional journal.

From my search, I have gathered ‘bits and pieces’ of forensic details, only from the interviews granted by Dr. P. Chandra Sekharan to the Indian news media. Thus, I wish to quote some details, available from his two interviews.^{7,8} In his 1999 interview, Dr. Chandra Sekharan had stated,

“...I tried to go that night itself, but could not because of the road blocks and the riots taking place all over the city. When I reached the scene in the morning, the police had cordoned it off.

...When I inspected all the 18 bodies including Rajiv Gandhi’s —17 bodies had been identified — there was one which was just an assembling of dismembered parts. From the hair and smooth skin, the absence of body hair, it was obvious that it was a female. I even correlated minor details like the same nail polish on finger and toenails. Only the head, the left forearm and two lower limbs were there, including some torn portions. The entire right hand and trunk of the body were missing. That gave me a clue that this was a woman who was a human bomb.

When we searched further, I found pieces of a denim vest with Velcro fastenings. This gave me an indication that the bomb might have been carried in an abdominal belt. You see, when I had been in England for a month on a case some time before, I had bought a similar vest with a Velcro fastening. The final conclusion was a belt-bomb carried by a woman. This was confirmed by the photographs taken immediately after the blast. The bodies were all lying in a geometrical fashion or in lotus petal arrangement, all the feet pointing towards the centre. Normally, when human beings are knocked about above their centre of gravity, say in the chest, they fall flat. All the people standing around Rajiv had fallen around in a circle, so I concluded that the explosion occurred at a height of about three-and-a-half feet above the ground level.

Further examination revealed that the woman’s face was intact, so that anyone who had known her would be able to recognize her. But her scalp was

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avulsed, that is the fleshy portion of the back of the head was stripped off, exposing her skull neatly. This indicated that the explosives were worn on the back of her belt only. If they had been all around her waist, then the tangential force would have also stripped off her face beyond recognition. . . . In our country, it is common that if someone bends suddenly to touch your feet, you will reflexively try to stop them from doing so. This is what Rajiv was doing, so his face was exactly above her back and was completely blown off. His frontal face bones were thrown 100 metres away. His body was cremated without frontal face bones. His back was intact. By studying these injuries, I was able to put up real live models and determine the position in which she was bending over, and how he was positioned over her. It took me just over 24 hours to draw these conclusions. . . .”⁷

THE MIRACULOUS CAMERA AND ITS FILM

In the same interview, Dr. Chandra Sekharan had observed

“I was in charge of this whole crime scene until the CBI came in, so the film from [photographer] Haribabu’s camera [*who died in the blast*] was developed in my laboratory. As soon as I saw photographs of this woman in a green dress in the pictures, I was able to say conclusively that this was the lady who had been the human bomb. It was not for me to find out who she was or whom she represented, but the identification of Dhanu and Sivarasan definitely helped the police to start solving the conspiracy angle of the crime. It took me six months to produce a full crime scene reconstruction document. I used many photographs taken by press photographers just before and immediately after the crime.”⁷

On the miraculous Chinon camera and the film prints which recorded Rajiv’s final moments, I entertain some doubts. I cite two passages from Rajeev Sharma’s analysis, related to the Chinon camera and the film.

FIRST PASSAGE:

“As everybody, including the hit squad members fled after the blast, nobody noticed Haribabu’s camera. It lay on the photographer chest for quite some before a Tamil Nadu police officer, Raghavan, chanced upon it. Raghavan immediately opened the camera took out the reel and handed it over to a policeman to get it developed without any delay. . . . Haribabu’s photos exposed the LTTE on May 24 when Dhanu’s photograph was published by *The Hindu*. Next day, other newspapers published another photograph, showing Dhanu holding a garland. By now, Dhanu was the suspected suicide bomber.”⁹

SECOND PASSAGE:

“The official count of the injured persons went up to 22, two days after the explosion when Jayabalan, an amateur photographer, got himself admitted

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to a city hospital. He later told the SIT he remembered having clicked just before the explosion.

‘I saw Haribabu, another photographer, surrounded by several women. I also tried the same method from behind Haribabu and clicked once. The next moment the blast occurred. I felt a severe shock and thought for a second that there was an electric short circuit. Then something hit my leg’.

As Jayabalan bolted, he was hit again, this time on the back of his head. Blood started oozing out. ‘I cried for help and two policemen standing by the dais came forward. But as they saw a body of a police inspector, they rushed towards him’, he was quoted in the media as saying. He reached home on his own. After two days when the city became calm, Jayabalan handed over the camera with the film roll and his stained clothes to the DIG at the police headquarters. He had clicked at least eight frames. The unprocessed film he returned to the police contained the very last moments of Rajiv’s life.”¹⁰

The reported observations of photographer Jayabalan is interesting in that they tell the last moments of deceased accused Haribabu, the photographer. The Indian press had immediately published the photos said to be developed from the purported film obtained from Haribabu’s camera by police officer Raghavan. One of the penultimate prints showed the backside of alleged assassin Dhanu’s head (with flowers), with Rajiv’s face towards the camera. That would reveal that Haribabu was behind Dhanu. According to Jayabalan, Haribabu was “standing on his toes and holding his camera over his head to get pictures of Rajiv Gandhi” and that his camera was ‘lying on his chest’ when it was picked up by police officer Raghavan.

THE EXPLOSIVE FOUND IN THE BELT BOMB

According to Dr. Chandra Sekharan,

“We also determined that the explosive used was RDX, that is, the research and development explosive developed in American laboratories for military use. It is a semisolid explosive that is like *chappati* dough and can be moulded to any shape. It is very dangerous, but does not ignite until you heat it to 197 degrees. It explodes at a detonating force of 29,000 feet per second and burns in one by ten-thousandth of second. The instantaneous burning makes it detonate at a very high velocity. It does not need any kind of shell or covering like a grenade.

The people who made this belt-bomb had embedded it with 2 mm steel pellets, roughly about 10,000 (we recovered about 6,000, and many are still living with these pellets embedded in them) in number. The idea of these pellets was that they would fly at a velocity of 29,000 feet per second in all directions, and add to the damage done. So many pellets were recovered from Rajiv’s body during the post-mortem and are in the museum in Delhi now...”¹¹

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THE OUTCOME OF FORENSIC INVESTIGATION

Dr. Chandra Sekharan, in 2000, had observed:

“...In the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, I was handling the entire crime scene examination from the beginning. I reconstructed the scene of the blast with all the minute details and submitted a 100-page report with nearly 100 illustrations and photographs to CBI and the Verma Commission.”¹²

I summarise the observations made by Dr. Chandra Sekharan, and my queries as follows:

Fact 1: Following impact with the belt bomb, Rajiv Gandhi’s frontal face bones were thrown 100 meters away. [That is a pretty long distance, almost covering the two goal posts of a football arena!]

Fact 2: The explosive used in the belt bomb had a detonating force of 29,000 feet per second.

Fact 3: All those who were within the 3 meter radius of the center of explosion had died, including the freelance photographer Hari Babu, who was holding the Chinon camera above his head to click at Rajiv.

Query 1: But Hari Babu’s Chinon camera lying in his chest did not suffer any damage. The film inside the camera did not suffer any exposure damage and the ten frames shot before the explosion were retrieved. A miracle indeed, considering that the Chinon camera used by Hari Babu was also held within the 3 meter radius, and that it (with all certainty) was not protected with a hard outer layer made up of lead or some damage resistant material.

Fact 4: It took six months for him to produce a full crime scene reconstruction document. This could be interpreted as that, from May 21, 1991 to end of November 1991, the complete details on the identity and the activity of the alleged assassin Dhanu was not reconstructed in full.

Query 2: If so, on what basis, the SIT personnel and the Indian press released information on Dhanu’s identity and her links to LTTE within days of the assassination (See, for example the above-cited first passage of Rajeev Sharma’s book) and before November 1991?

Query 3: Did Dr. Chandra Sekharan carry out a confirmatory ‘blast- damage’ experiment, using the same explosive and dummy targets (within the 3 meter radius from the center of explosion) to see whether the Chinon camera worn by the freelance photographer could not suffer any damage during the blast and that the film contained in the camera would not be exposed? If so, where did he carry out such an experiment?

Fact 5: Dr. Chandra Sekharan has stated in his Nov. 2000 interview [after nine years!], that he “submitted a 100-page report with nearly 100 illustrations and photographs to CBI and the Verma Commission.”

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Query 4: Why he or none of his associates who were involved in the forensic analysis of the victims of May 21, 1991 event have not bothered to publish their forensic findings on such an important assassination, in a peer-reviewed medico-legal journal of international standing [which is abstracted in the National Library of Medicine’s, Medline database], until now? Isn’t this a professional negligence and discourtesy to other scientists?

USE OF DNA FINGERPRINTING FOR
FORENSIC INVESTIGATIONS IN INDIA

The *Deccan Herald*, in 2001, carried a Press Trust of India news feature dated ‘New Delhi, Aug.20’ which contained some relevant information about the Rajiv assassination case as presented by Dr. Lalji Singh, the Director of Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad. Excerpts:

“... Establishing the identity of Dhanu, the suicide bomber who killed former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, was another occasion when the DNA probe was used: ‘We established that the DNA found in the skull, charred muscle pieces on the suicide bomber’s belt showed identical patterns, which led us to prove that Dhanu was the bomber’. Equally crucial was comparing LTTE mastermind Sivarasan’s DNA to that of his parents who were flown in from Sri Lanka for the purpose: ‘Establishing the identity of Sivarasan was the only evidence we had to link the murder of Rajiv to LTTE’...”¹³

According to Dr. Lalji Singh, they had compared the DNAs of Sivarasan with that of his **parents** ‘who were flown in from Sri Lanka for the purpose’. Similarities in the DNA pattern of Sivarasan to that of his ‘parents’ would only prove that Sivarasan was only a progeny of his ‘parents’ and nothing about ‘linking the murder of Rajiv to LTTE’.

Now, to the interesting puzzle about Sivarasan’s parents, as noted by Dr. Lalji Singh. On Sivarasan’s origins, journalist D. B. S. Jeyaraj had published ‘an exclusive investigation’ in mid 1991 in the *Frontline* magazine, which was republished in the *Lanka Guardian*¹⁴. According to this report, Sivarasan’s mother Sivapackiyam, who is from Chavakachcheri, was alive in 1991. [Whether she is still alive in 2004 is unclear]. But Sivarasan’s father Chandrasekharam Pillai, who is from Udupiddy, had died in late 1977. This indicates that the credibility of either Jeyaraj or Dr. Singh is in jeopardy. If Jeyaraj is correct in his report, that Sivarasan’s father had died in late 1977, the male individual who was flown from Sri Lanka to India for DNA finger printing match with Sivarasan’s sample was none other than a consenting impersonator.

Contrary to the information provided by Dr. Lalji Singh in 2001, Karthikeyan had stated in his book released recently, that “In March 1992, SIT offi-

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cials got the blood samples of Sivapackiyam Chandra Sekharam and Ravichandran, the mother and brother of Sivarasan, from Colombo with the assistance of Interpol Colombo”¹⁵. If so, why the discrepancy on Sivarasan’s immediate male kin [was it father or brother?] who provided blood for DNA analysis, in the observations of Dr. Singh and Karthikeyan?

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The Lady Vanishes

‘*The Lady Vanishes*’ was an Alfred Hitchcock thriller released in 1938. In that movie, Hitchcock spun a suspense yarn revolving around a young girl on a train meeting an old lady who befriends her, and then vanishes following an accident (a flower-pot falling on the head) to the heroine. In that yarn, Hitchcock included a parade of bizarre characters such as a circus magician, a baroness, a brain surgeon, a nurse dressed as a nun, a wealthy official with his mistress, and two cricket enthusiasts who were concerned only about ‘the game’, to push the storyline about that old lady trying to deliver a coded message in a lullaby about a covert treaty between two powers.

What happened on May 21, 1991 in Sriperumbudur can be portrayed as a reverse Hitchcock’s plot, where an old lady (Maragatham Chandrasekar) was befriended by a young girl (Dhanu) and her handlers, who precipitated all the uproar with a suicidal bomb-blast that the heroine never thought would happen in her electorate. Maragatham Chandrasekar was the then sitting member of parliament representing the Sriperumbudur constituency. She had previously won the 1989 election on Congress Party ticket, by defeating K. Ganesan of DMK by a margin of 154, 551 votes. After Rajiv Gandhi assassination, she again won the 1991 election for the Congress Party, defeating K. Sundaram of DMK by a margin of 180, 572 votes.

The political drama (spun around post hoc ‘decoding’ of coded messages between the LTTE cadres in Eelam and Tamil Nadu by the invariably clever spooks of India) staged at the Trial court, Commission sittings, Interpol Red Notice on Pirabhakaran, extradition request from India, with additional ingredients such as Yasser Arafat’s prior warning on assassination, third grade intelligence ‘leads’ from Colombo, Swedish Bofors arms deals, ‘Italian connection’ from Sonia’s side, India’s ‘godman’ Chandra Swamy and his links to bizarre characters (international arms dealers, Narasimha Rao and Subramanian Swamy) in the legal, political and media arenas could have provided headache and constipation, even to Hitchcock.

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While the young assassin Dhanu literally vanished at the end of her act on May 21, 1991, Maragatham Chandrasekar died on October 26, 2001¹. Her children were Mr. Lalit Chandrasekar (who had married a Sinhalese lady) and Ms. Latha Priyakumar. Ms. Priyakumar’s name was also highlighted and linked to the events of May 21st night in 1991. She also contested the Sriperumbudur constituency in the 1996 election in place of her mother on the Congress Party ticket, but was defeated by T. Nagaratnam of DMK by a margin of 245,711 votes. Though Ms. Priyakumar also performed a ‘vanishing act’ while inquiries were progressing, this mother-daughter duo, who organized the May 1991 campaign meeting for which Rajiv Gandhi was invited to attend, were not included in the charge-sheet prepared by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of India’s CBI. This is because, they were ‘sharks’ swimming in the Tamil Nadu Congress politics for decades. But, the mother-daughter duo [Padma and Nalini, who organized the safe houses for LTTE cadres in Tamil Nadu] were listed in the charge-sheet prepared by the SIT. This is because, these two were ‘sprats’ floating in the Tamil Nadu milieu. This explains the political angle of the Rajiv assassination.

Subramanian Swamy has recorded Maragatham Chandrasekar’s role on the events of May 21, 1991 as follows:

“The meeting was organized by Mrs. M. Chandrasekhar, a Congress (I) candidate from Sriperumbudur parliamentary constituency, to canvass support for her and other Congress (I) candidates for Assembly constituencies from that area. The Sriperumbudur meeting was Rajiv Gandhi’s first regular meeting in Tamil Nadu during the election. Newspapers of May 19 carried Rajiv Gandhi’s proposed visit to Tamil Nadu including Sriperumbudur. Journey details were, however, finalized only as late as May 20. As per his programme, Rajiv Gandhi was to arrive at the venue of the meeting at 9 pm but as his aircraft developed problems in Visakhapatnam, his departure was delayed by an hour. He arrived more than an hour late. Sri Perumbudur is located at a distance of 48 km south-west of Madras on the Madras-Bangalore national highway.

Although RG told a naval officer in Visakhapatnam that it was Mrs. Maragatham Chandrasekhar who would be anxious and disappointed if he did not make it to Sriperumbudur, Mrs. Chandrasekhar on the other hand told the Jain Commission that she had never requested the meeting [Vol. I, chapter I-III, p. 68].”²

Dr. Swamy’s views deserve attention since at the time of Rajiv Gandhi assassination, he held the portfolio of Minister of Law and Commerce in the lame-duck cabinet of Chandra Shekhar. Thus, until he lost that status in June 1991, it is reasonable to infer that he would have received privileged information on the events of May 21, 1991 from official sources. Though I have

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not come across a corroborating reference (even from that of Dr. P. Chandra Sekharan, the then chief forensic scientist of Tamil Nadu) related to the dispersal of Rajiv Gandhi’s body after the bomb blast, I cite the following details stated by Dr. Swamy:

“The body of Rajiv Gandhi was flung about 1.85 metres eastwards (towards the barricade) with face downwards due to the powerful blast. His body was found intermingled with other badly mutilated bodies of policemen. When the explosion occurred, K. Ramamurthy, TNCC-I President, was on the dais and G. K. Moopanar, former party general secretary a little distance away, behind the dais. Both escaped unhurt. Mrs. Chandrasekhar who was hurt was luckily ahead of Rajiv Gandhi, but at some distance, outside the 3-metre radius killer zone.”³

Considering that politicians everywhere like to project themselves in front of cameras and videos, and that in India a leader of Rajiv Gandhi’s stature would be always surrounded by fawning local politicians, it is rather puzzling why on that critical moment of bomb blast, the three Congress Party politicians [namely, Maragatham Chandrasekar, G. K. Moopanar and K. Ramamurthy] were beyond the three-meter killer zone radius. Maragatham Chandrasekar was reported as receiving some injury, but Moopanar and K. Ramamurthy escaped unhurt. Also the location of Ms. Latha Priyakumar, another Congress bigwig and daughter of Mrs. Chandrasekar, at the time of bomb blast was not reported in detail. When Moopanar died in late 2001, he also most likely had carried some secrets with him to the grave.

POLITICAL GAME PLAYED BY THE SIT

The abduction of Kannada movie star Rajkumar by the bandit Veerappan’s gang made a splashing story in 2001 for a couple of weeks in the Indian newsmedia. When that story came to its ending with the release of Rajkumar through the mediation of P. Nedumaran, one of the leading LTTE sympathizers in Tamil Nadu, a couple of additional names were highlighted as those having camaraderie with LTTE. One of these names was Kolathur Mani alias T. S. Mani. For relevance to political angle taken by the SIT officials in the Rajiv’s assassination investigation, a 2000 commentary by L. R. Jagadheesan noted:⁴

“Very few people know that there were serious differences of opinion within the SIT on how to treat Mani’s role in the Rajiv assassination case. While some officials felt he should be booked as an accused in the case, since he had arranged the tanker lorry which carried the killers from one hideout to another, others, particularly one senior officer, felt he should not be made an accused, for two strategic reasons:

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- The SIT team reportedly took a conscious decision to avoid booking Indian politicians as accused in the Rajiv assassination case. The CBI sleuths felt naming politicians as accused would hamper the investigation and divert the attention of the case and its seriousness. Mani, being the Salem district Dravidar Kazhagam office bearer, was let off on this count.
- Senior SIT officials felt Mani was an important source of information on the LTTE’s involvement and so was not named as an accused in the case.”

The first stated reason let the ‘proverbial cat’ out of its bag, after a passage of eight years since the SIT charge sheeted 41 individuals as the accused in the Rajiv assassination trial. It is not irrational to ponder that to protect the Congress Party operatives Maragatham Chandrasekar and Latha Priyakumar, the Dravidar Kazhagam office bearer Kolathur Mani was also let off by the SIT in the Rajiv assassination trial in 1992. This was in addition to his potential use by the SIT as a ‘cheese piece’ in the trap to pry on LTTE’s activities in Tamil Nadu.

ASSASSINATION STORY IN KARUNANIDHI’S SCRIPT

M. Karunanidhi, the DMK party leader, has been a public figure in Tamil Nadu from 1952 (as a script writer to Sivaji Ganesan’s debut movie *Parasakthi*) and a prominent all-Indian politician since 1965. In a 1997 interview he granted to the *Frontline* magazine’s editor N. Ram and correspondent T. S. Subramanian following the release of interim report of Jain Commission findings, Karunanidhi had noted:

“If, I, as a writer, were asked to write a story on this assassination case, I would write it as follows: Some stories introduce a hero and a heroine, they go forward and finally end in a conclusion. Some stories begin with the climax and are then narrated in flashback. As far as this story is concerned, it is one that should begin with the climax.

How should it begin? How did the human bomb Dhanu, charge-sheeted in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, come to Tamil Nadu? Who came with her? Where did she stay and with whom did she stay? Who took her to Sriperumbudur? Who arranged the programme of Rajiv Gandhi? Who suddenly made changes in the programme? To what places did Sivarajan go in Tamil Nadu? Why could Sivarajan not be apprehended till he went to Bangalore? It is said that the place where Sivarajan stayed and was cornered in Bangalore belongs to a Congressman. What are the details?

At the place where Rajiv Gandhi died, no Congressman was injured. The persons who died there were police officers who provided him security. At

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this point of time, there was an alliance between Rajiv Gandhi’s party, the Congress (I), and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu. Why did no candidate belonging to that alliance go to the public meeting addressed by Rajiv Gandhi? After his death, why was no effort made to see the body at the airport? Not only that. When Rajiv Gandhi traveled from the airport to Chennai, though Jayalalitha was not then in town, did any AIADMK candidate who contested with Congress (I) support, or any AIADMK worker, receive him?...”⁵

MURASOLI MARAN’S QUERIES

Two Commissions of inquiry (by Verma and Jain) and two legal trials (Designated Court under TADA and Supreme Court appeal) pertaining to Rajiv assassination have now passed into history. But answers to every question raised by Karunanidhi have not been forthcoming from those who ascended to the inquisitor’s pedestal. Karunanidhi’s queries was reiterated by his nephew Murasoli Maran (a federal cabinet minister in India until his death in 2003), when the Final Report of the Jain Commission was debated in the Lok Sabha on August 5, 1998. In his concluding remarks to the debate, Maran observed:

Shri Murasoli Maran (Madras Central): “... I want to know how Sriperumbudur meeting was organized at such a short notice? How as Rajivji persuaded to accept the invitation when some senior leaders of the Congress were not enthusiastic about it? Where did the human bomb obtain local hospitality? That is very important. Whose guest was she? She could have been a guest of somebody else. How was she able to approach the target breaking the security cordon?... (Interruptions) This is called access theory. Shri K. Subrahmanian, of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis pointed out that there is unwillingness to go into those issues because of the fear that such an exercise would reflect....(Interruptions).

Mr. Speaker: Shri Maran, please conclude.

Shri Murasoli Maran (Madras Central): I would conclude shortly, Sir. There was unwillingness. I want my friends to note that if they want to get to the truth, it is very important to examine the aspect of access to the target. Generally, in the investigation of a murder case, it is very important to know as to how the murderer approached the victim. That question was not taken up at all. We are not afraid of MDMA because we have nothing to fear and nothing to hide. We know the BJP leaders for several years.... (Interruptions) We have warmed lot of these benches in this House and the other House for more than three decades. We have seen a lot of politics together. I always carried a lofty impression about the BJP leaders like hon. Prime Minister Atalji [Vajpayee] and hon. Home Minister Advaniji — I still do. But I am shocked to see how the great leaders, the tall leaders, could descend to such a low level. I am sorry for them. We understand their political compulsions. So be it! Thank you.”⁶

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MDMA is the abbreviation for the Multi-Disciplinary Monitoring Agency, formed by the Union Home Ministry of India to probe the larger conspiracy in Rajiv’s assassination, following the recommendations made by the Jain Commission in early 1998. The MDMA, referred to by Murasoli Maran, was set up by the BJP for two reasons: (1) as an exhaust valve to release the political hot air emanating from Congress Party circles. (2) to rein on Pirabhakaran’s political activities at the international forums.

PIRABHAKARAN’S STATUS IN THE RAJIV ASSASSINATION CASE

It is appropriate to analyze now the status of Pirabhakaran in the Rajiv assassination case. Since May 1992, his status has been variously described (for reasons of ignorance or malice) as absconder, accused, criminal, fugitive, proclaimed offender and suspect. Legally speaking, each of these terms has subtle difference among them and they cannot be used interchangeably. The *Black’s Law Dictionary* (5th edition) distinguishes each of these terms as follows:⁷

Abscond [or absconder]: To go in a clandestine manner out of the jurisdiction of the courts, or to lie concealed, in order to avoid their process. To hide, conceal, or absent oneself clandestinely, with the intent to avoid legal process.

Accused: The generic name for the defendant in a criminal case. Person becomes ‘accused’ within meaning of guarantee of speedy trial only at point at which either formal indictment or information has been returned against him, or when he becomes subject to actual restraints on his liberty imposed by arrest, whichever first occurs.

Criminal: One who has committed a criminal offense; one who has been legally convicted of a crime; one adjudged guilty of crime.

Fugitive: One who flees; used in criminal law with the implication of a flight, evasion or escape from arrest, prosecution or imprisonment.

Suspect: A person reputed or suspected to be involved in a crime.

Among these five terms, two (criminal and fugitive) are unapplicable to Pirabhakaran. As of now, he has not been legally convicted of the crime in the Rajiv’s assassination trial held in India. According to the legal system adopted in India, one cannot be tried in absentia. Also, he is not a fugitive. The assassination took place in India, and Pirabhakaran was not present at the scene of crime according to the collected documents and he has been residing beyond the boundaries of India since January 1987. Thus, technically the term ‘fugitive’ is nonsensical to use on Pirabhakaran. However, politicians speak nonsense, and the ex-Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake is no

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exception. In 2000, he alluded to Pirabhakaran as a fugitive with the comment, ‘When a fugitive wants to talk peace, it would be the priority of the Government to think on those lines rather than act to extradite him’.⁸

The legal documents prepared in India label him as ‘absconding accused’, combining the two terms absconder and accused. That Pirabhakaran is absconding from the Indian operatives is laughable; it can be true, if it is qualified to include the information that for valid reasons in the past, Pirabhakaran has absconded from the Indian Intelligence operatives to avoid unnecessary harassment. Also, he is not a citizen of India. Thus, he is at liberty to choose whom he should meet or not.

The description ‘accused’ also does not fit properly to Pirabhakaran’s status. According to one definition of the term ‘accused’ in the *Black’s Law Dictionary*, he has not been subjected “to actual restraints on his liberty imposed by arrest.” Though Pirabhakaran can be classified as an ‘accused’ on the description that ‘formal indictment or information has been returned against him’, the question arises whether such an indictment was personally delivered to him by a messenger from the court. Since he has been living in Eelam, beyond the jurisdiction of Indian courts, a news-release making him an ‘accused’ in the Rajiv assassination trial would not be an acceptable criterion. If facts are to be believed, Pirabhakaran was publicized as an ‘accused’ in the charge sheet prepared by the SIT in May 1992. He should have been served with court summons. And there exists no public record that Pirabhakaran accepted such a court summons from the official Indian representatives in Sri Lanka, assuming that such a document has in fact been delivered from India. In the absence of such validation, it is inappropriate to label him as an ‘accused’ with whatever prefixes. This brings us to the question of extradition of Pirabhakaran from Sri Lanka.

POLITICS OF EXTRADITION

Five selected reports and commentaries related to Pirabhakaran’s extradition to India, which appeared in the newsmedia since 1997, is provided below. The last four reports appeared in December 2000. The humor in each of the five features is self-evident.

FEATURE 1:

“Deputy Inspector General of Police (CID), T. V. Sumanasekera told newsmen here that documents pertaining to LTTE leader Prabhakaran’s extradition, which also include evidence of his alleged involvement in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination had been taken into cognizance. Mr. Sumanasekera, now attending the ongoing Interpol conference said this move followed India’s request for the LTTE chief’s extradition. He said a search was on

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for Prabhakaran who is also the prime accused in the suicide bomb attack on the Central Bank in Colombo last year. The Attorney-General is examining India’s request, he said. ‘The army after re-taking Jaffna peninsula is now in the process of liberating the main supply route from Colombo to Jaffna and after this the possibility of Prabhakaran’s arrest will improve’ Mr. Sumanasekera said.”⁹

FEATURE 2:

“In remarks possibly aimed at placating a livid opposition, Indian Home Minister Lal Krishan Advani has committed himself to extraditing Sri Lankan Tamil Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, but diplomatic sources said on Friday the idea was far-fetched. ‘It is a bit of quixotic dream if taken seriously’, said a diplomat in New Delhi. ‘Mr Advani is probably playing to an extraordinarily gullible audience’.

The diplomat’s comments complemented remarks to this correspondent complemented remarks to this correspondent two years ago by the late Sri Lankan Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike who thought that the idea to arrest Prabhakaran ‘was laughable’. ‘India wants us to arrest him when we ourselves do not know where to find him’, Bandaranaike had chuckled, in response to an Indian-inspired Interpol red corner alert for Prabhakaran.

Newspapers in Delhi quoted Advani as telling parliament on Thursday [Nov. 30, 2000] that Indian officials had visited Colombo a week ago to seek the extradition of the head of Liberation Tigers for Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The Multi-Disciplinary Monitoring Agency (MDMA) team was in Sri Lanka between Nov 13 and 23 and met the attorney general and solicitor general. . . .

Prabhakaran has been found guilty by a special trial court in India of conspiracy in the assassination of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991 by a woman suicide bomber.”¹⁰

Note: The last statement is *incorrect*. Pirabhakaran was not under trial at the Special Court which convened at Poonamalee¹¹. But, in reports about Pirabhakaran such inaccuracies are abundant due to reporter bias.

FEATURE 3:

“India has sought Sri Lanka’s help to investigate possible links between the island’s Tamil Tiger rebels and politicians in Tamil Nadu, reports said here on Sunday. New Delhi, which sought the extradition of Sri Lanka’s top Tamil Tiger supreme Velupillai Prabhakaran in June 1995, had a team of officials visiting Colombo last month for routine follow-up action, officials and diplomats said.

The *Sunday Times* said the Indian team ‘reviewed an earlier request’ that Delhi had made for the extradition of Prabhakaran, wanted in connection with the 1991 assassination of former Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi. However, another private newspaper, the *Sunday Leader*, quoted Sri Lankan attorney general K. C. Kamalasabayson as saying that Indian officials had not

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specifically asked for Prabhakaran’s extradition this time. Kamalasabayson said the Indians wanted to interview a member of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) identified as ‘Nixon’ who is in police custody here.

Calling for extradition was ‘a formal procedural exercise and was not a specific request made during the team’s visit’ Kamalasabayson was quoted as saying. Sri Lanka’s attorney general’s department was not immediately available for comment. The extradition of Prabhakaran will remain an academic question as long as the 46 year-old rebel leader remains at large. He is believed to be somewhere in the island’s north-east...¹²

FEATURE 4:

The Attorney-General of Sri Lanka, Mr. K. C. Kamalasabeyson, has said the Multi-Disciplinary Monitoring Agency (MDMA) team that was here last month did not raise extradition of the LTTE leader, Mr. Velupillai Prabhakaran. Mr. Kamalasabeyson told the *Sunday Leader* that the Indian team wanted to interrogate an LTTE suspect, Nixon, who is in custody here and was allegedly involved in the conspiracy to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi.

Though permission was refused, the Attorney-General obtained a court order permitting Sri Lanka’s CID to interrogate him and record his statement in the presence of the MDMA team. The MDMA was set up by the Home Ministry in 1998 to follow up leads that were said to have emerged from the Jain Commission of Inquiry into the Rajiv Gandhi assassination. The Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani’s statement in Parliament last week that the MDMA was in Sri Lanka to press for the extradition of Mr. Prabhakaran has already had its impact...¹³

FEATURE 5:

“... What is one to make of [Union Home Minister L. K.] Advani’s assertion in parliament that the special team that visited Sri Lanka recently had raised the Prabhakaran extradition issue and Colombo’s bland denial that it never did? The Sri Lankan authorities have gone one step further saying that they have other fish to fry than take up the extradition issue at this juncture when the peace moves are gathering momentum.

Did not the External Affairs Ministry brief Advani properly? Or is it the government’s case that the media have blown out of proportion a routine answer in the House? Who will deny that the government has egg on its face?...¹⁴

From these five features, one can itemize a few observations. (1) Pirabhakaran always offers a good copy to the newsmedia in the Indian subcontinent. (2) one should never underestimate the agony of the Sri Lankan army and its ever quotable spokesman who in 1997 predicted that the possibility of Prabhakaran’s arrest would improve with the liberation of the main supply route from Colombo to Jaffna. (3) Sirimavo Bandaranaike did possess some

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level of comprehension to quote that the idea of arresting Pirabhakaran ‘was laughable’. (4) India’s pompous mandarins wouldn’t care much about having an egg in their faces occasionally.

To sum up on Pirabhakaran’s current status in India as per Rajiv assassination trial, I am of the opinion that technically he is only a ‘suspect’ and nothing more. The *Black’s Law Dictionary* defines suspect as ‘a person reputed or suspected to be involved in a crime’ (p. 1297). It also defines ‘suspicion’ as ‘belief or opinion based upon facts or circumstances which do not amount to proof’ (p. 1298).

TORTURING OF FACTS

Since suspicion is defined as ‘belief or opinion based upon facts or circumstances which do not amount to proof’, how the SIT collected the facts, and whether it tortured vital facts pertaining to Rajiv assassination deserve analysis. James Mills wrote a perspective commentary on, ‘Data Torturing’ prevalent among scientists¹⁵. In this commentary, Mills identified two types of data torturing. These being,

- *Opportunistic data torturing*, where the analyst simply pores over the data until a significant association is found between variables and then devises a biologically plausible hypothesis to fit the association.
- *Procrustean data torturing*, where the analyst first decide on the hypothesis to be proved and make the data fit the hypothesis. The adjective ‘Procrustean’ is derived from a robber named Procrustes in Greek mythology. [According to this myth, he haunted the travelers along the road to Athens and pledged hospitality to the travelers with a magical bed that would fit any guest. When the guests came to rest on his bed, Procrustes either stretched the guests or cut off their limbs to fit them perfectly into his magical bed.]

After eleven years, it is becoming clear that the SIT operatives led by D. R. Kartikeyan basically carried out Procrustean data torturing for an year from the date of assassination to come out with their charge sheet on May 20, 1992, implicating Pirabhakaran and LTTE. Their hypothesis was ‘LTTE did it’ and they chose (or left out) data which did (or did not) fit their convenient hypothesis. The revelation in the *India Today* magazine¹⁶ that the SIT team reportedly took a conscious decision to avoid booking Indian politicians as accused in the Rajiv assassination case is a pointer to its Procrustean data torturing technique.

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Following the Supreme Court appeals verdict in 1999, Kartigeyan, the assigned chief investigating officer of SIT, was interviewed by Suhasini Haidar for the Rediff .com website, He stated that his ‘job was like that of a scientist in a laboratory’. Some excerpts:¹⁷

Question: “What is your reaction to the SC judgment that confirmed death only to 4 of the 26? Does it hurt that although the apex court praised your work, they ended up releasing 19 of the accused?”

Kartigeyan: No, it doesn’t hurt, and I would like to say at the outset that I genuinely believe that truth does prevail. My task was to find the truth behind Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination. I did that. It is not for me to convict or acquit these people. After all, that is the process of law. If it was up to me to punish the guilty, then why bother with the trial court in Madras? Similarly, if the special court’s judgment could not be overruled, then why would there be a process of appeals in the Supreme Court? In any case, from what I understand of this judgment, the Supreme Court 3-judge bench has not said these people were not guilty. They have released them because in their opinion, they were not guilty of ‘an act of terror’. And that is a matter of opinion. I mean, I might feel that Rajiv Gandhi was killed for decisions he took as the prime minister of this country, but they might feel it was a personal thing. And the fact is that they did convict 7 people.

Question: The judgment also spoke of a ‘paucity of evidence’. Were you satisfied with the extent of evidence produced during the investigations?

Kartikeyan: Look, my job was like that of a scientist in a laboratory. I can only find evidence that is already there. Me and my team worked 7 days a week, 20 hours a day for a whole year. We viewed 500 videocassettes, scanned thousands of photographs, and interrogated 5,000 people. All together, our evidence would probably fill this room. Whatever evidence was there, we produced that. But we couldn’t concoct evidence, and I refused outright to allow any doubtful information, even if it was merely to help make ‘the truth appear to be true’...”

Though, Kartikeyan had asserted that he had submitted evidence (which fit his hypothesis derived from Procrustean data torturing), other reports had appeared that he also consciously omitted data which were of political significance.

KARTIKEYAN’S OMISSIONS

Some of Kartikeyan’s omissions have been identified by Rajeev Sharma in 1998. Excerpts:¹⁸

“...Justice Verma’s report said: *This part of the report of the DIB* [relating to the then Director of Intelligence Bureau, M. K. Narayanan, who submitted a report to the then Prime Minister Chandra Sekhar on May 22, 1991,

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following his inspection of the assassination site] *mentioning the fact that scanning of video pictures was being done to identify the lady does indicate that on 22.5.91, there were available video pictures of that part of the meeting which could reveal the identification of the suspected human bomb. No such video pictures were made available by the SIT or Tamil Nadu police and it was specifically stated by the SIT chief, D. R. Kartikeyan that no other video cassettes were available with the SIT.*

The commission pointed out this unusual feature of the video cassette to the SIT chief D. R. Kartikeyan since it may have greater significance for investigation of the crime even though to the commission it amounts to absence of some useful evidence alone’. [Italics are retained as in the original.]

Kartikeyan later told the Verma panel that foreign experts were examining the cassettes to find out whether these had been tampered with to obliterate any part of the recording. The commission was told at its last sitting that the outcome of that inquiry was awaited.

The SIT produced four video cassettes before the Verma commission. The Tamil Nadu congress committee had got Rajiv Gandhi’s visit to Sriperumbudur recorded on video from the time he landed at Meenambakkam airport. But the organizers told the commission that they did not have the cassettes and believed the police had seized them.

Justice Verma said in an extremely meaningful observation: ‘The commission refrains from commenting on this aspect since it can be avoided in this inquiry but may have significance in some other proceeding’.

Two video cassettes had the recording of the May 21 event and the third of the next day. The May 21 cassettes were screened at an open hearing of the Verma commission. These were blurred at the crucial portions and neither showed the actual assassination taking place nor focused on the suicide bomber. Crucial questions arise. Was Rajiv’s assassination videographed till the very last second? Did the camera focus on the hit squad members? Who all were seated or standing near Dhanu and Sivaraman? If the cassettes were intentionally blurred, who ordered their tampering and why? Were Rajiv’s assassins standing close to any prominent person? If so, who are they?”

LATHA PRIYAKUMAR’S EVASION

One of the eye-witnesses to the Rajiv assassination who evaded inquisition was Ms. Latha Priyakumar, the daughter of Mrs. Maragatham Chandrasekar. She does not even receive mention by name in Subramanian Swamy’s book on the assassination. Considering the personality of Swamy who needles everyone at the slightest occasion, this omission is surprising. But, Rajeev Sharma’s provided details on the discomfort faced by Ms. Latha Priyakumar during the hearings of Verma Commission. According to Rajeev Sharma,

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“It was Kumudavalli, a Congress party member, who put Latha Priyakumar in the dock. She filed an affidavit before the Verma commission stating she saw Latha Kannan and Kokila (the mother-daughter duo who were in the receiving line of Rajiv before Dhanu, and Kokila was the one who was scheduled to read a Hindi poem to Rajiv) getting off from Latha Priyakumar’s car at the public meeting venue at Sriperumbudur on May 21, 1991. Later she saw Kannan and Kokila talking with Dhanu and Sivarasan, while they waited for Rajiv.

Did Latha Priyakumar actually help Kokila gain access to Rajiv? Justice Verma says this by itself might not be of much significance. In a clear indictment of Latha Priyakumar, he says: ‘Latha Priyakumar does not appear to be a credible witness. Her deposition does not appear to be forthright and she gave the impression of withholding some knowledge she has’.

C. S. Vaidyanathan, counsel for [police] officers of Tamil Nadu, blamed Latha Priyakumar for breach of access control by securing permission for Kokila to recite a poem from the queue of garlanders which took more time than the act of garlanding. This detained Rajiv increasing the risk to him, he argued.

Latha Priyakumar insisted she reached the venue only after 9 pm even though witnesses, including Lakshmi Albert, said she was present from 8.30 pm. Priyakumar admitted having left between Arakkonam at 7 pm and 7.30pm in a taxi for Sriperumbudur. Rajiv’s meeting was scheduled for 9 pm and she had to cover about 40 to 45 kilometres, she could not have taken more than an hour to reach the venue.

Says Justice Verma: ‘She tried to evade this question by saying that she was sleeping throughout the way even though the road was bumpy and, therefore, she did not even know the route which her taxi took. There were certain suggestions made to her which relate to matters outside the scope of this inquiry’.

The Verma commission did not go deep into the alleged role of Latha Priyakumar and did not even consider the affidavit of Kumudavalli because of its terms of reference.¹⁹

Then Rajeev Sharma had described in a paragraph the lack of action taken by the inquisitors on witness Kumudavalli’s incriminating affidavit. To quote,

“Justice Verma had sent Kumudavalli’s affidavit and other important documents to the MHA [Ministry of Home Affairs], noting that these pertained to matters outside the scope and purview of his inquiry. He had also clearly said in his noting that these papers could have an important bearing on the case and the needful could be done. This was in 1992. But nothing much appeared to have happened in this direction in the last six years. Kumudavalli has neither been questioned by the SIT nor the trial court. She deposed before the Jain commission as late as in July 1996. It is still not known what is the

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outcome of investigation into Kumudavalli’s disclosures, if any investigation has been conducted, that is.”²⁰

It would be too much to expect any proper investigation on Kumudavalli’s disclosures if Kartikeyan, the leader of SIT, had trusted the powers of Procrustean data torturing. A credible proven link between the ‘suspected LTTE operatives’ and the Congress Party bigwigs in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka would be like a fire in the basement of Congress palace. Until 1996, the Congress Party was in power in India under the leadership of uncharismatic Narasimha Rao, a wily survivor of many a factional battles from the Southern India. Thus political compulsion demanded that Kartikeyan take the easy route to ‘quickly solve the murder mystery’ by implicating only LTTE and Pirabhakaran, but conveniently ignoring the links of Latha Priyakumar.

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Rajiv Assassination: verdict of Justice Quadri

‘He will lie, sir, with such volubility that you would think truth were a fool’

— SHAKESPEARE
in *All’s well that ends well*, IV, iii.

CALIBRATING THE JUSTICE SCALE IN INDIA

IN SCIENCE, the first step carried out before one measures any parameter is calibration of the instrument or equipment to check whether the measurements obtained by the instrument will bring accurate and precise data. This calibration step is vital to the success of any experiment or even for any measurement taken at home such as one’s weight or body temperature. Similarly, it is appropriate to calibrate the ‘justice scale’ first before analyzing the verdict of the Rajiv assassination trial.

Knowing a little about the status of Indian judiciary as it existed in 1992 is a simple calibration step. A critical feature by Rahul Pathak and Anirudhya Mitra in the *India Today* magazine, which appeared at the same time when the charge sheet prepared by SIT identified 41 accused in the Rajiv assassination trial, focused on three major problems eroding the worth of Indian judiciary¹. These were, namely, (1) politicization, (2) corruption, and (3) system overload. Among the three, the details presented under the politicization problem is excerpted below:

“...A whole industry of touts and fixers has grown around the buzz that judgements can be bought. Smugglers from all over rush to certain high courts where they believe relief will be easily available.... Now, political interference is no longer a surreptitious exercise. It is stated policy.... Politicians are forever looking for a higher judiciary that they can control. There is a kind of quid pro quo between them. As each helps the other, both are forced to overlook misdemeanours and improprieties. A perfect example of the pitfalls of this arrangement surfaced early last year [i.e, 1991] when Rajiv Gandhi placed a secret call to Rabi Ray, then Speaker of the Lok Sabha. The impeachment motion against Justice Ramaswamy had just been initiated.

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Rajiv told the Speaker that Ramaswamy had been appointed chief justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court because he had promised to be ‘strict’ in granting bail to militants. He had kept his word and done a signal service to the nation. Rabi Ray was asked to keep this in mind while dealing with the motion. . . .

Judges retire at 65 and are entitled a maximum pension of Rs. 4, 500 a month. Many need perks like commissions of inquiry. But there are also other carrots politicians dangle. . . . Sometimes, the carrot being dangled in front of a judge becomes a gun pointed at his head. The perks referred to are political appointments such as Congress Party nomination to the Rajya Sabha. Eminent lawyer and former law minister Shanti Bhushan says the entire tragedy of the country has been that judges have tried to anticipate what the Government expects of them.”

Since no credible criticism appeared in the *India Today* magazine to contradict the report, one can safely assume that the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial also was burdened with the three problems (politicization, corruption and system overload) identified by Pathak and Mitra which have been corroding the Indian judiciary system. This need to be kept in mind in interpreting the verdicts delivered in the Rajiv assassination trial. The third problem — *i.e.*, system overload — was visibly evident from the years consumed for completion of the assassination trial and its appeal. The problems of politicization and corruption couldn’t be understated as well.

SUPREME COURT VERDICT OF JUSTICE S. S. M. QUADRI

In this chapter, the supreme court verdict of Justice Quadri is highlighted for three specific reasons. First, of the three verdicts, it was the briefest. Secondly, Justice Quadri provided a clear summary of (a) what the trial was, (b) what were the charges and (c) how it progressed. Thirdly, probably not to confuse the political issues and the affiliated bias, Justice Quadri has not mentioned Pirabhakaran’s name even once.

SUMMARY OF THE ASSASSINATION TRIAL

In the words of Justice Quadri,²

“On June 26, 1992, after a lengthy investigation, the SIT filed charge sheet in respect of offences under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987 (TADA), Indian Penal Code, 1890 (IPC), Explosive Substances Act, 1908, Arms Act, 1959, Passport Act, 1967, Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933, against 41 persons, 12 of them died (2 in the blast and 10 having committed suicide) and three were declared absconding.”

Chapter 27. Rajiv Assassination: verdict of Justice Quadri

Only reference by Justice Quadri to Pirabhakaran’s status in the case is the last statement. Then, he lists the names of 26 accused, coded 1 to 26 with the prefix ‘A’. “The case was thus tried against the following 26 accused persons: A-1 (S. Nalini), A-2 (T. Suthendraraja @ Santhan), , A-3 (Sriharan @ Murugan @ Thas @ Indu Master), A-4 (Shankar @ Koneswaran), A-5 (D. Vijayanandan @ Hari Ayya), A-6 (Sivaruban @ Suresh @ Suresh Kumar @ Ruban), A-7 (S. Kanagasabapathy @ Radhayya), A-8 (A. Chandralekha @ Athirai @ Sonia @ Gowri), A-9 (B. Robert Payas @ Kumaralingam), A-10 (S. Jayakumar @ Jayakumaran @ Jayam), A-11 (J. Shanti), A-12 (S. Vijayan @ Perumal Vijayan), A-13 (V. Selvaluxmi), A-14 (S. Bhaskaran @ Velayudam), A-15 (S. Shanmugavadivelu @ Thambi Anna), A-16 (P. Ravichandran @ Ravi @ Pragasaam), A-17 (M. Suseendran @ Mahesh), A-18 (G. Perarivelan @ Arivu), A-19 (S. Irumborai @ Duraisingam), A-20 (S. Bhagyanathan), A-21 (S. Padma), A-22 (A. Sundaram), A-23 (K. Dhanasekaran @ Raju), A-24 (N. Rajasuriya @ Rangan), A-25 (T. Vigneswaran @ Vicky), A-26 (J. Ranganath). Thirteen of these accused are Sri Lankan and an equal number comprises of Indians.”

CHARGES

Justice Quadri had categorized the charges against these 26 accused as follows:

“The Designated Court framed as many as 251 charges of which Charge No. 1 is common to all the accused for the other 250 charges, accused are charged separately under different heads. For the sake of brevity, all charges can be conveniently classified under three categories:

- Under Section 120-B read with Section 302 IPC
- Under Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the TADA Act; and
- – Under various provisions of IPC
 - Under Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Explosive Substances Act, 1908;
 - Section 25 of the Arms Act, 1959;
 - Section 12 of the Passport Act, 1967;
 - Section 14 of the Foreigners Act, 1946;
 - Section 6(1A) of the Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933.”

[Note: IPC refers to Indian Penal Code]

Supporting materials used to prove the Charges

“ To bring home the guilt of the accused in respect of the charges framed against each of them, the prosecution placed on record confessions of seventeen accused and also plethora of evidence. It examined 288 witnesses exhibited 1448 documents, marked Exs. P-1 to P-1448.”

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VERDICT OF THE DESIGNATED COURT AND THE DETAILS OF APPEAL

“The Designated Court, on consideration of the material placed before it, found all the twenty six accused guilty of all the charges framed against them and awarded punishment of fine of varying amounts, rigorous imprisonment of different period and sentenced all of them to death. The Designated Court referred the case to this Court for confirmation of death sentence of al the convicts, numbered as Death Reference No. 1 of 1998. The convicts filed appeals, Criminal Appeals 321 to 324 of 1998, against their conviction for various offences and the sentence awarded to them. These cases were heard together.

Mr. Natarajan, learned senior counsel for the appellants (except Appellant No. 15), assisted by the team of able and thoroughly prepared instructing counsel, Mr. Subramaniam for the appellant No. 15 and Mr. Altaf Ahmed, learned Additional Solicitor General for the Prosecution, assisted by competent and proficient advocates and departmental officers, very ably and exhaustively argued the cases for over three months.”

Regarding the conviction of the appellants for offences mentioned in Category ‘C’ noted above, the learned counsel for appellants submitted that they were not pressing the appeals on that aspect as all the appellants had served out the sentence thereunder.

JUSTICE QUADRI’S VERDICT

“The conviction of appellants under the provisions of TADA Act, noted in category ‘B’ above, had been found to be unsustainable by my learned brethren [i.e., Justice Wadhwa and Justice Thomas] in their separate opinions and I am in respectful agreement with the same.”

Thus, the charge under Category ‘B’ was overturned for appellants. The difference of opinions among Justice Wadhwa, Justice Thomas and Justice Quadri were related to the charge under Category ‘A’, Section 120-B read with Section 302 IPC. On this issue, Justice Quadri had recorded his observations, among which, I present the emphatic ones in ten numbered sequences.

OBSERVATION 1

“There is no controversy about the horrible occurrence of human bomb blast in Sriperumbudur in the night of May 21, 1991 causing death of Shri Rajiv Gandhi and eighteen others and grievous injuries to 43 persons. The controversy is about who are responsible for this horrendous crime? The question is whether the conviction of the appellants or any of them under Section 120-B r/w 302 IPC is sustainable in law and in respect of whom the punishment of death sentence can be confirmed.

To record conviction under Section 120-B, it is necessary to find the accused guilty of criminal conspiracy as defined in Section 120-A of IPC which reads

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as under: ‘120A. *Definition of criminal conspiracy* — When two or more persons agree to do, or cause to be done — (1) an illegal act, or (2) an act which is not illegal by illegal means, such an agreement, is designated a criminal conspiracy; provided that no agreement except an agreement to commit an offence shall amount to a criminal conspiracy unless some act besides the agreement is done by one or more parties to such agreement in pursuance thereof.

Explanation — It is immaterial whether the illegal act is the ultimate object of such agreement, or is merely incidental to that object’

The ingredients of the offence of criminal conspiracy are: (i) an agreement between two or more persons; (ii) the agreement must be related to doing or causing to be done either (a) an illegal act; or (b) an act which is not illegal in itself but is done by illegal means. The proviso and the explanation are not relevant for the present discussion.

Though the meeting of minds of two or more persons for doing/or causing to be done an illegal act or an act by illegal means is a *sine qua non* of the criminal conspiracy yet in the very nature of the offence which is shrouded with secrecy no direct evidence of the common intention of the conspirators can normally be produced before the Court. Having regard to the nature of the offence, such a meeting of minds of the conspirators has to be inferred from the circumstances proved by the prosecution, if such an inference is possible.”

OBSERVATION 2

“The agreement, sine qua non of conspiracy, may be proved either by direct evidence which is rarely available in such cases or it may be inferred from utterances, writings, acts, omissions and conduct of the parties to the conspiracy which is usually done. In view of Section 10 of the Evidence Act anything said, done or written by those who enlist their support to the object of conspiracy and those who join later or make their exit before completion of the object in furtherance of their common intention will be relevant facts to prove that each one of them can justifiably be treated as a conspirator.”

OBSERVATION 3

“To establish the charge of conspiracy to commit the murder of Shri Rajiv Gandhi, reliance is placed mainly on seventeen confessional statements made by the accused persons. The confessions of the accused persons have been recorded under Section 15(1) of the TADA Act. Before adverting to the confessional statements, it is necessary to consider the incidental questions as to whether they can be used against the appellants for the charge under Section 120-B read with Section 302, IPC when the accused are found to be not guilty of various offences under the TADA Act.”

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OBSERVATION 4

“[Justice] Thomas took the view that the confession of an accused is a substantive evidence as against the maker thereof but it is not so as against the co-accused, abettor or conspirator against whom it can be used only as corroborative evidence. [Justice] Wadhwa took the contrary view; according to him, confession of an accused is a substantive evidence against himself as well as against co-accused, abettor or conspirator.”

OBSERVATION 5

“In regard to evidential value of confessions both academicians and Judges have expressed conflicting opinions.”

OBSERVATION 6

“... I respectfully differ from the view taken by brother [Justice] Thomas in his judgment in this case and in respectful agreement with the view expressed by brother [Justice] Wadhwa in his judgment that a confession of an accused under Section 15(1) of the TADA Act is substantive evidence against the co-accused, abettor or conspirator jointly tried with the accused.

But I wish to make it clear that even if confession of an accused as against co-accused tried with accused in the same case is treated ‘substantive evidence’ understood in the limited sense of fact in issue or relevant fact, the rule of prudence requires that the court should examine the same with great care in so far as use of confession of an accused against a co-accused is concerned, rule of prudence cautions the judicial discretion that it cannot be relied upon unless corroborated generally by other evidence on record.”

OBSERVATION 7

“Now advertent to merits of the appeals, learned brother [Justice] Thomas, having considered the confession..., meticulously examined other oral and documentary evidence in support of such confessional statement and found A-1 (Nalini), A-2 (Santhan), A-3 (Murugan), A-9 (Robert Payas), A-10 (Jayakumar), A-16 (Ravichandran) and A-18 (Arivu) guilty of offences under Section 120-B read with Section 302 IPC and altered death sentence of A-1, A-9, A-10 and A-16 to life imprisonment while confirming death sentence of A-2, A-3 and A-18. Brother [Justice] Wadhwa on consideration of all the aforementioned confessions and other evidence against the appellants confirmed conviction of only A-1, A-2, A-3 and A-18 under Section 120-B read with Section 302 IPC and confirmed death sentence of all of them while acquitting all other appellants.

... I consider it appropriate to record my respectful agreement with the reasoning and conclusion arrived at by [Justice] Thomas in confirming the conviction of A-1, A-2, A-3, A-9, A-10, A-16 and A-8 for the aforementioned offences.”

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OBSERVATION 8

“On applying the well-settled principles laid down by this Court, Brother [Justice] Thomas felt that the confirmation of death sentence awarded by the Designated Court to A-2, A-3 and A-18 is justified whereas brother [Justice] Wadhwa on the same principles confirmed the death sentence awarded by the Designated Court to A-1, A-2, A-3 and A-18. So far as the confirmation of death sentence of A-2, A-3 and A-18 is concerned both the learned brethren concur and I record my respectful agreement with their conclusions. The difference of opinion between them is regard to confirmation of death sentence of A-1. It is now my view which determines the result of this issue.”

OBSERVATION 9

“I am convinced that the facts of this case are uncommon. A crime committed on Indian soil against the popular national leader, a former Prime Minister of India, for a political decision taken by him in his capacity as the head of the executive and which met with the approval of the Parliament, by persons running political organisation in a foreign country and their agents in concert with some Indians for the reason that it did not suit their political objectives and of their organization, cannot but be a ‘rarest of the rare’ case.... The conspirators including A-1 (Nalini) had nothing personal against him but he was targeted for the political decision taken by him as the Prime Minister of India.... For a person like A-1, taking into consideration all the mitigating circumstances, in my view, there is no room for any leniency, kindness and beneficence.... Therefore, with respect I concur with brother [Justice] Wadhwa in confirming the death sentence of first appellant A-1 (Nalini) awarded by the Designated Court.”

OBSERVATION 10

“In the result I agree with brother [Justice] Thomas and set aside the conviction of all the appellants recorded by the Designated Court for offences under the TADA Act mentioned in category ‘B’ and also the conviction A-4 (Shankar @ Koneswaran), A-5 (D. Vijayanandan @ Hari Ayya), A-6 (Sivaruban @ Suresh @ Suresh Kumar @ Ruban), A-7 (S. Kanagasabapathy @ Radhayya), A-8 (A. Chandralekha @ Athirai @ Sonia @ Gowri), A-11 (J. Shanthi), A-12 (S. Vijayan @ Perumal Vijayan), A-13 (V. Selvaluxmi), A-14 (S. Bhaskaran @ Velayudam), A-15 (S. Shanmugavadivelu @ Thambi Anna), A-17 (M. Suseendram @ Mahesh), A-19 (S. Irumborai @ Duraisingam), A-20 (S. Bhagyanathan), A-21 (S. Padma), A-22 (A. Sundaram), A-23 (K. Dhanasekaran @ Raju), A-24 (N. Rajasuriya @ Rangan), A-25 (T. Vigneswaran @ Vicky), A-26 (J. Ranganath) for the offences under Section 120-B read with Section 302 IPC. Their appeals are accordingly allowed. Agreeing with brother [Justice] Thomas, I confirm the conviction of A-1 (Nalini), A-2 (Santhan) and A-3 (Murugan), A-9 (Robert Payas), A-10 (Jayakumar), A-16 (Ravichandran) and A-18 (Arivu) finding them guilty of offences under Section 120-B read with Section 302 IPC. On the facts and in

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the circumstances, I am also of the same view as expressed by brother [Justice] Thomas, that it is not a fit case to confirm the death sentence awarded to A-9 (Robert Payas), A-10 (Jayakumar) and A-16 (Ravichandran) and their death sentence is commuted to life imprisonment and their appeals are allowed to this extent.”

The merits in Justice Quadri’s verdict are that it is brief and devoid of political cant. He delivered his opinion, based on the submitted judicial evidence. Thus, his verdict fails to mention Pirabhakaran’s name even once. This confirms the fact that Pirabhakaran was not under trial between 1992 and 1999 in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

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JUSTICE K. T. THOMAS ON CORRUPTION IN INDIA

IN THE PREVIOUS chapter, the three major problems (*viz.* politicization, corruption and system overload) which have been eroding the worth of Indian judiciary were highlighted. While the problem of system overload was visibly evident from the time taken for completion of the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial, the other two problems of politicization of judiciary and corruption cannot be understated. Thus, the 2001 observations made by Justice K. T. Thomas (one of the three Supreme Court Judges, who heard the appeal on Rajiv assassination trial), on the intermarriage of politics and corruption in current India is very pertinent.

The title of Justice Thomas’s second D. P. Kohli Memorial Lecture, delivered on April 1, 2001 was, *Anatomy and Epidemic of Corruption*. The law enforcement officials (Central Bureau of Intelligence) in New Delhi were his audience. He stated,

“... The only solace I had was when I read a news-item that a society called Transparency International conducted a study of corruption level in various countries of the world. They found India as the 10th highest corrupt country in the world. Why I felt it as a solace is, because there are nine other countries in the world, which are more corrupt than India. I thought then about the lamentable situation of those other countries because I myself was lamenting about my own country’s pitiable position....

Politics in India means a very influential instrument because politics can make and unmake Governments. In our constitutional scheme Government is very powerful and it has the exchequer at its command as well authority to create sources for augmenting the funds for the exchequer. So power brokers could also become financially powerful. All will agree that such assets are the repository of many corruptly acquired money. There is no legal provision now to deal with such power brokers....”¹

These general observations have pregnant meaning, and it is anybody’s guess that how the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial itself was influenced by

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the politicization of judiciary and corruption problems among the law enforcement personnel, as pointed out by Justice Thomas. While it is difficult to make accusing fingers directly on those who were involved in every phase of the Rajiv assassination trial, even circumstantially one cannot infer that politicization and corruption of law enforcement and Intelligence personnel in India are non-existent problems. Otherwise, Justice Thomas wouldn't have chosen such an appropriate theme as his lecture! Now, to Justice Thomas's verdict on the appeal of Rajiv assassination trial.

VERDICT OF JUSTICE THOMAS

The verdict of Justice Thomas in the Rajiv assassination trial appeal was in the medium length range, between the verdicts of Justice D. P. Wadhwa and Justice Quadri. He summarized 'prosecution case' as follows:²

“A criminal conspiracy was hatched and developed by the hardcore LTTE cadre which spread over a long period of 6 years commencing from July 6, 1987 and stretching over till May 1992. The main objects of the conspiracy were: (1) to carry out acts of terrorism and disruptive activities in Tamil Nadu and other places in India during the course of which to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi and others, (2) to cause disappearance of evidence thereof, (3) to harbour all the conspirators living in India and (4) to escape from being apprehended and to screen all those who were involved in the conspiracy from legal consequences.”

ON PIRABHAKARAN'S STATUS IN THE ASSASSINATION TRIAL

Justice Thomas stated,

“On completion of the investigation the CBI laid charge-sheet against all the 26 appellants besides Veluppillai Piribhakaran (the Supremo of LTTE), Pottu Omman [sic] (the Chief of intelligence wing of LTTE) and Akila (Deputy Chief of intelligence) for various offences including the main offence under Section 302 read with Section 120-B and Sections 3 & 4 of the TADA. . . .

All steps taken to apprehend three of the main accused (1) Veluppillai Piribhakaran (2) Pottu Omman and (3) Akila did not succeed and hence they were proclaimed as absconding offenders. . . .”

WHAT IS TERRORISM, ACCORDING TO TADA OF INDIA?

Though the following extract is legalese and somewhat lengthy, I wish to reproduce it for reasons of continuing current interest on 'what is terrorism'. As it is seen in Indian law under TADA, according to Justice Thomas,

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“ ‘Terrorist act’ is defined in Section 2(1) of the TADA, by giving ‘the meaning assigned to it in sub-section (1) of Section 3’ and the expression ‘terrorist’ is mandated to be construed accordingly. It is therefore necessary to look at Section 3(1) more closely. We may extract the first three sub-sections of Section 3:

1. Whoever with intent to overawe the Government as by law established or to strike terror in people or any section of the people or to alienate any section of the people or to adversely affect the harmony amongst different sections of the people does any act or thing by using bombs, dynamite or other explosive substances or inflammable substances or fire-arms or other lethal weapons or poisons or noxious gases or other chemicals or by any other substances (whether biological or otherwise) of a hazardous nature in such a manner as to cause, or as is likely to cause, death of, or injuries to, any person or persons or loss of, or damage to, or destruction of, property or disruption of any supplies or services essential to the life of the community, or detains any person or threatens to kill or injure such person in order to compel the Government or any other person to do or abstain from doing any act, commits a terrorist act.
2. Whoever commits a terrorist act, shall,
 - if such act has resulted in the death of any person, be punishable with death or imprisonment for life and shall be liable to fine;
 - in any other case, be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than five years but which may extend to imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to fine.
3. Whoever conspires or attempts to commit, or advocates, abets, advises or incites or knowingly facilitates the commission of, a terrorist act or any act preparatory to a terrorist act, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than five years but which may extend to imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to fine.

A reading of the first sub-section shows that the person who does any act by using any of the substances enumerated in the sub-section in any such manner as are specified in the sub-section, cannot be said to commit a terrorist act unless the act is done with intent to do any of the four things:

1. to overawe the Government as by law established; or
2. to strike terror in people or any section of the people; or
3. to alienate any section of the people; or
4. to adversely affect the harmony amongst different sections of the people.

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When the law requires that the act should have been done ‘with intent’ to cause any of the above four effects such requirement would be satisfied only if the dominant intention of the doer is to cause the aforesaid effect. It is not enough that the act resulted in any of the four consequences.”

VERDICT ON CONVICTION FALLING WITHIN THE CHARGE UNDER
SECTION 3 OF TADA

Justice Thomas’s verdict on conviction falling within the charge under Section 3 of TADA. This following excerpt is relevant since it includes details about Pirabhakaran’s views related to LTTE’s relationship with India. According to Justice Thomas,

“Learned Additional Solicitor General endeavoured to show that the intention of the conspirators was to overawe the Government of India. His contention was that assassination of Rajiv Gandhi was a follow up action for restraining the Government from proceeding with the implementation of India-Sri Lanka Accord. In other words, the focus of the conspirators was the Government of India and Rajiv Gandhi was targeted to deter that focal point, according to learned Additional Solicitor General. This contention can be examined by a reference to the evidence in this case.

It is true, LTTE leaders were bitterly critical of ‘India-Sri Lanka Accord’ which was signed on 22-7-1987 [*i.e.* July 22, 1987. *Note: This is an error. The Accord was signed between Rajiv Gandhi and J. R. Jayewardene on July 29, 1987.*]. Any one criticized the policy of a Government could not be dubbed as a terrorist unless he had done any of the acts enumerated with the object of deterring the Government from doing anything or to refrain from doing anything.

Velupillai Pirabhakaran addressed a meeting on 4–8–1987 [*i.e.* August 04, 1987], the text of the speech was published which is marked in this case as Ext. 354. In the said speech he used strong language to criticize ‘India-Sri Lanka accord’ and the manner in which it was made. But no word of hatred was expressed towards the Government of India though he aired his opposition towards Sri Lankan Government which he described as ‘Sinhala racist government’. He also spoke bitterly against the Sri Lankan Tamil leaders who supported the Accord. About the Indian Government and its Prime Minister the LTTE supreme said the following:

‘The Indian Prime Minister offered me certain assurances. He offered a guarantee for the safety and protection of our people. I do have faith in the straightforwardness of the Indian Prime Minister and I do have faith in his assurances. We do believe that India will not allow the racist Sri Lankan State to take once again to the road of genocide against the Tamils. It is only out of this faith that we decided to hand over our weapons to the Indian peace keeping force’.

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It must be remembered that political changes which occurred in India thereafter had brought a new Government under the leadership of V. P. Singh as Prime Minister in 1989. The IPKF inducted into Sri Lanka was gradually withdrawn in a phased manner, which process was commenced during the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi himself and continued during the Prime Ministership of V. P. Singh. The attitude of LTTE towards Government of India, during the aforesaid period, can be seen from what their own official publication *Voice of Tigers* had declared in its editorial column in the issue of the said journal dated 19-1-1990 (which is marked as Ext. 362). The editorial reads as follows:

‘In the meantime, the defeat of Rajiv Congress Party and the assumption of power of the National Front alliance under Vishwanath Pratap Singh has given rise to a sense of relief and hope to the people of Tamil Eelam. The LTTE has already indicated to the new Indian Government its desire to improve and consolidate friendly ties with India. The new Indian leadership responded positively according to Mr. Karunanidhi, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, the role and responsibility of mediating with the Tamil Tigers. The LTTE representatives who had four rounds of talks with the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister in Madras, are firmly convinced that the Tamil Nadu Government and the new Indian administration are favourably disposed to them and the V. P. Singh’s government will act in the interests of the Tamil speaking people by creating appropriate conditions for the LTTE to come to political power in the North-Eastern Province’.

The above editorial is a strong piece of material showing that LTTE till then did not contemplate any action to overawe the Government of India. Of course the top layer of LTTE did not conceal their ire against Rajiv Gandhi who was then out of power.

In this context it is important to point out what Veluppillai Piribhakaran, who went underground in Sri Lanka and resurfaced on 1-4-1990 [*i.e.* April 1, 1990] after a period of 32 months of disappearance had said. (The news about his re-emergence was published in the newspaper — a copy of which has been marked as Ext. 363). The LTTE supremo had told the newsmen then as follows:

‘We are not against India or the Indian people but against the former leadership in India who is against the Tamil liberation struggle and the LTTE’.

Nothing else is proved in the case either from the utterances of the top brass LTTE or from any writings edited by them that anyone of them wanted to strike fear in the Government either of Centre or of any State.

From the aforesaid circumstances it is difficult for us to conclude that the conspirators intended, at any time, to overawe the Government of India as by law established.

Nor can we hold that the conspirators ever entertained an intention to strike terror in people or any section thereof. The mere fact that their action resulted

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in the killing of 18 persons which would have struck great terror in the people of India has been projected as evidence that they intended to strike terror in people. We have no doubt that the aftermath of the carnage at Sriperumbudur had bubbled up waves of shock and terror throughout India. But there is absolutely no evidence that any one of the conspirators ever desired the death of any Indian other than Rajiv Gandhi. Among the series of confessions made by a record number of accused in any single case, as in this case, not even one of them has stated that anybody had the desire or intention to murder one more person along with Rajiv Gandhi except perhaps the murderer herself. Of course they should have anticipated that in such a dastardly action more lives would be vulnerable to peril. But that is a different matter and we cannot attribute an intention of the conspirators to kill anyone other than Rajiv Gandhi and the contemporaneous destruction of the killer also.

Alternatively, even if Sivarasam and the top brass of LTTE knew that there was likelihood of more casualties that cannot be equated to a situation that they did it with an intention to strike terror in any section of the people.

In view of the paucity of materials to prove that the conspirators intended to overawe the Government of India or to strike terror in the people of India we are unable to sustain the conviction of offences under Section 3 of TADA.”

VERDICT ON CONVICTION FALLING WITHIN THE CHARGE UNDER
SECTION 4(1) OF TADA

Justice Thomas’s verdict on conviction falling within the charge under Section 4(1) of TADA was as follows:

“The next endeavour is to see whether the conspirators did any ‘disruptive activities’ so as to be caught in the dragnet of Section 4(1) of TADA. The subsection reads: ‘Whoever commits or conspires or attempts to commit or abets, advocates, advises, or knowingly facilitates the commission of, any disruptive activity or any act preparatory to a disruptive activity shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than five years but which may extend to imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to fine’...”

Under this section, Justice Thomas established that Rajiv Gandhi, at the time of his assassination, was *not a public servant*.

“The killing of a public servant or killing of any other person bound by oath would be an offence under the Indian Penal Code. But it must be noted that such killing, as such, is not a disruptive activity. Certain type of actions which preceded such killing alone is regarded as a disruptive activity through the legal fiction created by sub-section (3). Such actions include advocating, advising, suggesting, inciting, predicting, prophesying, pronouncing or

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prompting the killing of such persons. In other words, all the preceding actions directed positively towards killing of such persons would amount to disruptive activity, but not the final result namely, the act of killing of such person.

If there is any evidence, in this case, to show that any such preceding act was perpetrated by any of the appellants towards killing of any police officer who was killed at the place of occurrence it would, no doubt, amount to disruptive activity. But there is no such evidence that any such activity was done for the purpose of killing any police personnel.

However, there is plethora of evidence for establishing that all such preceding activities were done by many among the accused arrayed, for killing Rajiv Gandhi. But unfortunately Rajiv Gandhi was not then ‘a person bound by oath under the Constitution to uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India.’ Even the Lok Sabha stood dissolved months prior to this incident and hence it cannot be found that he was under an oath as a Member of Parliament. The inevitable fall out of the above situation is that none of the conspirators can be caught in the dragnet of sub-section (3) of Section 4 of TADA.

Then, in dismissing the conviction of appellants under Section 3 or 4 of TADA, Justice Thomas had inferred,

“What remains to be considered for Section 4(1) of TADA is whether any disruptive activity falling within the ambit of the definition in sub-section (2) has been established. The attempt which prosecution has made in that regard, is to show that the conspirators intended to disrupt the sovereignty of India. To support the said contention, our attention was drawn to the confessional statement of A-3 (Murugan), A-18 (Arivu) and the photographs proved as M. Os. 256 to 259 [Note: *M. O* is the abbreviation for *Material Objects submitted by the prosecution*] which were seized from the bag of A-3 (Murugan). The said items of evidence show that photos of Fort St. George, Madras (which houses the Government Secretariat of Tamil Nadu and the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council), Police Headquarters, Central Jail within Vellore Fort etc. had been taken and dispatched to the LTTE top brass of Sri Lanka.

It is too much a strain to enter a finding, on such evidence, that the above activities were unmistakably aimed at disrupting the sovereignty of India. The sketch of Vellore Fort (which houses the Central Jail) was drawn up, most probably, for planning some operation to rescue the prisoners (belonging to LTTE who have been interned therein). That of course would be an offence but not an activity which falls within the purview of Section 4 of TADA.

We are, therefore, unable to sustain the conviction of appellants for offences under Section 3 or 4 of TADA.”

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CONCESSIONS MADE AND DISPUTED BY THE DEFENCE COUNSEL

Justice Thomas also summarized clearly the concessions made and disputed by the Defence Counsel in the assassination trial. In his words,

“We may put on record the following concessions made by the learned counsel for all the appellants at the Bar:

1. Prosecution has successfully established that Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated at 10.19 PM on 21-5-1991 at Sriperumbudur by a girl named Thanu who became a human bomb and got herself exploded in the same event; and that altogether 18 persons, including the above two, died in the said explosion.
2. There is overwhelming evidence to show that assassination of Rajiv Gandhi was resulted from a conspiracy to finish him.
3. It is also established by the prosecution beyond doubt that Sivarasan @ Raghuvaran who was a top brass of LTTE was one of the kingpins of the said conspiracy.

We may also record at this stage that the two points which are seriously disputed by the learned counsel for the appellants are the following: (1) Assassination of Rajiv Gandhi was not the only focal point of the conspiracy. (2) Appellants were participants in the conspiracy. In other words, the defence contended that the conspiracy was made only to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi and that none of the appellants had participated in the conspiracy.”

Upto this point, Justice Thomas had meaningfully restricted his observations within the judicial terms of reference, based on submitted evidence by the prosecution. Then, he inserted political cant in one sentence by proclaiming, “*There is not even a speck of doubt in our mind that the criminal conspiracy to murder Rajiv Gandhi was hatched by at least 4 persons comprising of Veluppillai Pirabhakaran, Pottu Omman, Sivarasan and Akila.*” However, he refrained from providing any supporting evidence for such a blanket statement. Rather than substantiating his inference with solid proof, he skirted the issue (by engaging in verbal gymnastics) with the following observation:

“We have no doubt from the circumstantial evidence in this case, that Thanu, the girl who transformed into a human bomb, and her friend Suba were unflinchingly committed commandos of LTTE and they were also brought into the conspiracy ring by the top brass of LTTE. Circumstances proved in this case regarding the aforesaid core points are too many. However, we are spared from the task of enumerating all such circumstances as learned counsel for the accused have fairly conceded about the sufficiency of circumstances which have been proved in this case to establish the aforesaid points.”

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In my opinion, the defence counsel had conceded that Sivarasan was “one of the kingpins of the said conspiracy.” But Justice Thomas has not revealed in his verdict, the presence of any pre-assassination ‘document’ (in whatever form) which links Sivarasan or Dhanu to Pirabhakaran.

JUSTICE THOMAS’S CATEGORIZATION OF ‘CONSPIRATORS’

“The conspirators in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination can be vivisected into four broad categories. First, those who formed the hardcore nucleus which took the decision to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi. Second, those who induced others to join the ring and played active as well as supervisory roles in the conspiracy. Third, those who joined the conspiracy by inducement whether through indoctrination or otherwise. Fourth, those among the conspirators who participated in the actual commission of murder.”

Then, Justice Thomas wrote the vital three sentences, which have been highlighted and twisted in the mass media to portray Pirabhakaran as the ‘convicted criminal’. First, I provide the words of Justice Thomas, then I analyze the meaning of these three sentences. [Note: The spellings of names are as in the original, and not corrected for conventional use.]

“Persons who fall within the first category cannot normally escape from capital punishment if their case ends in conviction. Velupillai Pirabhakaran, Pottu Amman, Akila, Sivarasan and Trichy Santhan have been described as persons falling within the radius of the first category. As they were not tried for the offences so far we refrain from observing anything concerning them in the sphere of sentencing exercise.”

MY OBSERVATIONS ON THESE THREE SENTENCES

The first sentence is a conditional statement, ending in “if their case ends in conviction.” Quite a few Colombo hacks had twisted this conditional statement into a fact.

In the second sentence, Justice Thomas had stated, that Pirabhakaran, Pottu Amman, Akila, Sivarasan and Trichy Santhan “have been described as persons falling within the radius of the first category.” Who described? — not Justice Thomas, but the prosecution team of SIT.

The third sentence is also interesting in that Justice Thomas confirms that Pirabhakaran, Pottu Amman and Akila (“they”) “were not tried for the offences so far.” Then, he also continues the sentence with the assertion, “we refrain from observing anything concerning them in the sphere of sentencing exercise.”

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While stating in one instance that Pirabhakaran, Pottu Amman and Akila “were not tried for the offenses”, Justice Thomas [willingly or negligently] had offered political cant in his verdict proclaiming, “*There is not even a speck of doubt in our mind that the criminal conspiracy to murder Rajiv Gandhi was hatched by at least 4 persons comprising of Velupillai Piribhakaran, Pottu Omman, Sivarasan and Akila.*” I find this perplexing, unless one allows it as a ‘political piece of meat’ thrown in to satisfy the lapping instinct of Indian journalists and commentators. Also, the recurrent use of royal ‘we’ (and associated ‘our’) need to be noted, and I would state that among the three judges who heard the supreme court appeal, Justice D. P. Wadhwa and Justice S. S. M. Quadri did not offer any comment which is in concordance with that of Justice Thomas relating to Pirabhakaran’s role in the conspiracy.

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS OF JUSTICE THOMAS

A list of additional observations made by Justice Thomas in his verdict is compiled below.

1. “It must be remembered that LTTE had several activities, even apart from murdering Rajiv Gandhi. So merely because a person is shown to be an active worker of LTTE that by itself would not catapult him into the orbit of the conspiracy mesh in order to murder Rajiv Gandhi.”
2. “A-8 [*i.e.* 8th accused Athirai] is a girl hailing from Sri Lanka. She was in her teens during the days of conspiracy. Two of her sisters are now in Switzerland living with their husbands. A-8 (Athirai) had a love affair with a boy named Anand, but he died in a raid conducted by IPKF during 1989. She was recruited in the LTTE at the age of 16 and she was given a training in shooting. It was from her confessional statement [Exhibit for Prosecution — 97] that we got the idea of placement of Thanu and Suba in the LTTE ranking. The former was a member of ‘Black Women Tiger’ and the latter was a member of the Army Branch of LTTE.”
3. “Except A-1 (Nalini), A-2 (Santhan), A-3 (Murugan), A-9 (Robert Payas), A-10 (Jayakumar), A-16 (Ravichandran) and A-18 (Arivu) all the remaining appellants shall be set at liberty forthwith.”
4. “We can hold with certainty that A-2 (Santhan), A-3 (Murugan) and A-18 (Arivu) belonged to the second category [of the conspirators, as mentioned above] even if they slip out of the first. They were not merely

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carrying out the orders of the first category personnel but they made others to work according to their directions in order to achieve the target. The role played by them was prominently direct and active. They were in the leadership layer among the conspirators. We are not able to find out anything extenuating as for the said three persons in their activities for implementation of the decisions of the cabal. We therefore confirm the extreme penalty imposed by the trial court on A-2 (Santhan), A-3 (Murugan) and A-18 (Arivu) for the offence under Section 302 read with Section 120-B of the IPC.”

5. “A-1 (Nalini) belongs to the fourth category [of the conspirators, as mentioned above]...on an evaluation of the plus and minus, pros and cons we persuade ourselves to save A-1 (Nalini) from gallows. Hence the sentence passed on her is altered to one of imprisonment for life.”
6. “What remains is the case of A-9 (Robert Payas), A-10 (Jayakumar) and A-16 (Ravichandran). They do not belong to the first or even to the second category [of conspirators, as mentioned above]. They were LTTE followers and they just obeyed the commands of leaders like Sivarasan who had the capacity to dominate over them. We are inclined to alter their sentence from death penalty to imprisonment for life. We order so.”

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MERIT IN JUSTICE D. P. WADHWA’S VERDICT

IF BREVITY AND lack of political cant are the merits in Justice S. S. M. Quadri’s verdict (*see*, Chapter 27) on the appeal of Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial, *Justice Wadhwa’s comparatively lengthy verdict has a different merit of its own.* Considering that this particular assassination trial was conducted in secrecy where much information was suppressed to the public, Justice Wadhwa has made a quota of suppressed information available to researchers via his lengthy verdict. Unlike the newspaper reports, interviews and commentaries by partisan journalists, this information provided by Justice Wadhwa is unimpeachable. Also, many of the newspaper accounts of the verdict as well as Subramanian Swamy’s book on Rajiv Gandhi assassination, which I studied, have distorted or omitted chunks of Justice Wadhwa’s verdict which questions the validity of the submitted evidence from the prosecution team. Having stated this I would add that, unlike Justice Quadri’s verdict, one cannot say that Justice Wadhwa’s verdict is not without political cant at infrequent locations.

Justice Wadhwa’s verdict include the following details: details of the specific charges against the 26 accused, the names and designations of prosecution witnesses, the dates of arrest and dates of confession made by the 26 accused who were on trial, some interesting tidbits culled from the confession of the accused, unreliability of the post-assassination wireless messages submitted by the SIT as evidence to implicate LTTE in the assassination, and last but not the least — exposure on the incompetence of the Designated Judge Navaneetham as an impartial adjudicator of justice. Also, in specific aspects regarding whether the main accused (such as Sivarasan, Subha, Dhanu and Santhan — the first three were deceased accused, and Santhan was 2nd accused under trial) were members of the conspiracy, Justice Wadhwa had even disagreed with fellow Justice K. T. Thomas’s findings.

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THE PROSECUTION CASE

First, I present the prosecution case as presented Justice Wadhwa. In one lengthy sentence exceeding 60 words, Justice Wadhwa introduced the prosecution case as follows:¹

“Prosecution case is that Prabhakaran, Pottu Amman, Akila and Sivarasan master-minded and put into operation the plan to kill Rajiv Gandhi which was executed by Sivarasan and Dhanu, of the two assassins (other being Subha), with the back-up of other accused, who conspired and abetted them in the commission of the crime which included providing them safe haven before and after the crime.”

Then, Justice Wadhwa stated the *prosecution’s view* [italics added by me for emphasis; hereafter, abbreviations *PW* stands for prosecution witness, *A* stands for Accused, *MO* stands for Material Objects] of how the conspiracy to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi progressed. To quote,

“According to prosecution, conspiracy was activated with the publication of an interview of Rajiv Gandhi in *Sunday* magazine and how the conspiracy was put into operation.” Pertaining to this interview, Justice Wadhwa mentioned in the previous page,

“Aveek Sarkar (PW-255) had an interview with Rajiv Gandhi which was published in the *Sunday* magazine issue of August 12-19, 1990. The interview is dated July 30/31, 1990. In the interview, Rajiv Gandhi supported the Accord and criticized V. P. Singh in withdrawing the IPKF. He said there was no rationale behind the withdrawal and as things till then had not stabilized and Accord had not been fully implemented.”

The prosecution view of how conspirators arrived in India in seven groups, in Justice Wadhwa’s words, were as follows. To quote,

“First group of conspirators to achieve the object of conspiracy arrived in India on September 12, 1990. This group consisted of Vijayan (A-12), Selvaluxmi (A-13) and Bhaskaran (A-14). Bhaskaran (A-14) is father of Selvaluxmi (A-13). They arrived at Rameshwaram in India like other refugees from Sri Lanka and got themselves registered. At Jaffna in Sri Lanka they were seen off by deceased accused Sivarasan without paying any toll to LTTE.”

“Second group comprising Robert Payas (A-9), his wife Prema, his sister Premlatha, Jayakumar (A-10) and his wife Shanti (A-11) came to India from Sri Lanka on 20.9.1990 [i.e. Sept. 20, 1990] as refugees and reported at Rameshwaram.”

“Third group comprising Ravi (A-16) and Suseendran (A-17) along with Sivarasan arrived in India from Sri Lanka in the end of December 1990. Both

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Ravi (A-16) and Suseendran (A-17) are Indian Tamils. This group was seen off at Sri Lanka by Pottu Amman.”

“Fourth group comprising Arivu (A-18) and Irumborai (A-19) came to India in October 1990. They had gone to Sri Lanka in May 1990 with Baby Subramaniam where they had met Prabhakaran.”

“In the fifth group there is only one person — Murugan (A-3), who arrived in India clandestinely in the third week of January 1991 with the directions from Pottu Amman.”

“Sixth group comprising Kanagasabapathy (A-7) and Athirai (A-8) came to India on 23.4.1991 [*i.e.* April 23, 1991] and was seen off by Pottu Amman with certain specific instructions in an LTTE boat with escort.”

“Seventh and the last group consisting of nine persons under the leadership of Sivarasan arrived at Kodiakkarai on 1.5.1991 [*i.e.* May 1, 1991] in an LTTE boat. This group was seen off by Pottu Amman on 27.4.1991 [*i.e.* April 27, 1991]. The boat in which they were traveling developed a snag and had to return. They left shore of Sri Lanka on 30.4.1991 [*i.e.* April 30, 1991] when again Pottu Amman was there to see them off. Nine persons were Sivarasan, Santhan (A-2), Shankar (A-14), Vijayanandan (A-5), Ruban (A-6), Subha, Dhanu, Nero and Keerthi. Last four and Sivarasan are deceased accused.”

MAJOR FINDINGS OF JUSTICE WADHWA

In his verdict, Justice Wadhwa offered the following nine findings. I have added italics, wherever appropriate, for emphasis. To quote in full,

1. Presence of LTTE on Indian soil before and after Indo-Sri Lankan Accord is undisputed. Its activities went ostensibly underground after the Accord. LTTE was having various activities in India and some of these were (1) printing and publishing of books and magazines for LTTE propaganda, (2) holding of camps for arms training in India and various other places in Tamil Nadu (This was done openly till the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord), (3) collection and raising of funds for its war efforts in Sri Lanka, (4) treatment of injured LTTE cadres in India, (5) medical assistance and (6) transporting of goods like petrol, diesel, lungies, medicines, wireless equipments and explosives and even provisions to Sri Lanka.
2. Hiring of houses in Tamil Nadu was for various activities of the LTTE, which included houses for the treatment of injured LTTE cadres.
3. Sivarasan was having other activities in Tamil Nadu. He was to make arrangements for Santhan (A-2) to go to Switzerland and for Kanagasabapathy (A-7) and Athirai (A-8) to go to Delhi and from there to Germany. He was to make arrangement to recruit persons to impart arms training in

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Sri Lanka through Ravi (A-16) and Suseendran (A-17) and to arrange houses at Madras through Robert Payas (A-9), Jayakumar (A-10) and Vijayan (A-12) for the stay of LTTE cadres not necessarily for conspirators. He financed Vijayanandan (A-5) in Madras for purchase of books for LTTE library in Jaffna. Shanmugham (DA; *i.e.* referring to deceased accused) in his confession (Exhibit for Prosecution — 1300) stated that Sivarasan with others stayed in a house at Kodiakkarai and they were arranging to send petrol and diesel oil by boat to LTTE in Sri Lanka.

4. *In case of some of the accused including deceased accused there is no evidence whatsoever that they were members of the conspiracy. Prosecution has been unfair to charge them with conspiracy.*
5. *There is no evidence that all the nine persons, who arrived in India by boat on 1.5.1991 [i.e, May 1, 1991], namely, Sivarasan, Subha, Dhanu, Nero, Dixon, Santhan (A-2), Shankar (A-4), Vijayanandan (A-5) and Ruben (A-6), were members of the conspiracy. In this group there was Ruben (A-6), who came to India to have an artificial leg fixed which he had lost in a battle with Sri Lankan army. Sivarasan, Subha, Dhanu, Nero and Dixon are deceased accused.*

[My observation: Of the nine persons, Justice Thomas in his verdict had noted that Sivarasan could belong to the first category of conspirators, and Santhan as belonging to the second category of conspirators even if he slip out of the first category; *see*, chapter 28. Thus, there was divergence in the views of two Justices.]

6. *Prosecution also named Jamuna @ Jameela (DA) as a conspirator, who had also come to India for fixing an artificial limb, which she had also lost in a battle with Sri Lankan army. There is not even a whisper in the whole mass of evidence that she had even knowledge of any conspiracy to kill Rajiv Gandhi. Simply because she was found dead having committed suicide along with Sivarasan, Subha and others at Bangalore, could not make her a member of the conspiracy.*
7. *From frequent and unexplained meetings of some of the accused with others, who have been charged with conspiracy, it cannot be assumed that they all were members of the conspiracy. This is particularly so when LTTE was having various activities on Indian soil for its war efforts in Sri Lanka. Notebook (Exhibit for Prosecution — 1168) seized by the police gives bio-data of some LTTE cadre working in India though that list is not extensive. It also contains the bio-data of Irumburai (A-19).*
8. *All the persons, who came from Sri Lanka during the strife, did not come through authorized channels. It is also to be seen if the accused now charged with conspiracy and alleged to have come to India in the guise of refugees were not in fact refugees. Rather evidence shows that Robert Payas (A-9), Jayakumar (A-10) and Shanti (A-11) as one*

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group and Vijayan (A-12), Selvaluxmi (A-13) and Bhaskaran (A-14) as the second group, were in fact wanting to come to India due to conditions prevailing in Sri Lanka. They had no money to pay to LTTE. They were exempted from paying any toll to LTTE on their agreeing to hire houses in Tamil Nadu for stay of LTTE cadre and on their being promised help by LTTE. When they so agreed they were not aware that what was the object behind their hiring the houses. Evidence regarding providing shelter to the conspirators either before or after the object of the conspiracy has been achieved, is not conclusive to support the charge of conspiracy against them.

9. Robert Payas (A-9), Jayakumar (A-10) and Vijayan (A-12) were hardcore LTTE activists. They were living in Sri Lanka with their families and suffered because of the turmoil there. They may be sympathizers of LTTE having strong feelings against IPKF. Consider the background in which they accepted the offer of LTTE to meet their expenses in India. It could be that they themselves fell into the trap because of the circumstances in which their families were placed in Sri Lanka.

CHARGES AGAINST THE 26 ACCUSED

In the words of Justice Wadhwa,

“Including the charge of conspiracy, which is charge No. 1, there are 251 other charges framed against the accused for having committed various offences in pursuance to the conspiracy under Charge No. 1. Out of these Nalini (A-1) has been charged on 121 different counts.” Next to Nalini, Arivu (A-18) was charged on 63 counts. Next to Arivu, seven accused (A-7, A-8, A-10, A-11, A-12, A-13, and A-19) were charged on four counts each; seven other accused (A-3, A-14, A-21, A-23, A-24, A-25 and A-26) were charged on three counts each; six other accused (A-2, A-4, A-5, A-6, A-20 and A-22) were charged on two counts each; two remaining accused (A-9 and A-15) were charged on one count each. The charge No. 1, common to all 26 accused, were the following seven items:

1. 120-B read with 302, 326, 324, 201, 212, 216 of Indian Penal Code.
2. 3, 4 and 5 of Explosives Substances Act, 1908
3. 25 of Arms Act, 1959
4. 12 of Passport Act, 1967
5. 14 of Foreigners Act, 1946
6. 6 (1-4) Indian Wireless and Telegraphy Act, 1933
7. 3, 4 & 5 TADA, 1987

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The abbreviation TADA stands for Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act. The Terrorist Act under Section 3(3) states, “Whoever conspires or attempts to commit, or advocates, abets, advises or incites or knowingly facilitates the commission of, a terrorist act or any act preparatory to a terrorist act, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than five years but which may extend to imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to fine.”

The Terrorist Act under Section 3(4) states, “Whoever harbours or conceals, or attempts to harbour or conceal, any terrorist shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than five years but which may extent to imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to fine.”

Of the 26 accused, eleven (A-7, A-8, A-10, A-11, A-12, A-13, A-14, A-16, A-17, A-19 and A-23) were charged under both Sections 3(3) and 3(4) of TADA; twelve (A-1, A-2, A-3, A-4, A-5, A-6, A-9, A-15, A-18, A-20, A-21 and A-22) were charged under Sections 3(3) only; the remaining three (A-24, A-25 and A-26) were charged under Sections 3(4) only.

Implying the system overload factor which cripples the Indian judiciary system leading to many accused spending a longer duration under detention in prison *even before* they become convicts, Justice Wadhwa also recorded that,

“We may refer to the preliminary submissions of Mr. N. Natarajan, senior advocate, who appeared for all the accused except Shanmugavadivelu @ Thambi Anna (A-15). He submitted that he is not challenging the convictions of various accused under the Foreigners Act, Passport Act, Explosive Substances Act, Indian Wireless and Telegraphy Act, Arms Act, and Sections 212 and 216 IPC. This he said was on account of the fact that for offences under these Acts accused were awarded sentence of imprisonment for two years or for a period less than two years which in any case has to be set off under Section 428 of the Code as they had been under detention throughout the period during trial. We are thus left to consider offences under Section 120-B IPC, 302/34 IPC, 362/34 IPC, 324/34 IPC and under Sections 3, 4 and 5 of TADA. [IPC refers to Indian Penal Code.]

**PURPORTED LTTE LINKS OF THE MAIN ACCUSED WHOSE APPEALS
WERE HEARD**

From Justice Wadhwa’s verdict, one can tabulate the purported LTTE links of the 26 main accused, whose appeals were heard by the three-judge bench of the Indian Supreme Court. Among the 26, the following 16 were indicated by Justice Wadhwa, as having had links with LTTE as activists or helpers or sympathizers. They are namely,

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- Murugan (3rd Accused): a Sri Lankan national and a hard-core LTTE activist
- Vijayanandan (5th Accused): a Sri Lankan national and is also a senior member of LTTE.
- Ruben (6th Accused): a Sri Lankan national and is an LTTE militant.
- Kanagasabapathy (7th Accused): a Sri Lankan Tamil and an LTTE helper.
- Athirai (8th Accused): a Sri Lankan and hard-core LTTE militant girl.
- Robert Payas (9th Accused): a Sri Lankan and hard-core LTTE activist.
- Jayakumar (10th Accused): a Sri Lankan and hard-core LTTE activist.
- Vijayan (12th Accused): a Sri Lankan Tamil and a helper of LTTE.
- Ravi (16th Accused): an Indian Tamil, and LTTE activist.
- Suseendran (17th Accused): an Indian Tamil, and LTTE activist.
- Arivu (18th Accused): an Indian Tamil and LTTE propagandist in India.
- Irumborai (19th Accused): an Indian Tamil and LTTE sympathizer.
- Bhagyanathan (20th Accused): an Indian Tamil, who purchased LTTE press from Baby Subramaniam at a very nominal cost.
- Suba Sundaram (22nd Accused): an Indian Tamil and owner of Subha News Photo Service and Subha Studio, a meeting point for LTTE activists.
- Rangan (24th Accused): a Sri Lankan national and LTTE activist, who joined the movement in 1983, came to India in 1989 and running a travel agency without permit.
- Vicky (25th Accused): a Sri Lankan national, who moved to India in 1990 and assisted the LTTE activist in getting medicines and acted as his helper.

Among these 16 accused, only two (namely Murugan and Arivu) were ultimately convicted on the charge of aiding and abetting the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. Other 14 accused (nine Sri Lankan nationals and five Indian nationals) were acquitted from the main charge. Of the other two convicted for

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their roles in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, neither Nalini (the 1st accused; an Indian national) nor Santhan (the 2nd accused; a Sri Lankan national), were indicated as LTTE individuals by Justice Wadhwa. But, the status of Santhan in LTTE, as depicted by Justice Thomas, in his verdict, is in discordance to that of Justice Wadhwa.

In Justice Thomas’s verdict,

“Santhan (A-2) is a Sri Lanka citizen. He was aged 22 during the relevant time. The evidence shows that he was a card-holder of the intelligence wing of the LTTE. He studied up to 5th standard in a school at Jaffna. He came into contact with Sivarasan and they eventually became close to each other. In February 1988, Sivarasan suggested to him to continue his studies at Madras and LTTE would meet his expenses. Pursuant thereto he came to India in February 1990 and secured admission at Madras Institute of Engineering Technology. His educational expenses were met by LTTE.”

SPECIFIC REFERENCES TO PIRABHAKARAN IN THE VERDICT

The following specific references to Pirabhakaran appeared in Justice Wadhwa’s verdict. I provide these examples, to substantiate a point which I note under a later section, ‘Unmentionables in the Verdict’ in this chapter.

“In the night of 3/4.10.1987 [*i.e.* Oct.3–4, 1987] when IPKF convoy was carrying ration it was attacked by LTTE and 11 Indian soldiers were killed. It was the flashpoint of breach between IPKF and LTTE and active confrontation between the two started. Prabhakaran, supreme leader of LTTE, went underground...”

“Prabhakaran at one stage even said that it [*i.e.* LTTE] was stabbed in the back by agreeing to the accord and had been betrayed...”

“Two volumes of the book *Satanic Force* (MO-124 and MO-125) were published in India at the behest of LTTE which contained compilation of speeches of Prabhakaran and other articles and photographs showing the atrocities committed by IPKF on Tamils in Sri Lanka after the Accord and the animosity which Prabhakaran developed towards Rajiv Gandhi. The book was compiled by N. Vasantha Kumar (PW-75). He is an artist by profession. The printing and publishing of the book was authorised and financed by LTTE. It was published in January 1991 and contains information up to March 1990. In his statement Brig. Vivek Sapatnekar (PW-186), who was earlier in-charge of IPKF operations in Sri Lanka, also stated that the Accord was not having the support of LTTE. MO-125 (volume 2 of *Satanic Force*) contained the news item published in the *Indian Express* of April 1990 which quotes the speech by Prabhakaran saying that he was against the former leadership in India and that LTTE was not against India or Indian people. These two volumes of *Satanic Force* contain over 1700 pages. No article or writing has

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been pointed out from the *Satanic Force* from which it could be inferred that it was ever in the contemplation of Prabhakaran or any other functionary of LTTE questioning the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India rather they identified Rajiv Gandhi with the Accord and the atrocities committed by IPKF. . . .”

“In the writings and articles in the two volumes of *Satanic Force* there were scathing attacks on Shri Rajiv Gandhi, who was projected as the perpetrator of the sufferings of Tamils in Sri Lanka by sending IPKF. Prabhakaran when he came out of his hiding after about two and a half years he made statement in April 1990 that he was against the former leadership, Rajiv Gandhi. . . . Rajiv Gandhi stood for territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and for role of various Tamil organizations in Sri Lanka for any Tamil solution. LTTE on the other hand claimed to be the sole representative body of Tamils there.”

The prosecution team, in its *Procrustean data-torturing mode and wearing blinders*, had presented the LTTE compilation *Satanic Force* to support its position that LTTE had animosity against Rajiv Gandhi. Similar or even worse level of animosity against Rajiv Gandhi was existing in the Sinhala press of Sri Lanka as well, from May 1987 until the day of his death. To top it, there was even an assassination attempt [not by LTTE!] on him in Colombo on July 30, 1987 which was cleanly captured in camera. Rajiv Gandhi became a saint to the partisan Sri Lankan press, only from May 22, 1991. To continue, Justice Wadhwa’s verdict,

“It was on this account, submitted Mr. Natarajan, that there was conspiracy to eliminate Rajiv Gandhi in order to prevent him from coming back to power. He said LTTE perceived the accord as object to stop creation of separate Tamil Elam which went against the basic objective of LTTE. . . . Mr. Natarajan said that motive was not to overawe the Government of India or to create terror as was being alleged by the prosecution. Animosity of LTTE was only against Rajiv Gandhi who was identified with the Accord. Prabhakaran, the supreme leader of LTTE, had clearly stated more than once that he was not against the Indian Government and the Indian people.”

IMPLICATING PIRABHAKARAN THROUGH THE CONFESSIONS

The prosecution team had presented confessions of 2nd Accused Santhan and 3rd Accused Murugan as evidence for implicating Pirabhakaran as one of the conspirators to the assassination.

CONFESSION OF SANTHAN

According to Justice Wadhwa, “Santhan (A-2) is a Sri Lankan national. He knew Sivarasan as they both belonged to same town in Sri Lanka. According to Santhan (A-2) important decisions like murder of anybody could be taken only by Prabhakaran.”

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MY COMMENT ON SANTHAN’S CONFESSION

Santhan’s confession was taken on Sept. 17, 1991, after the death of Sivarasan. Justice Wadhwa’s specific choice of words deserve attention. In paraphrasing Santhan’s confession, he mentions about, ‘*murder of anybody*’ and not ‘murder of Rajiv Gandhi’ in specific. Justice Wadhwa also fails to inform whether Pirabhakaran had specifically told the 2nd accused Santhan that Rajiv Gandhi would be assassinated. Santhan was identified by him as,

“a Sri Lankan national, in his confession talks of his role in the elimination of Padmanabhan, EPRLF leader and others in Madras but that is not the subject matter of the charge and it is no terrorist act. Santhan (A-2) was one of the nine persons, who came from Sri Lanka on a boat arriving at the shore of India on 1.5.1991 [*i.e.* May 1, 1991]. His leader was Sivarasan.”

The last sentence, ‘His leader was Sivarasan’ is also of interest. Regarding the ‘mysterious status’ of Sivarasan, I will provide details released by Ranganath [the 26th accused who was acquitted] after his acquittal, in the forthcoming ‘Espionage Angle’ chapter.

CONFESSION OF MURUGAN

According to Justice Wadhwa’s verdict,

“Murugan (A-3) when asked Sivarasan the reasons for killing of Rajiv Gandhi he replied that Kasi Anandhan (PW-242) [*i.e.* prosecution witness] had met Rajiv Gandhi at Delhi and was told that the meeting was very cordial there and if Rajiv Gandhi came to power he would help LTTE movement. Prabhakaran showed the letter written by Kasi Anandhan (PW-242) suggesting cordial relations to Pottu Amman and said that people like Kasi Anandhan (PW-242) should be removed from the movement. When Sivarasan met Prabhakaran he told him that ‘We must teach a lesson to Rajiv Gandhi through the girls since IPKF dishonoured women’. From this Murugan (A-3) understood that decision to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi was taken by Prabhakaran.”

MY COMMENT ON MURUGAN’S CONFESSION

Murugan’s confession was recorded by the law enforcement personnel on Aug. 8, 1991. Murugan is identified as “a Sri Lankan national and a hard-core LTTE activist. He was member of the suicide squad of LTTE which he joined in January 1991.” Even if one assumes that Murugan was indeed a member of the LTTE suicide squad, according to his confession, he has not heard directly from Pirabhakaran, the LTTE leader, on why Rajiv Gandhi need to be eliminated. But, Murugan ‘**understood**’ that decision to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi was taken by Prabhakaran’ from Sivarasan’s comment that Pirabhakaran had

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told him [Sivarasan] that ‘We must teach a lesson to Rajiv Gandhi through the girls since IPKF dishonoured women.’

I’m piqued by the interpretation and specific meaning by the prosecution team of the clause ‘We must teach a lesson’, which had been uttered by Pirabhakaran. Whether Sivarasan had met Pirabhakaran has not been proved beyond doubt. Even if one assumes that such a meeting would have taken place, it is obvious, that Pirabhakaran would have naturally spoken to Sivarasan in Tamil language, and not in English or any other language. I’m not certain about the fluency of Justice Wadhwa in Tamil language, but any native speaker in Tamil can vouch the clause, ‘teach a lesson’ (literal translation would in all probabilities be, *Paadam padippikka vendum*) has a range of connotations, which need not necessarily mean ‘assassination’. In my opinion, the validity of Murugan’s confession has some credibility problems indeed.

To support my view, I reproduce an excerpt from my 1992 column written under my pen name C. P. Goliard.

“The May 31st issue [i.e. May 31, 1992] of the *India Today* magazine reported how Prabhakaran’s involvement in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination has been traced by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) in India. ‘According to the charge-sheet, the plan to eliminate the former prime minister was conceived by LTTE supreme, V. Pirabhakaran, in 1986 when he was detained at Tamil Nadu House in New Delhi before the start of the SAARC summit. A telephone conversation between Pirabhakaran and Anton Balasingham, his political adviser in Madras, which was taped by the Intelligence Bureau recorded his angry outbursts against Rajiv Gandhi who, he said, should be ‘fixed’ once he gets out of Indian soil.’

What a flimsy piece of evidence for the motive attributed to Prabhakaran’s grouse against Rajiv? If the Intelligence Bureau had tapped the telephone calls of all the politicians opposed to Rajiv Gandhi from Kashmir to Kerala, they would have received adequate angry outbursts against Rajiv Gandhi.”²

Thus, according to the original charge-sheet prepared by the SIT, believe it or not, Pirabhakaran had conceived elimination of Rajiv Gandhi, well before the Indian army landed in Eelam. If so, his ‘purported quip’ to Sivarasan that ‘We must teach a lesson to Rajiv Gandhi through the girls since IPKF dishonoured women’ from which Murugan had understood that the decision to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi was taken by Pirabhakaran is somewhat oxymoronic.

MAHATHAYA CONNECTION IN ATHIRAI’S CONFESSION

Justice Wadhwa’s information in his verdict about Athirai, the 8th accused, is of special interest too. Justice Wadhwa had stated,

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“Athirai (A-8), a hard core LTTE militant girl, came to India in the last week of April 1991 in an LTTE boat from Sri Lanka. Athirai (A-8) in her confession said that she got specialised training in LTTE camps. She was assigned the work of gathering intelligence on the operations and movements of Sri Lankan army and other rival organisations like EPRLF, PLOT, etc. Reports, she prepared, would be handed over by her to Mathiah, another LTTE leader.”

Athirai had made her confession on Aug. 29, 1991. Here is another ‘smoking gun’ that the then LTTE deputy leader, Mahathaya was intentionally overlooked by the SIT officials, when charge sheet on Rajiv assassination trial was finalized in May 1992.

VERDICT OF JUSTICE WADHWA

The verdict of Justice Wadhwa can be summarised as follows:

1. We acquit Shanti (A-11), Selvaluxmi (A-13) and Shanmugavadivelu (A-15) of all charges. Their conviction and sentence are set aside.
2. None of the accused has committed any offence under Section 3, 4 or 5 of TADA. Their conviction and sentence under these Sections are set aside.
3. Conviction and sentence of the accused except, Nalini (A-1), Santhan (A-2), Murugan (A-3) and Arivu (A-18) under all other charges are maintained. Conviction and sentence of all the accused under Section 120B IPC read with all other counts as mentioned in charge No. 1 is set aside except conviction of Nalini (A-1), Santhan (A-2), Murugan (A-3) and Arivu (A-18) under Section 120B read with Section 302 IPC.
4. In view of these discussions, Shanti (A-11), Selvaluxmi (A-13) and Shanmugavadivelu (A-15) are to be released forthwith. All other accused except Nalini (A-1), Santhan (A-2), Murugan (A-3) and Arivu (A-18) would also be entitled to be released forthwith as it was pointed out to us that they have already undergone imprisonment for a period of more than the sentence of imprisonment awarded to them. In case they are not required to be detained in any other case they shall also be released forthwith.
5. We confirm the conviction of Nalini (A-1), Santhan (A-2), Murugan (A-3) and Arivu (A-18) under Section 120B read with Section 302 IPC.
6. This is a case where all these Nalini (A-1), Santhan (A-2), Murugan (A-3) and Arivu (A-18) deserve extreme penalty. We confirm the award of sentence of death on them.”

Such a verdict was arrived at by Justice Wadhwa, after allowing that the confessions made by the accused (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 8th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 23rd, 24th and 25th) following their arrests were permissible.

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CONFESSIONS: A DEBATABLE POINT

Justice Wadhwa, in his verdict, had included the following seven objections made by Mr. N. Natarajan, the leading defence counsel who represented all the accused, except 15th.

“Mr. Natarajan said that confessions of the accused could not be taken into consideration. His arguments were:

1. all these confessions have been retracted by the accused having being taken under coercion and under Police influence;
2. sufficient time was not given to accused before recording of the confession. They were given only few hours to reflect if they wanted to make any confession;
3. under the provisions of the Code as amended by TADA, the Police took full remand of the accused for 60 days and when a day or so before the remand was to expire the accused were made to give their confessions. There is, thus, every possibility of the confessions being extracted. It cannot also be ruled out that they confessions were obtained by causing physical harm to the accused and playing upon their psychology;
4. confessions of Nalini (A-1) and Arivu (A-18) are otherwise inadmissible as mandatory provisions contained in Sections 15 of TADA and Rule 15(3) of TADA Rules have been violated;
5. all the accused were kept together in a building called Malagai [Note: referring to Malligai] situated at Green Pass Road, Madras which were the headquarters of CBI. Firstly, remand was taken for one month but no confession came to be recorded. Further remand of one month was taken. During this period, Ponamalai sub-jail was denotified as jail and handed over to CBI and converted into Police Station. All the accused were transferred there and again kept together under the control of special investigation team of CBI. Legal principles required that the accused should have been kept separate and sufficient time should have been given to them for their minds to reflect if they wanted to make clean breast of the whole thing;
6. it is settled law that confession of an accused cannot be used for corroboration of the confession made by co-accused. The rule of prudence so requires; and
7. all these confessions are post-arrest confessions and confession of one accused cannot be used against the other even with reference to Section 10 of the Evidence Act. It could not be said that object of conspiracy was not accomplished by the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and that the conspiracy was still in existence.”

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However, following extensive citation from the archives, Justice Wadhwa asserted that the confessions of accused are ‘admissible evidence’. According to him,

“ ‘ Admissible’ according to *Black’s Law Dictionary* means, ‘pertinent and proper to be considered in reaching a decision. Used with reference to the issues to be decided in any judicial proceeding’.

It defines ‘Admissible evidence’ as, ‘As applied to evidence, the term means that the evidence introduced is of such a character that the court or judge is bound to receive it; that is, allow it to be introduced at trial. To be ‘admissible’ evidence must be relevant, and, inter alia, to be ‘relevant’ it must tend to establish material proposition. . . . If we again refer to *Black’s Law Dictionary*, ‘substantive evidence’ means ‘that adduced for the purpose of proving a fact in issue, as opposed to evidence given for the purpose of discrediting a witness (*i.e.* showing that he is unworthy of belief), or of corroborating his testimony’.

TADA was enacted to meet extra-ordinary situation existing in the country. Its departure from the law relating to confession as contained in Evidence Act is deliberate. Law has to respond to the reality of the situation. What is admissible is the evidence. Confession of the accused is admissible with the same force in its application to the co-accused who is tried in the same case. It is primary evidence and not corroborative. . . .”

Then, after quoting a few precedent-setting cases, Justice Wadhwa inferred that,

“ . . . we hold the confessions of the accused in the present case to be voluntarily and validly made and under Section 15 of TADA confession of an accused is admissible against co-accused as a substantive evidence. Substantive evidence, however, does not necessarily means substantial evidence. It is the quality of evidence that matters. As to what value is to be attached to a confession will fall within the domain of appreciation of evidence. As a matter of prudence court may look for some corroboration if confession is to be used against a co-accused though that will again be with the sphere of appraisal of evidence.”

Next segment of Justice Wadhwa’s verdict described in detail the confessions of the accused and the “evidence linking the accused with each other as projected by the prosecution.” Then, Justice Wadhwa had summarized the stand of the leading defence counsel, as follows:

“Mr. Natarajan said that there was no evidence against any of the accused to bring home charge either under Section 3 or Section 4 of TADA, yet the

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prosecution wrongly alleged that there was conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism and disruptive activities under TADA and in that process Rajiv Gandhi was killed. He said apart from the killing of Rajiv Gandhi no other terrorist act had been shown to have been committed or disruptive activity shown to have been committed. There is no such act till May 1991 though the prosecution has alleged the period of conspiracy being 1987 to 1992. Killing of Rajiv Gandhi could not be a terrorist act under Section 3 of TADA. Also there is no disruptive activity falling under Section 4 of TADA. ...”

OBSERVATION OF JUSTICE WADHWA ON TERRORISM

Justice Wadhwa, in his verdict, had inferred,

“Mr. Natarajan, in our view, is right in his submission that no case under Section 4 of TADA has been made out in the case.

Under Section 3 of TADA in order there is a terrorist act three essential conditions must be present and these are contained in sub-section (1) of Section 3 — (1) criminal activity must be committed with the requisite intention or motive, (2) weapons must have been used, and (3) consequence must have ensued. It was contended by Mr. Natarajan that in the present case though the evidence may show the weapons and consequence as contemplated by Section 3(1) is there it is lacking so far as the intention is concerned. Prosecution had to prove that the act was done with the intention to over-awe the Government or to strike terror in people or any section of people or to adversely affect the harmony amongst different sections of people. There is no evidence that any of the accused had such an intention.”

POLITICAL CANT ON PIRABHAKARAN

In his verdict, Justice Wadhwa, while reiterating that none of the accused under trial had any terrorizing intention, added tangentially his bit of political cant on Pirabhakaran as well.

“In the present case. . . , we do not find any difficulty in concluding that evidence does not reflect that any of the accused entertained any such intention or had any of the motive to overawe the Government or to strike terror among people. No doubt evidence is there that the absconding accused Prabhakaran, supreme leader of LTTE had personal animosity against Rajiv Gandhi and LTTE cadre developed hatred towards Rajiv Gandhi, who was identified with the atrocities allegedly committed by IPKF in Sri Lanka. There was no conspiracy to the indiscriminate killing of persons. There is no evidence directly or circumstantially that Rajiv Gandhi was killed with the intention contemplated under Section 3(1) of TADA. State of Tamil Nadu was notified under TADA on 23.6.1991 [*i.e.* June 23, 1991] and LTTE was declared an unlawful

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association on 14.5.1992 [*i.e.* May 14, 1992] under the provisions of the Unlawful Activity (Prevention) Act, 1957. Apart from killing of Rajiv Gandhi no other terrorist act has been alleged in the State of Tamil Nadu. Charge may be there but there is no evidence to support the charge. . . . Mr. Natarajan said it was the case of the prosecution itself that Prabhakaran had personal animosity against Rajiv Gandhi developed over a period of time and had motive to kill him.”

One should note the specific use of the word, ‘allegedly’ is a pointer to political cant. If IPKF did not commit atrocities, how come nearly 6,000 non-combatant Eelam Tamils died between Oct. 1987 and March 1990?

ON THE PROSECUTION TEAM’S DIFFICULTY IN PROVING THE CHARGES
UNDER TADA

Justice Wadhwa then observed the difficulty faced by the prosecution team in proving the charges under TADA. To quote,

“Mr. Altaf Ahmad [the Additional Solicitor General, leading the prosecution team] realised the difficulty he had to face to show that any offence under Sections 3 and/or 4 of TADA had been committed. He submitted that charges in the present case showed the dimension of the conspiracy and the nature of the crime committed on 21.5.1991 [*i.e.* May 21, 1991]. He said the object of the conspiracy was to commit terrorist act and use of bomb, etc. was the means to achieve that object and that the consequence was to overawe the Government and to create terror in the minds of the public and it was with that object that Rajiv Gandhi and others were killed. He said object of the conspiracy was not accomplished on the killing of Rajiv Gandhi but it continued even after his death as LTTE targeted places and persons spread across the country. There is no evidence that blasting of the buildings like Vellore Fort, police headquarters, was the object of conspiracy or that was to be done with intention to overawe the Government or to create terror among the public. Charge does not specify any such intention or the places. Similar is the position regarding unspecified targets in Delhi. According to him conspiracy was not abandoned and did not culminate with the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi though the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi overshadowed other activities. . . .

Mr. Altaf Ahmad said that though the approach of the Designated Court may have been different in construing the charge and it may not accord with the submissions made now before us and if we construe the charge of our own it is that the accused had committed a terrorist act on the soil of India and in the course of that killed Rajiv Gandhi in order to overawe the Government established by law not to pursue the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord. It was, however, not suggested as to what inquiry or additional evidence is contemplated by the prosecution. From the arguments of Mr. Altaf Ahmad it would appear that

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he is seeking amendment of the charge and if that is done it would require additional evidence or even retrial may have to be ordered. We do not think we should adopt any such course...”

OVERTURNING THE JUDGMENT OF THE DESIGNATED COURT DELIVERED
IN JAN. 28, 1998

Justice Wadhwa then presented his verdict, overturning the judgment of the Designated Court, on the main charge [*i.e.* 3(3) and/or 3(4) of TADA] against all the 26 accused. Though Pirabhakaran was not under trial, his name also received mention in some sentences. Thus, I present the complete verdict. As one would expect, it certainly was tinged with political flavor (probably as a sop to the prosecution team), though the learned judge was negating the arguments of prosecution as unacceptable. But, this is expected, since as I pointed out in the previous chapter, that the justice scale in current India is tainted with politicization, corruption and system overload. To quote Justice Wadhwa [with *italics added* for emphasis.],

“Prosecution case now made out before us is that the object of conspiracy was to commit terrorist acts during the period 1987 to 1992; that the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi was one of such acts with the intention to overawe the Government and to strike terror; and the assassination was an act which struck terror and was also a disruptive activity. As to how it was intended to overawe the Government it was submitted that it was on account of Indo-Sri Lankan Accord, which the Government of India was to honour and that did not suit the aspirations of LTTE and thus the conspiracy was hatched to eliminate the person who was the author of the Accord and to threaten the successive Governments not to follow the Accord, otherwise that Government would also meet the same fate. But then, as noted above that there was a conspiracy to overawe the Government is nowhere in the charge. *Though it could be said that terror was struck by assassination of Rajiv Gandhi but the question is if striking of terror was intended and for that again there is no evidence.* Apart from the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi no other act which could be termed as terrorist act has been suggested.

The Designated Court in its impugned judgment does record any such argument now advanced before us. There is no discussion in the judgment and there is no evidence to which judgment refers to hold that there was any terrorist act intended to overawe the Government or to strike terror. The Designated Court has clearly held that on the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi object of conspiracy was successfully accomplished. *Even if thus examining the proceedings in reference to our decision has to be made on the basis of evidence on record. When there is no evidence inference cannot be drawn that act of killing of Rajiv Gandhi was to overawe the Government.* Even though there is no bar to the examination of the accused under Section 313

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of the Code by this Court in these proceedings but then what is required to be put to the accused is to enable him to personally explain any circumstance appearing in the evidence against him and when there is no evidence, there is no necessity to examine the accused at this stage as that would be a futile exercise. *When the prosecution during the course of the trial, which lasted over a number of years, had taken the stand that killing of Rajiv Gandhi was a terrorist act, it cannot now turn about and say that killing itself was not a terrorist act but was committed to achieve the object of conspiracy which was to overawe the Government. As a matter of fact in the statement of Kasi Anandhan (PW-242), who was a member of the Central Committee of LTTE, it has come on record that he met Rajiv Gandhi in March 1991 when Rajiv Gandhi supported the stand of LTTE and had admitted that it was his mistake in sending IPKF to Sri Lanka and wanted LTTE to go ahead with its agitation. That being the evidence brought on record by the prosecution there is no question of it now contending that there was conspiracy to overawe the Government. Its stand throughout has been that it was the personal motive of Prabhakaran and others to commit terrorist act by killing Rajiv Gandhi. Under Section 3(1) of TADA overawing the Government cannot be the consequence but it has to be the primary object. There is nothing on record to show that the intention to kill Rajiv Gandhi was to overawe the Government. Reference to the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord is merely by way of narration.*

Support to the struggle of LTTE in Sri Lanka was from Tamil Nadu and it does not appeal to reason that LTTE would commit any act to overawe the Government. It is matter of common knowledge that all terrorist acts are publicized and highlighted which is fundamental to terrorism. Whenever a terrorist act is committed some organisation or the other comes forward to claim responsibility for that. *In the present case LTTE tried to conceal the fact that it was behind the murder of Rajiv Gandhi. The object to assassinate was kept a closely guarded secret.*”

Justice Wadhwa continued further,

“We accept the argument of Mr. Natarajan that terrorism is synonymous with publicity and it was sheer personal animosity of Prabhakaran and other LTTE cadre developed against Rajiv Gandhi which resulted in his assassination. LTTE would not do any act to overawe the Government in Tamil Nadu or in the Centre as otherwise their activities in this country in support of their struggle in Sri Lanka would have been seriously hampered.

Charge of disruptive activities under Section 4(3) of TADA is against Nalini (A-1) and Arivu (A-18). There is no charge under Section 3(3) of TADA against Rangan (A-24), Vicky (A-25) and Ranganath (A-26). They are charged under Section 3(4) of TADA. Charge under Section 3(3) is against A-1 to A-23. If we examine one such charge, say charge No. 235 against A-21 which says that she in pursuance to the criminal conspiracy referred to in charge No. 1 and in course of same transaction during the period between January 91 and

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June 91 at Madras and other place in Tamil Nadu she had actively associated with and assisted other conspirators for carrying out the object of criminal conspiracy and thus she knowingly facilitated the commission of terrorist act or any act preparatory to terrorist act and which was committing the terrorist act by detonating the improvised explosive device concealed in waist belt of Dhanu and thereby A-21 committed an offence punishable under Section 3(3) of TADA.”

Designated Court held that hatred which developed in the minds [sic!] of Prabhakaran, further developed into animosity against Rajiv Gandhi in view of the events which took place after IPKF was inducted in Sri Lanka. *Thus examining the whole aspect of the matter we are of the opinion that no offense either under Sections 3 or 4 of TADA has been committed. Since we hold that there is no terrorist act and no disruptive activity under Sections 3 and 4 of TADA, charges under Section 3(3), 3(4) and 4(3) of TADA must also fail against all the accused.*

UNMENTIONABLES IN THE VERDICT

Though Justice Wadhwa delivered a lengthy verdict, what intrigued me was the scarcity of the details (other than the role played by 18th accused Arivu in purchasing the batteries for the belt bomb worn by Dhanu) relating to the forensic science component Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination, and the associated suicide of assassin Dhanu. However, Justice Wadhwa had identified by names the medical officers who conducted postmortem on the victims of May 21, 1991 tragedy and the deceased accused in August 1991.

Also, Justice Wadhwa has cavalierly dismissed the arrangements made by the Congress Party organizers to bring Rajiv Gandhi to Sriperumbudur, with a statement, **“We are not concerned with the tour programme of Rajiv Gandhi and the security arrangements made for him.”** One may pause a minute to think, why this disregard of the details of Rajiv Gandhi’s final 24 hours of life was made by the guardians of justice, while analyzing all the developments relating to LTTE, which occurred in Eelam and Tamil Nadu after the signing of Indo-Sri Lankan Accord of 1987. Could it be that some political operatives belonging to the Congress Party had to be protected from the manacles of law? Or could it be, that the real conspirators to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi deserved an escape route? ^{3,4}

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‘In the Computer Age we still live by the law of the Stone Age: the man with the bigger club is right. But we pretend this isn’t so. We don’t notice or even suspect it’s why, surely our morality progresses together with our civilization. Professional politicians, meanwhile, have deftly covered certain vices with a civilized veneer.’

— ALEKSANDR SOLZHENITSYN¹

ANTI-PIRABHAKARAN LITERATURE generated before May 1999 by non-Tamil analysts like Rohan Gunaratna and partisan journalists from Colombo portrayed an erroneous view that Pirabhakaran had killed Rajiv Gandhi. This was strongly based on conjectures and the news-releases from the Indian Intelligence agencies. But the presented evidence by the prosecution team at the assassination trial (*as indicated in the Supreme Court verdicts of Justice Wadhwa, Justice Thomas and Justice Quadri*) shows conspicuous lack of solid information linking Pirabhakaran to the assassination.

DEFENCE LAWYER DURAISAMY’S INTERVIEW

Justice Wadhwa, towards the end of his lengthy verdict had identified the other lawyers of the defence team as follows:

“Mr. Natarajan, senior advocate, led the team for all the accused except one. He was ably assisted by Mr. Sunder Mohan, Mr. B. Gopikrishnan, Mr. S. Duraisamy, Mr. V. Elangovan, Mr. N. Chandrasekharan, Mr. T. Ramdass and Mr. R. Jayaseelan. A heavy burden lay on the shoulders of Mr. Natarajan. He carried it with aplomb. His presentation of the case showed his complete mastery on facts and law. It was a pleasure to hear him, not losing his poise even for once. He was fair in his submissions conceding where it was unnecessary to contest. Mr. Siva Subramaniam senior advocate assisted by Mr. Thanan, who represented the remaining one accused, rendered his bit to support Mr. Natarajan.”²

Therefore, following my analysis on the Supreme Court appeal verdicts delivered by Justice Quadri, Justice Thomas and Justice Wadhwa in the past

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three chapters, it is more than appropriate to study the impressions of defence lawyer S. Duraisamy on the final verdict delivered in 1999 — almost 8 years after the tragic event. Duraisamy became the Bill Kunstler of Tamil Nadu. Luckily, Duraisamy’s impressions are available from an illuminating interview³ he granted to A. G. Nadar a few months after the delivery of the Supreme Court verdicts. It deserves reading since he knew better on aspects that were ignored by the adjudicators of justice. The introductory note on Duraisamy in the interview mentions,

“... Typical, you can say, of the man who saw the Rajiv Gandhi assassination accused in a different light. When the world condemned them, Duraisamy was among the few who sympathized at their plight. Unshaken by a frightening volley of hate mail and threats, he stood his ground to defend what seemed indefensible then. And succeeded. By snatching life for 22 of the 26 accused from the jaws of death: 19 acquitted and the sentence of three reduced to life. In his modest apartment in Madras, the soft-spoken lawyer spoke to A. G. Nadar about his defence.”

Note of explanation: the italics within parentheses are as in the original interview. Other descriptions within parentheses have been added by me, for clarification purposes.

Q: Since when you have been practising law?

Duraisamy: 1970.

Q: You have always been a criminal defence lawyer?

Duraisamy: Yes.

Q: When did you become a member of the Dravida Kazhagam?

Duraisamy: Since my school days I have been a follower of Periyar [*E. V. Ramasamy Naicker, founder of the Dravida movement*]. Even today I am a follower. We have formed a separate party called Periyar Dravida Kazhagam three years back.

Q: When did you get involved with the Sri Lanka Tamil issue?

Duraisamy: Since the issue started we have been involved in it — 1983. After the massacres in the northern parts, around Jaffna, all of India sympathised with them. We in the Dravida Kazhagam supported them wholeheartedly.

Q: Before this case [i.e., Rajiv assassination trial], have you handled anything that involved so much publicity?

Duraisamy: During the Emergency [of 1975–77] there were a lot of excesses in jail. I was in jail for a year under the MISA. People were tortured, some were beaten to death. After the Emergency a commission was appointed under Justice

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Ismail. I represented the victims. We examined the prison officials, jailers and superintendents. From their mouth I was able to get the answer that they had exceeded their authority. That was my first brush with the government.

Q: And then this case.

Duraisamy: Yes!

Q: When the court sentenced the accused to die, were you disappointed?

Duraisamy: Of course, I was disappointed. The outcome of the arguments looked like they were in our favour. They should have been acquitted there [*by the trial court*] itself. Even the Supreme Court judgment shocked me. I don't think they will hang four of them. There is no evidence at all.

Q: Do you expect all of them to be acquitted?

Duraisamy: Definitely. They have not committed any offence at all.

Q: Not committed any offence at all, or not committed any offence that can be proved in court?

Duraisamy: They have not committed any offence.

Q: You believe that.

Duraisamy: Yes!

Q: What were they doing in Sriperumbudur?

Duraisamy: Sivarasan and the others?

Q: Yes.

Duraisamy: They committed [*the crime*]. These people are innocent.

Q: So you are not talking about the LTTE. Only these accused.

Duraisamy: Yes! Only these.

Q: You pleaded in the trial court and then you pleaded in the Supreme Court. They have handed death sentences to four of your clients.

Duraisamy: The Terrorist and Disruptive (Prevention) Act expired in 1996. Now the Supreme Court itself has said that in this case TADA is not applicable. They have acquitted the charges under TADA. Then the proceedings in the TADA court have to go. The court says there is no terrorist activity in Rajiv Gandhi's case. If there is no terrorist activity, then the TADA court has no jurisdiction. So the proceedings in the TADA court will not be applicable in this case. The case has to be reopened. Statements and confessions recorded under TADA cannot be, should not be, considered. When you take away those statements and the confessions, there is no case at all. There is no evidence.

Q: You mean they have to be tried by a regular court now.

Duraisamy: Only then should it be relied upon.

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Q: What about the photographs retrieved from the dead photographer’s camera?

Duraisamy: Sivarasan, Subha and Dhanu were seen there. We are not denying that.

Q: Even Nalini was there.

Duraisamy: We are not denying that. Other than Nalini, there were thousands of people there. [*now Tamil Rajiv Congress leader*] Vazhapadi [Ramamurthy] was there. [*now Tamil Maanila Congress leader*] Karuppaiah Moopanar was there.

Q: They were Indians involved in the election campaign. Not Sri Lankans, who has nothing to do with the election.

Duraisamy: Nalini is an Indian.

Q: The other three? [referring to Sivarasan, Dhanu and Subha]

Duraisamy: The other three came only for killing Rajiv Gandhi.

Q: Not these four accused?

Duraisamy: No! Not these four accused. None of them were there.

Q: They were elsewhere?

Duraisamy: They were elsewhere. Actually, at that time according to the police, Perarivalan [18th accused] was seeing a cinema at the Devi theatre.

Q: So your entire argument is that because the Supreme Court did not uphold the TADA act in this case, the entire case becomes invalid?

Duraisamy: Not only that. There are other certain points.

Q: Please tell us.

Duraisamy: There are so many contradictory statements in the confession. According to one, Sivarasan was taken to Bangalore from Madras on 28th June and he was left in Bangalore on the 29th morning.

Q: Inside a petrol tanker?

Duraisamy: Yes. This is in the confession statement of three accused. Another statement says that on the 30th of June, Sivarasan asked Santhan to come over to the Ashok Nagar cinema theatre. They were staying with a party in Madras. Now which confession has to be relied on? The court says we believe both confessions. This is not proper or possible. Like this there are so many contradictions.

Q: There is Ranganath, your client, coming out with stories that the Special Investigation Team’s D. R. Kartikeyan says he never told him. In one of the affidavits before the Jain Commission he had said the same thing. Also, in one of your petitions before the trial court, he gave the same facts.

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Duraisamy: In this case we used the statement because Ranganath’s statement said only about this case.

Q: Apart from the LTTE, is there somebody else involved?

Duraisamy: Already he has said that in an affidavit to the Jain Commission when he was in Poonamalle jail. We have filed many petitions too. Now he is revealing it to the press that Chandra Swami and others are involved. We do not know why the Jain Commission didn’t act.

Q: The Jain Commission did not say anything. It is Karthikeyan who is denying it now.

Duraisamy: Even before, they were told that Sivarasan used to talk about Chandra Swami and help from some other quarters in Delhi. They were threatened by the investigating authorities and beaten up by the police. He has lost his front teeth because of that.

Q: Does it look like they were protecting somebody?

Duraisamy: They want to throw the whole accusation against the LTTE only. They don’t want to see anything beyond that.

Q: Internationally, did somebody financed the LTTE?

Duraisamy: We do not know if the LTTE was financed or where they picked up the people. They could have been engaged by the real conspirators, of course. That part we do not know.

Q: There are rumours that the LTTE is targeting Sonia Gandhi. Is there any substance to it?

Duraisamy: Even the Supreme Court says the LTTE must have known that if they kill an Indian leader in India they will lose support of the people. Can we expect that at this stage they will do something like that? It is a rumour started by the CBI or some others who are frustrated because they lost in the Supreme Court.

Q: Rajiv Gandhi was killed. Seventeen others died. You feel you did justice by defending the accused?

Duraisamy: Of course, I feel sorry. The real culprits should be punished.

Q: Not these people.

Duraisamy: Definitely not.

Q: What was the public reaction like when you took up this case?

Duraisamy: Everybody was afraid. All the advocates were scared. I did not find any reason not to appear for them. The public reaction was against me. There were so many threatening calls. Congressmen attacked my office, my house. Even then I did not ask for protection. Even now I do not ask for protection. I thought I will appear for the innocent. I have to defend the innocent.

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Q: Guilty or innocent, everybody deserves a lawyer. What about your wife and children? Your child must have been in school then.

Duraisamy: My family was proud of me.

Q: They supported you. So are all the people in your house members of the Dravida Kazhagam?

Duraisamy: *[Laughs]*

Q: Do you think this case will affect your future?

Duraisamy: Yes! Definitely.

Q: All the ‘wrong’ cases will come to you.

Duraisamy: Wrong cases or right cases, rowdies and *goondas* will not come to me. This kind of political cases will come. In the RSS office bomb blasts, I am defending some of the accused.

Q: We heard that P. Nedumaran of the Tamil Desiya Iyakam collected Rs. 3.4 crore [Rs. 34 million] for this case. How come you are living in this house?

Duraisamy: *[Laughs]* We did not collect so much. Of course, we had to spend a lot of money. The defence consists of a team of lawyers. We had to stay in Delhi.

Q: For that you got people. Juniors and seniors?

Duraisamy: Yes.

Q: So nobody wanted to be the main defence counsel, but they didn’t mind assisting you.

Duraisamy: After two or three years everybody was willing to come out openly.

Q: Who is the senior advocate in Delhi?

Duraisamy: N. Natarajan.

Q: Anything you would like to tell us?

Duraisamy: No.

In his interview, the defense lawyer Duraisamy pointed out only one example of the contradiction, with an added note, “Like this, there are so many contradictions.” **Having studied the verdicts of Justice Wadhwa and Justice Thomas**, I present below contradictions relating to the arrest records of 16th accused Ravi.

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PUZZLING ARREST RECORDS OF RAVI, THE 16TH ACCUSED

Ravi, the 16th accused, was identified as an Indian citizen. First I quote directly from the verdicts of Justice Wadhwa and Justice Thomas. Within parenthesis of each cited date, I cite the appropriate date with month noted in alphabetical form in italics.

“Ravi (A-16), Suseendran (A-17), Sivarasan, Subha, Kanthan and Murugesan collected at the seashore to take a boat for Sri Lanka. That was 10.6.1991 [*i.e. June 10, 1991*]. A message was, however received that the boat got hit in the sea near Jaffna and all 11 persons who were coming to India died.” [*Wadhwa’s verdict*]

“In his confession Ravi (A-16) had shown his various attempts for him and others to leave the country and his being in constant touch with Pottu Amman through wireless set installed at Dindigul. On 28.7.1991 [*i.e. July 28, 1991*], Ravi (A-16) along with Kanthan and Ramanan went to Sri Lanka and met Pottu Amman.” [*Wadhwa’s verdict*]

“Ultimately Ravi (A-16) stated that he returned to India. He left Sri Lanka on 10.8.1991 [*i.e. Aug. 10, 1991*] with various weapons, 12 gold biscuits and 15 code sheets.” [*Wadhwa’s verdict*]

“On 21.8.1991 [*i.e. Aug. 21, 1991*] Ravi (A-16) was arrested by the police.” [*Wadhwa’s verdict*]

“In the confession made on 12.12.1991 [*i.e. Dec. 12, 1991*] by Ravi (A-16) in that case, he said as under: . . . Then he again went to Sri Lanka on 23.8.1991 [*i.e. Aug. 23, 1991*] when boat arrived from there. Suseendran (A-17) did not accompany him. He met Pottu Amman on 28.8.1991 [*i.e. Aug. 28, 1991*]. He gave him further arms and ammunition and also 12 gold biscuits weighing 10 tolas each. He returned to India on 10.9.1991 [*i.e. Sept. 10, 1991*]. He was arrested on 23.10.1991 [*i.e. Oct. 23, 1991*].” [*Wadhwa’s verdict*]

However, Justice Thomas in his verdict, makes Ravi as a Sri Lankan citizen, and records that, “A-16 (Ravichandran) is a Sri Lankan citizen. He was arrested on 20-10-1991 [*i.e. Oct. 20, 1991*] in connection with Rajiv Gandhi murder case. The difference in this arrest date, Oct. 20 or Oct. 23, 1991, could be a legitimate clerical error. But, the table providing the dates of arrest, confession and nationality in Justice Wadhwa’s verdict, state,

“nationality Indian; date of arrest 6.1.92 [*i.e. Jan. 6, 1992*]; date of confession 14.2.92 [*i.e. Feb. 14, 1992*].”

If these dates are to be believed, Jan. 6, 1992 arrest was Ravi’s third arrest! To chronologically recapitulate this messy schedule underwent by Ravi, the 16th accused: he left Sri Lanka on Aug. 10, 1991. He was first arrested

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on Aug. 21, 1991. Then, he went to Sri Lanka on Aug. 23, 1991. He returned to India on Sept. 10, 1991. He was arrested for the second time (?) on Oct. 20, 1991 [according to Justice Thomas] or Oct. 23, 1991 [according to Justice Wadhwa]. He made a confession on Dec. 12, 1991. Then, Ravi was arrested again on Jan. 6, 1992. He made a second confession on Feb. 14, 1992.

MY OPINION ON RAVI’S ARREST RECORD

This postulation is derived from the travel records, as culled from the verdict of Justice Wadhwa. *One wonders whether Ravi was released on bail after his first arrest on Aug. 21, 1991? If not, how come he could move to Sri Lanka two days later on Aug. 23, 1991? These two dates have some significance.* Sivarasan, Subha and five other associates were reported committing suicide in Bangalore on Aug. 20, 1991 [see below, the statement of S. B. Chavan, the then Minister of Home Affairs, in Lok Sabha on Aug. 21, 1991]. Assuming Ravi was arrested on the following day, one can even postulate whether he was used by the Indian Intelligence operatives as a ‘reluctant mole’ to receive ‘intelligence’ about the activities of LTTE leadership in Jaffna. Thus, he could have been requested to travel to Jaffna (with that purpose) on Aug. 23, 1991, following his first arrest. Then, after Ravi’s return to India on Sept. 10, 1991, he was arrested for the second time on Oct. 20 or Oct. 23, 1991. *This postulation may become credible (I repeat, credible!), if the dates of Ravi’s arrest recorded in the verdict of Justice Wadhwa are indeed true.*

If the supreme court verdict itself is riddled with such *consequential contradictions* (unattributable to clerical error, which abounds in the spelling of names), what confidence one could have in the submitted confessions of accused and the recorded evidence during the hearing of the trial. My proposal is that, it becomes imperative that the impressions of defence lawyer Duraisamy on the contradictions which existed in Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial deserve to be recorded in full for posterity [in whatever means available such as videotape, audio tape, transcribed book] before his memory fails.

UNTOUCHED JIG-SAW PUZZLES

UNUSUAL DEATH OF SHANMUGAM

If Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial, prosecuted by the SIT personnel with their Procrustean data-torturing mindset, is full of mysteries, the disappearance and unusual death of one of the deceased accused N. Shanmugam, aged 40, on the night of July 19, 1991 deserves an exceptional ranking. This tragedy occurred before the reported suicides of Sivarasan and Subha in Bangalore. In the original charge sheet prepared by the SIT in May 1992, Shanmugam was listed as

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the 35th accused. According to this charge sheet,

“Shanmugam (A-35) with long association with LTTE help to smuggle arms and explosives between Jaffna and Kodiakkarai. In the area around his house he had got buried under the sand 121 cases of high explosives, wireless communication equipment and petrol in cans for the use of the conspirators. He arranged for the reception of the group of nine persons and other and actively assisted them in carrying out the object of the conspiracy. When he was arrested and recoveries of the aforesaid materials were effected at his instance, he escaped from custody and committed suicide.”⁴

Some kind of suicide that should have been! Facts pertaining to the unusual death of Shanmugam remain hidden. But, for record, the impressions expressed by some of the Indian members of parliament in the floor of Lok Sabha, ten days following this unusual death are provided below. Though every one of them had their own perceptions and biases (Some criticising LTTE for their activities in the Indian soil), in retrospect, one can judge that in totality they doubted the credibility of the law enforcement personnel in India, *even before the SIT prepared the original charge-sheet for the Rajiv assassination trial*. Among the four MPs from Tamil Nadu who spoke in the Lok Sabha on July 29, 1991, Thangkabalu, Padma and Tindivanam Ramamurthee belonged to the Congress Party and Raja Ravivarma was from the Anna DMK Party.

K. V. THANGKABALU (REPRESENTING DHARMAPURI)

“...Today’s discussion is pertaining to the incident which had taken place in Tamil Nadu. We know that there was an announcement of the CBI’s investigation particularly under the dynamic leadership of Shri Kartikeyan, a well-known disciplined and outstanding officer of the police cadre. After his induction and stewardship, we heard and we are also knowing that effective steps are taken to get the culprits of the [Rajiv Gandhi] assassination. What was surprising Madam, with regard to Shanmugam’s case is that, as many honourable colleague also has said, a person was in police custody and he was allowed to go out and the next morning, he was seen hanging near the guest house where he was interrogated. This is a strange incident. Madam, I would ask the hon. Home Minister as to how was it possible for him to escape. We want to know whether the officers who were involved in this incident belong to the CBI or the State Police. Under whose custody was he able to go out of the tourist bungalow?

Secondly, the police and the CBI version say, that in the next 24 hours, they were searching for him. He had escaped and they were searching him. Who was on the search? Who is responsible for this and what was their responsibility? And they are saying that the next morning, he was found hanging near the same premises of 50 meters.

This is not only mysterious but the people who were having lot of hope in the

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CBI are now losing hope. That very hope is destroyed. I would like to know whether such kind of officers who were involved in the incident are a party to the conspirators or the persons who made Shanmugam to be killed. Who was the real instrumental behind this scenario? This is to be found out.

Madam, another point is that, which appeared in the press, Shanmugam was supposed to go out of the house to wash his hands after having food. When there was a wash basin within the guest house, where was the necessity for him to go out and wash his hands? It means that somebody, in connivance with the Police or the officers in charge, allowed him to go out of the guest house. This point is very clear. Only the Home Minister will be knowing as to what happened truly. The investigating agencies, the vigilance agencies and so many other officers are also trying to find out the truth. But so far no information is known to the public or the people concerned.

Another point is that he went out at night and in the next morning, he was hanged to death or supposed to be hanging. Everybody’s understanding is that while one is hanging to death, his feet will certainly be above the ground level. But Shanmugam’s feet was touching the ground. So, certainly he must not have hanged himself. Certainly, he was made to die and after he was dead he was brought to the tree and was hanged down. That must have happened. The common sense says that if someone hangs himself to death then his body will always be hanging above the earth. But the photo clearly shows that he was hanging with his feet touching the ground. I think the Home Minister knows it and we wish him to clarify this point.

Then there is another news in the Tamil Nadu newspaper. I would like to quote from a Tamil Nadu evening daily, the *Makkal Kural*. It says that one Superintendent of Police was not allowed to go inside the bungalow where the investigation was going on and also that the police authorities are supposed to help them to coordinate with the CBI. So, the S. P. was not allowed to go into the guest house. The CBI authorities now say that the two police constables who are now suspended clearly shows that they are responsible for the escape of Shri Shanmugam. If that is so then the action is right but the State Police says that the two constables were responsible to help the CBI and they were not responsible to guard Shri Shanmugam. SIT, that is the Special Investigating Team, consisting of the CBI officers, the I. B. officer and the State Police. The Hon. Home Minister may be knowing the composition of this team exactly. Contradictory versions are being given to the press and public and this shows that they are not going in the right direction; that there is some confusion and they are thus accusing each other. It appears that they are not going in the right direction in which they are assigned to go.

I would like to ask the hon. Home Minister that if this is the fate of the case of a leader of the great stature like Shri Rajiv Gandhi then what will happen to the case of an ordinary common man of this country. I remember that when Shri Rajiv Gandhi died everybody in this country wept as if he was their own brother or a family member. The way this case is being handled, I very much

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doubt whether we will be able to do justice or whether we will be able to reach to the culprit who was behind his assassination. Whosoever he may be, whomsoever they may be supported by, the Government’s duty is to bring them to light and punish them. This is the duty of the Government.”⁵

B. RAJA RAVIVARMA (REPRESENTING POLLACHI)

“Mr. Chairman, the statement of the hon. Home Minister made in the House on the issue of the death of Shri Shanmugam is totally unbelievable. Shanmugam, an accused in the assassination of the former Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi and he surrendered voluntarily to the police on 17-7-1991 [i.e. July 17, 1991]. It was not that the CBI or SIT caught him. Therefore, it is not at all believable that he escaped on 19-7-1991 [i.e. July 19, 1991] and committed suicide just two days after surrender. If he wanted to escape from the issue, there was no question of his voluntary surrender and then escaping and committing suicide. So, we want to know whether it is a suicide or homicide.

When Shanmugam was washing his hands, the constables were not around him. They were supplying food for the CBI and SIT officials. I would like to know that the State Police who had been posted there were meant to keep a watch on Shanmugam or to serve food for the CBI and SIT officials. The services of our State Police had been misused by the CBI and SIT officials.

It is stated that Shanmugam escaped under the cover of darkness. The question of darkness could come only after Shanmugam escaping from the building. Therefore, I strongly suspect the role played by the CBI and SIT officials behind this issue. The Tourist Bungalow at Vedaranyam in Thanjavur district where the accused Shanmugam was under arrest is having all facilities like wash basin and bathrooms within the premises. Then, how had Shanmugam been allowed to go outside to wash his hands?

We feel surprised that how an accused under the custody could have a 15 feet rope with him with which he was reported to have hanged himself? By and by, he was not accustomed to wearing lungi, even then how lungi was found at the site? Sir, is it true that his feet were touching the ground while hanging? If so, how can anybody hang himself like that? I want to ask the hon. Home Minister, through you, why the postmortem was done at Nagapattinam General Hospital instead of teaching medical institution at the Tanjavur Medical College which is equidistant from Vedaranyam and where there are latest sophisticated instruments and forensic experts available to pronounce an expert opinion? Has the postmortem concluded that asphyxiation is due to hanging or otherwise? Moreover, is it true that the place in which he was found also belongs to a private individual who is in anyway connected with the smuggling activities? The Home Minister says that he himself is not satisfied with the replies and the reports furnished by the officials of SIT. What is the nature of the suspicion? Will you take this House in confidence by informing the same? The officials who are responsible for this incident should be identified and they must be enquired first, before Shivarajan. With this I conclude.”⁶

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DR. (MRS) PADMA (REPRESENTING NAGAPATTINAM)

“Mr. Chairman Sir, ... As a doctor, I would like to say that it would have been better if the body of Shanmugam would have been sent to a teaching institution for post-mortem. So far as the post-mortem report is concerned, to know whether it is homicide or suicide, have they taken the X-ray of the hyoid bone or preserved the hyoid bone? These are the points on which I would like to know.”⁷

TINDIVANAM K. RAMAMURTHEE (REPRESENTING TINDIVANAM)

“Sir, I will make a very brief speech. ... Shanmugam had surrendered himself through a lawyer in the High Court. When he had surrendered himself through a lawyer, it means that he wanted to live and he wanted protection also. The importance of Shanmugam was felt more by the investigation team than anybody else because when he was taken to Vedaranyam, he was not taken by road or rail but he was taken by a helicopter. And such a person, after reaching Vedaranyam, did not have that much of protection and was not guarded. He escaped from the place where he had been kept. And after the escape, a case was registered against him for escaping from police custody. Then suicide or murder, whatever it may be, came to the notice of the investigation team. After that, a case was registered against Shanmugam for suicide. But there is no case against the police for having allowed him to escape. There is no case against the police for having allowed him to commit suicide or for having allowed the murder to take place.

When he escaped a very few police men were guarding the place who say that they were not in a position to run after him to catch him or to find him out. But immediately after he escaped, within hours, several hundreds of men were put on duty to search him out. Wherever the person was kept, whether in Vedaranyam or Kodikarai, police should have been guarding the bungalow or the guest house where he was kept. I do not know as to why the investigation was not pushed in that direction and why action was not taken in that regard. Shanmugam, as is revealed by the SIT, was a very well-known smuggler in that very area and the sea coast is known for several smugglers. There must have been a competition among these smugglers. As my other friend had put it, there are other people in that area who are involved with the LTTE or the Sri Lankan terrorists who came there.

There was a report in the press also that there may be very many politicians there who were on the payrolls of Shanmugam. Who knows that they were not afraid of Shri Shanmugam’s revealing the facts which may give some new clues to Shri Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination case. ...”⁸

The *India Today* magazine carried a grotesque photo of Shanmugam’s body hanging by a rope, where his feet were almost touching the ground. Anirudhya Mitra reporting the story from Madras had observed:

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“... The post-mortem was conducted the same day at Nagapatnam, 40 km from Vedaranyam. The report, taking note of the saliva, emission of semen and stools, declared it suicide. But the SIT story and post-mortem are riddled with loopholes that militate against forensic wisdom:

1. There was no rope mark or bruise on the victim’s neck which the rope would have positively left if he was alive at the time of hanging.
2. The tongue wasn’t protruding.
3. The face was not congested with a rush of blood. And the eyes had not popped out if he was hanged.
4. The saliva, stool and semen discharges could have happened in the event of his being strangled too.
5. No scratch marks on his thighs — for in the last minute struggle and pain, the hands, unless tied, instinctively scratch the thighs. If Shanmugam was tied up, how could he commit suicide? Neither were skin particles found in his nails.
6. The only way he could have hanged himself was by climbing the tree, putting a noose around his neck and jumping. The impact would have broken the neck bones or ruptured the arteries which was not the case.
7. The rope from which he was hanging was 14 feet long. Where did he get it in the dead of night?

These were clear pointers that Shanmugam’s death did not occur due to hanging. The evidence suggests the death took place in custody as even the escape story sounds dubious...”⁹

Even with all these contra-indications presented in the Lok Sabha and the news magazines of India within a month of the tragedy, for the SIT to record in its charge sheet, prepared in May 1992, that Shanmugam committed suicide was nothing but audacious. Karthikeyan, the chief of SIT, has affirmed the same (without providing convincing answers!) in his recently published book¹⁰. Subramanian Swamy reproduced a doctored version of the grotesque photo of Shanmugam’s body — where the feet touching the ground have been clipped. If this doctoring of the photo was intentional, it provides a proof for Swamy’s perfidy. On the other hand, if Swamy had used the photo unintentionally (without checking the original photo, published in the *India Today* magazine in 1991), then it again proves Swamy’s lackadaisical research and care-free attitude for facts. Following a six page description of Shanmugam’s death, Swamy also evades this issue with a statement,

“Mr. Shanmugam’s mysterious death, whether by suicide or murder is immaterial to the SIT’s case especially since even the LTTE defence counsel did not make an issue of it.”¹¹

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UNUSUAL DEATH OF SIVARASAN

In the original charge sheet prepared by the SIT in May 1992, S. Packiachandran @ Raghuvaran @ Sivarasan was listed as the 4th accused. The then Minister of Home Affairs, Shri S. B. Chavan, presented the official version of the death of Sivarasan via a statement made at the floor of the Lok Sabha on Aug.21, 1991. It was entitled as, *Encounter with LTTE militants on 20th August 1991 at Konanakunte near Bangalore*. Excerpts:

“I rise to apprise this August House on the details of the incident at Konanakunte near Bangalore in which Sivarasan, one of the main accused in Shri Rajiv Gandhi assassination case and six others were found dead.

In pursuance of the consent given by the Government of Tamil Nadu to investigate the case of Shri Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination, a Special Investigation Team was formed. The SIT has examined 346 witnesses and conducted searches at 49 places seizing incriminating material. 14 accused persons were also arrested. As you are all aware, the most important accused who had remained to be arrested were Sivarasan and Subha. A nation-wide manhunt was launched and efforts were being made to locate the hide-out of these main conspirators.

Suspecting that some LTTE militants were hiding in Muttati and Beroota villages of Madhya District, raids, in all 12 LTTE cadres were taken by police on 17/18-8-91 [i.e, Aug.17-18, 1991]. In these raids, in all, 12 LTTE cadres were found dead after committing suicide by consuming cyanide and five suspect who were apprehended were admitted in Bowring Hospital, Bangalore.

During investigation, it was ascertained that a person by name Anjanappa of Puttenhalli had helped the LTTE militants to find houses in Muttati and Beroota. Further, a diary containing a list of 26 militants was also found at Muttati. Based on this information, another person by name Ranganath was also apprehended by Bangalore City Police. This person gave information about a house in Konanakunte which was arranged by him for six militants. The City Police along with SIT surrounded this house on the night of 18-8-1991 [i.e, Aug. 18, 1991] and kept a continuous watch on the house. Further, one person by name Prem Kumar was apprehended at Konanakunte crossing. He was the man who was supplying food etc. to the LTTE militants hiding in Konanakunte house. Further enquiries revealed the presence of LTTE militants including Sivarasan and perhaps Subha in the above house.

To try and capture Sivarasan and others alive, watch was continued throughout the 19th and the entire area was encircled and guarded by plain clothes men and NSG commando positioned strategically. Additional reinforcement of NSG commandos and medical expert with latest anticyanide antidote were requisitioned from Delhi. It was decided not to storm the place as similar action earlier on several occasions had resulted in even minor LTTE functionaries committing suicide. On 19th, around 7:00 pm, the LTTE militants holed

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up inside the house, opened fire indiscriminately without any apparent reason. The NSG returned the fire. This exchange of fire continued for about 30 minutes and three police personnel (one of NSG and two of Karnataka Police) sustained injuries. The injured are out of danger. The militants opened fire either because they were wanting to escape under the cover of fire or because of some movements close to the house where local residents were trying to move a broken down lorry. Two militants who came out, perhaps in a bid to escape ran back inside the house. Later at around 8:00 pm, about 7–8 more rounds were fired by the militants for about half a minute.

After the arrival of the additional reinforcements and the medical team with the latest anticyanide antidote from Delhi, in the early hours of 20th August, the house was stormed at about 6:30 am. The NSG commandos blasted the door and entered the house. They found the dead bodies of 7 LTTE militants. They included the wanted Sivarasan and a woman who is obviously Subha but whose identity requires evidential confirmation. Efforts are on to identify all the other bodies. One AK 47 rifle and a 9 mm pistol and several rounds of ammunition were recovered. Sivarasan was found with a bullet injury in the temple of his head. All others obviously died due to cyanide poisoning. It is being ascertained whether Sivarasan also consumed cyanide capsule. The bodies were shifted to Victoria Hospital for post-mortem examination. The whole operation was supervised by CBI Director, SIT Chief and the City Police Commissioner of Bangalore and the NSG officers. Meanwhile, the SIT will continue investigation of case relentlessly with the objective of unraveling the entire conspiracy behind the assassination, identifying and arresting the remaining accused person and eventually charge sheeting the case in court.”¹²

Subramanian Swamy had also raised doubts about the death of Sivarasan. To quote,

“Sivarasan, for whom a massive manhunt was mounted by SIT, was finally tracked down to a house on the outskirts of Bangalore. He was admittedly the leader of the killer squad and should have been aware of the highlights of the conspiracy. But the intriguing point was that, while eight others of the squad were found dead by consuming cyanide (in accordance with the LTTE dictum) Sivarasan was found dead with bullet injuries. Sivarasan’s mortal remains were quickly cremated, while belt-bomb girl Dhanu’s remains had been preserved in Chennai as a prosecution exhibit. Why the difference?”¹³

That even Swamy (the anti-LTTE politician) found it difficult to gulp the presented official version of Sivarasan’s death and the subsequent quick cremation of his mortal remains indicates the abysmal professionalism of India’s law enforcement personnel. Question arises that if there was no hanky-panky on Sivarasan’s death, why his mortal remains were hurriedly cremated? Rajeesh Sharma, the journalist stated that “Sivarasan and Subha were cremated

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amid tight security at Bangalore’s Wilon Garden crematorium on September 3, 1991”¹⁴

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Rajiv Assassination: The Conspiracy Angle

PIRABHAKARAN’S DENIAL IN AN INTERVIEW TO BBC

TO COMPREHEND the conspiracy angle, chronologically one should study the sequence of events following the reported deaths of Sivasaran, Subha and five of their associates in Bangalore on August 20, 1991. Chris Morris, the then BBC Colombo correspondent recorded an interview with Pirabhakaran in Jaffna on Sept.1, 1991. Pirabhakaran’s answers to three questions asked by Morris were as follows:

Morris: “Turning to your relations with India. They are particularly bad at the moment. Does that worry you?”

Pirabhakaran: Our organization has had problems with India for quite a long time. The government of India intervened in the Tamil problem in 1983 and provided military assistance to various Tamil groups and created new Tamil militant organizations. In 1987 the government of India entered into an agreement with Sri Lanka and imposed a solution on our people. We were opposed to the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement, and as a consequence the war broke out between India and the LTTE. So for a long time India was acting on its own national interest, but we were upholding the interests of our people. As a consequence there have been contradictions between the LTTE and the government of India. The present hostility is a product of this long historical bitterness. Therefore we are really concerned and to some extent disappointed over the approach of the Indian government.

Morris: Can you tell me more specifically about the clamp down on your activities in Tamil Nadu. What has been the worst aspect of that clamp down on your fight in Sri Lanka?

Pirabhakaran: For a long time the LTTE have been used as pawns in the political chess game in Tamil Nadu. The government of India as well as the Tamil Nadu state government have been making calculated efforts to turn the Tamil Nadu people against our struggle. Deliberate attempts are being made to undermine the image of our organization. But we can say confidently that there are vast sections of the people in Tamil Nadu who support the Tiger movement and the legitimate cause for which we are fighting. As long as there is this continuing support I don’t think our struggle will be in any way affected.

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Morris: Now I know you have denied any involvement in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. But the Indian investigators are convinced that you are responsible.

Pirabhakaran: Our movement is not in anyway involved in the killing of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi. So far this accusation has not been corroborated. It is true that the government of India has been engaged in a massive disinformation campaign against our movement, based on this false accusation.” ¹

This was the strongest denial offered by Pirabhakaran to an international news organization pertaining to LTTE’s role in Rajiv Gandhi assassination. Pirabhakaran or any of his official representatives has neither offered any revision nor retraction to this 1991 stand.

HAMISH McDONALD’S REPORT IN THE *Far Eastern Economic Review*

Impressions of Hamish McDonald, the New Delhi correspondent of *Far Eastern Economic Review* magazine, appeared in mid-September 1991. Excerpts:

“Working from the forensic and photographic evidence, Karthikeyan’s team quickly rolls up the LTTE support network that aided the assassins. Reports say they also knew from radio intercepts that the group leader, a 30-year old one-eyed man called Sivarasan, and a back-up woman assassin were still in the country after failing to rendezvous with a getaway boat from Jaffna. Finally, on 20 August [1991], Sivarasan and the woman are cornered by police in neighbouring Karnataka state. They and five others take cyanide in LTTE fashion. Sivarasan shoots himself in the head as well.

What is missing so far is the positive link to the ultimate instigator, and a clear motive. The involvement of ethnic Tamils, the location and the suicide element all point to the LTTE. ‘How is anyone else going to find a Sri Lankan lady willing to blow herself up?’ said one diplomat. The plot looks neat — almost too neat. *Why would the LTTE take the risk of hiring a photographer if it proposed to hide its hand? Why did Sivarasan and his group not get back to Jaffna in the four or five days before the pictures were published? Why were so many LTTE sympathizers involved in such a sensitive operation?* How did they get through security? [**Note:** Italics as in original.] Was it only police carelessness that allowed Shanmugan to escape from custody, to be found dead later — an apparent suicide.

Conspiracy theorists have had a field day, working back from the question ‘who benefited?’ The most obvious beneficiary goes beyond most imaginations: results from the first day of voting on 20 May indicate Congress would have lost seats but for the sympathy factor. The Sri Lankan leadership hated Gandhi’s assertion of an Indian Raj and has been helped by the backlash against the Tigers. But Colombo has virtually no ability to operate covertly in Tamil Nadu.

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For its part, the LTTE denies any involvement and profess not to know the alleged assassins. Spokesman Anton Balasingham suggested a host of Indian groups or aggrieved Sri Lankan individuals could have done the job. He said the Tigers had twice sent emissaries to talk with Gandhi in New Delhi in March, and had found him cordial. Many other sources, including rival Tamils and foreign diplomats believe otherwise. They said the LTTE could have feared Gandhi’s return to power would lead to renewed Indian meddling in Sri Lankan affairs.

Tiger leader V. Prabhakaran is also said to have held a deep personal grudge against Gandhi for having put under arrest while visiting New Delhi, and over the deaths of close colleagues during fighting with the Indian peace-keeping force. This school of thought assigns a degree of ‘irrationality’ to Prabhakaran.”²

THREE PUBLISHED COMMENTS ON McDONALD’S REPORT

After reading McDonald’s report on the assassination conspiracy, I submitted my comments to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, which appeared in print a month later. This comment elicited a sarcastic note from a Sinhalese residing in Colombo, for which I submitted a rebuttal, which was also published in the same magazine in November 1991. For record, I provide below these three brief communications in entirety. My first letter was as follows:

“I agree with Hamish McDonald’s report on the murder of Rajiv Gandhi [12 Sept.], that though ‘the involvement of ethnic Tamils, the location and the suicide element all point to the LTTE’, the murder theory formulated by the Indian investigation team ‘looks almost too neat’ to believe.

In his last interview in *The New York Times* [22 May] shortly before he was killed, Gandhi stated that ‘India and Indian leaders could be targets of outside powers as the country took on a larger role in the region’. It was also reported that when asked whether he had the CIA in mind as the outside force, he ‘smirked’. Gandhi’s reference to ‘a larger role in the region’ is not too cryptic a remark to fathom what he had in mind.

According to news reports released after the murder, Khaled el-Sheikh, the PLO’s chief envoy in India, said that he gave Gandhi a warning from PLO leader Yasser Arafat ‘about a plot to assassinate him’ some five weeks before he was killed on 21 May. The warning could have been about the activities of the Mossad, the secret service arm of Israel. And Gandhi’s reference to outside powers could be interpreted as a natural extension of his ‘intelligence’ received from the PLO. If the LTTE planned to murder Gandhi, how could one explain that Arafat came to know about this plot? It is ridiculous to believe that Arafat spied on the LTTE in Jaffna or in jungles of the Vanni region of Sri Lanka.

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

Mossad’s motives in eliminating Gandhi are not incomprehensible, since India under Gandhis (both Indira and Rajiv) has openly supported the causes espoused by the PLO. Last year, Mossad also suffered a loss of face when one of its former agents, Victor Ostrovsky, exposed its nefarious activities in his much publicized book, *By Way of Deception*. So it is not improbable to expect that Mossad could have been tempted to redeem its tarnished image among clients, which included the military establishment of Sri Lanka. One wonders why Arafat cannot be contacted and asked in detail about what kind of warning he gave Gandhi and whom he had in mind as the suspects.”³

This letter elicited a response from Mr. U. Pethiyagoda, of Colombo, Sri Lanka. It said:

“In reference to the letter by Sachi Sri Kantha [Letters, 3 Oct.], a ‘smirk’ by the late Rajiv Gandhi shortly before his brutal murder, the purported ‘warning’ five weeks before his killing, and a specious assumption that Mossad had ‘lost face’ by the publication of a book by an ‘ex-Mossad agent’, is apparently good enough evidence to suspect hands other than those of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for Gandhi’s murder.

The painstaking and impressive evidence uncovered by an Indian investigating team which fairly points the finger at the perpetrators pales into insignificance before the novel line of reasoning of your correspondent. Such impeccable logic of LTTE apologists is not unfamiliar to Sri Lankans. Clearly ‘looking for scapegoats’ continues!”⁴

To Mr. Pethiyagoda’s criticism, I wrote a rebuttal which was published subsequently in the same magazine. To quote,

“One Colombo correspondent [Letters, 7 Nov.] feels irritated by my linking of Israel’s secret service to the murder of Rajiv Gandhi. I wish to note that Mossad’s involvement in the politics of South Asia has been corroborated by Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa himself. On 24 September, Premadasa openly accused Mossad of trying to topple him.

In his address to the Sri Lankan parliament, he said: ‘You know that immediately after the sending back of the IPKF [Indian Peace Keeping Force], I had the Israeli Interests Section removed. In such a context there is nothing to be surprised about the Mossad rising up against me. Please remember that there are among us traitors who have gone to Israeli universities and lectured there and earned dirty money. Don’t forget that for a moment.’

Curiously, when you covered the impeachment crisis faced by Premadasa, this accusation was left out in your news reports. Also one should not forget that a serious assassination attempt was made on Gandhi in Colombo after he signed the now disgraced Gandhi-Jayewardene Peace Accordin mid-1987. Only the poor targeting by the assassin allowed Gandhi to have an additional

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four years of life. Being more inclined to get involved in polemics, the Colombo correspondent makes fun of the warning given to Gandhi five weeks before his death. This warning had come not from an ordinary person. It was given by Yasser Arafat.

While some in Sri Lanka may be impressed by the ‘painstaking evidence uncovered by an Indian investigating team’ which pointed fingers at the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the performance of the Indian sleuths resembled more closely a page from a Marx brothers’ comedy script. The Tamil Nadu police, the Central Bureau of Intelligence and the Research and Analysis Wing of the Indian search team bungled at every step from 21 May to 21 August. The so-called ‘impressive evidence’ could not track the personal details of the female assassin. Nothing is known about her background. The alleged mastermind Sivarajan has been identified by an investigative journalist as one who belonged to the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation until 1986. It was this rebel group which received official patronage from the Indian Government between 1983 and 1986.”⁵

Now in retrospect, after studying the Supreme Court verdicts on the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial, I feel relieved that my observations relating to the performance of the SIT officials and made in November 1991 have stood the test of time. The conspiracy angle of Rajiv Gandhi assassination itself has become more murkier than what I perceived then. For instance, there exists a book detailing the ‘complete photographic record’ of JFK’s final moments and autopsy details.⁶

But, in Rajiv Gandhi’s case, LTTE has been framed by the Indian investigators, based on the 10 frames from a roll of Hari Babhu’s camera. *But he was not the only photographer present on that fateful May 21, 1991 night in Sriperumbudur.* Even as acknowledged by Mr. Kartikeyan, there were numerous other still photographers and video photographers who had captured the final moments of Rajiv Gandhi’s life. What happened to all those photos? Why these photos have not been placed in public domain? Why none of the post-mortem autopsy photos of Rajiv Gandhi, Dhanu and Sivarasan have been released to the public?

THE OSWALD AND RUBY OF THE RAJIV ASSASSINATION

The secrets behind the assassination of John Kennedy were held by his assassin Lee Harvey Oswald, who in turn was assassinated by Jack Ruby. Oswald died two days following Kennedy’s assassination and Ruby was reported dead in January 3, 1967 due to prostrate cancer. In Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination, the roles of Oswald and Ruby were played by Dhanu and Sivarasan. Dhanu died together with Rajiv Gandhi on May 21, 1991 and Sivarasan was reported ‘dead’ in August 20, 1991 — three months following Rajiv’s assassination.

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

The parallels are remarkable, but with one striking difference. Quite a few books have been written about both Oswald and Ruby by a number of independent investigators of JFK assassination. At least that much information (verified and unverified) has been made available. Contrastingly, though over 13 years have passed after Rajiv Gandhi assassination, not a single book has appeared on either Dhanu or Sivarasan. Why? I am under the impression that whatever information available on both Dhanu and Sivarasan have been suppressed by the Indian intelligence agencies, since if all the details are revealed, their Procrustean data-torturing technique linking Pirabhakaran to Rajiv Gandhi assassination would crumble. Another noteworthy issue to ponder is *why during the last 13 years, not a single piece of evidence (video or audio or photograph or letter) had turned up* linking Pirabhakaran with either Sivarasan or Dhanu. If such evidence existed, the SIT officials and Indian journalists would have exploited that to maximum. In the absence of such evidence questions arise whether those two prime assassins linked to Rajiv Gandhi assassination did belong to LTTE. This forms the nucleus of the conspiracy angle of this assassination.

MEAGER DETAILS ON SIVARASAN AND DHANU

The *India Today* magazine first published meager details on Sivarasan and Dhanu in its Aug. 31, 1991 issue. It was authored by Anirudhya Mitra. The details made interesting reading.

“The on-going investigations reveal that he is a man with many names. In the murder of Rajiv Gandhi he was known to the police as Sivarasan, Shivaraj and Thurai. In the killing of EPRLF leader Padmanabha and 14 others in Madras he gained notoriety as Raghuvaran and Raghuappa. Apparently, he assumes a different name for each operation. But his real name is Raja Arumainayagam. He is currently the most hunted criminal in the country carrying a reward of Rs. 10 lakh on his head.

Sivarasan, 32, is an employee of the Sri Lankan Government in the eastern province. Originally from Chavakcherri village in Jaffna, he graduated in humanities, but it is his other qualifications which earned him the trust of the LTTE. He was LTTE’s prime hit man, thanks mainly to his ability to speak Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Hindi fluently. Contrary to reports, his Tamil is sans a Lankan accent. He is also familiar with Indian topography which has served him in good stead in eluding the slew of super sleuths who are tailing him. One of his big advantages is the stark contrast between his side and front profiles. There is hardly any similarity between Haribabu’s photograph of him, which is a side pose, and the front view which appears on his driving licence.

But today Sivarasan seems to have been discarded by the Tigers. With most of his disguises having been publicized, he is no longer good enough for

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‘shadow work’. He is also too junior to be inducted into the LTTE cabinet. He lost his only brother, Arumai, 25, in an IPKF operation in 1988.

The woman who died while killing Rajiv, Dhanu alias Gayatri, is Sivarasan’s cousin. But little else is known about her. Aged 24, she came from a village in Jaffna, called Kupukullai. Intelligence agencies have supplied some of her old pictures to the investigators. When one such picture was shown to the Forensic Science Department, its Director P. Chandra Sekharan said he was fairly certain that it was hers, taken four years ago in Jaffna.

Shubha or Shalini, who carries a reward of Rs. 5 lakh, is also Sivarasan’s cousin. Aged 27, Shubha like Sivarasan stayed back after the assassination to complete unfinished business. Like Dhanu, she too is from Kupukullai. She is slightly handicapped, her right leg being shorter than the left.”⁷

Nine months later, after the SIT officials released their initial charge sheet on Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial on May, 1992, the *India Today* magazine provided profiles of Sivarasan and Dhanu for the second time. These two profiles, presented by Anirudhya Mitra and Prakash Swamy, had revised the ‘purported real names’ of two assassins, from the Aug. 31, 1991 detail. Sivarasan has been now identified as Packiachandran and not Raja Arumainayagam. Dhanu has been now identified as Kalaivathi and not Gayatri. To quote,

SIVARASAN: BORN TO KILL

“It was, by far, the biggest assignment of his terrorist career. But Sivarasan, 33, the mastermind behind the Rajiv Gandhi assassination, had embarked on his hit-and-run course many years ago. The SIT probe has thrown some light on Sivarasan’s chequered past. Indoctrinated by his father, a TULF leader, at a very young age, Sivarasan was first arrested in Batticaloa for distributing leaflets containing pro-Eelam views. While in custody, he wrote Long Live Tamil Eelam on the walls of the lock-up and was severely beaten up for it. This, it seems, marked the beginning of his extremist career. In 1983, Sivarasan joined the TELO and left for India soon after. Here, he received extensive training in handling explosives. He also had an amazing aptitude for learning languages, and picked up all the south Indian languages. A year later, factional rivalry forced him to return home and join the LTTE. His new name was Raghu (Sivarasan - whose real name was Packiachandran — used many aliases: Sivarajan, Rajan, Aravinth).

For many years, Sivarasan worked in the LTTE’s political wing and was responsible for collecting funds from Udupidy, a job at which he was ruthlessly competent. He played an active role during the IPKF operation, even filling in as commander of Vadamarachchi. Still, he was not promoted and remained a lieutenant. His first real break came when he was asked to join the Black Tigers commando force — the suicide squad. Heading the nine-member core assassination team was fraught with danger. And it eventually cost him his life.”⁸

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

If Sivarasan’s profile provided by the SIT officials was full of holes, the same applied to identified woman assassin Dhanu’s profile as well.

DHANU: AN ENIGMA

“She holds the unhappy distinction of being the first-ever human bomb in the country’s history. In LTTE circles, Dhanu, 24, whose real name was Kalaivathi, is held in some awe. So much so that at a public function held in Jaffna last year, Pirabhakaran honoured her father posthumously with a ‘gold medal’ for her role in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi.

Dhanu, who studied till middle school in Batticaloa, was inspired by the Tamil liberation movement at a very young age. In fact, her father, A. Rajaratnam, who is described as Pirabhakaran’s mentor, played a crucial role in moulding the LTTE chief’s thinking during the movement’s formative years between 1972 and 1975. His articles were published in pro-LTTE magazines such as *Veera Vengai* and *Courageous Tigers*. And the SIT is now producing these articles as evidence to bolster its argument that Dhanu had been indoctrinated by her father and this is what motivated the crime rather than her reported rape by the IPKF which, the SIT believes, is part of a disinformation campaign spread by the LTTE.

Dhanu has only one sister, who lives in France. But attempts by SIT officials to elicit information from her have so far drawn a blank. Exactly what prompted Dhanu to undertake her terrible mission is destined to remain an impenetrable mystery. Perhaps forever.”⁹

The supreme court verdicts delivered by Justice Wadhwa, Justice Thomas and Justice Quadri are markedly silent on assassin Dhanu’s background. No mention was made in these verdicts about the reported pro-LTTE magazines *Veera Vengai* and *Courageous Tigers*. Thus, on the strength of supreme court verdicts, one can infer that it was the SIT officials who had spread the disinformation campaign to bolster their Procrustean data-torturing techniques. This is substantiated by J. Ranganath’s (the 26th accused in the assassination trial) revelation in 1999.

RANGANATH’S EXPLOSIVE REVELATION ON SIVARARASAN

Despite the smearing campaign conducted by the SIT official Kartikeyan and supreme egotist Subramanian Swamy, J. Ranganath has gained credibility. Though he was charged as the 26th accused in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial in 1992, he was acquitted by the Supreme Court verdicts, delivered on May 11, 1999. Nearly a month later, his interview to an Indian weekly news magazine shed some light on the conspirators, and who aided and abetted the conspirators. Ranganath’s interview to reporter E. Vijayalakshmi is provided below.

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“Immediately after his release on May 12 [1999], Ranganath vanished, apparently somewhere in Bangalore, and on May 23 [1999], the Tamil Nadu government assigned an armed security guard for him because of threats to his life. He has been frequently shifting residence and says his ‘days are numbered’. *The Week* met him at a lodge in Chennai. Excerpts from his explosive account:¹⁰

‘I know my days are numbered because I am opposing Chandraswami, Kartikeyan and a few Congress goons. I thank the government of Tamil Nadu for the security they have given me. August 2, 1991 was the darkest day in my life. Between 10:45 and 11 pm there was a knock on the door in my house at Putanhally in Bangalore. Thinking it was friends, I opened the door without asking their identity. It was a mistake. A man whom I later came to know as Suresh Master, pointed a handgun at me and told me to get inside. Only my wife was there. He said he wanted to talk. I asked him why then he had the gun. He said he was aware that members of my family were staying in different parts of Bangalore. I immediately understood that I was in a trap. Subha, Sivarasan, a driver ‘anna’ and a Nehru were with him. . . . I had to carry out their orders. I arranged food for them. My wife and I had a quarrel; she didn’t want to stay with me with these people around.

On the third day I came to know that I was harbouring Sivarasan. He was standing in front of the mirror and adjusting his false eye. . . . Sivarasan told me about the smell of lotus when he visited Chandraswami’s ashram, 140 km from Delhi on the Haridwar route, about 40 days before the assassination. He went there on a chartered flight that Chandraswami arranged to witness a ‘yagna’ for the success of the mission to kill Rajiv Gandhi. Chandraswami blessed his guns. That room was filled with lotus flowers and the next room was filled with lemons. He told that he didn’t believe in this kind of superstition, but it clicked.

He said he could have shot Rajiv Gandhi and consumed the cyanide capsule or vanished in the crowd. But Chandraswami wanted a mass killing so that he could recover his debt from abroad. And he showed me the suitcase with wheels which was filled with US dollars and travellers’ cheques. They said they wouldn’t use this money for food. In fact they would only eat bread and drink plain tea.

Sivarasan said that after completing another work, they would be flown to a European country and from there he would go to Jaffna. He said that he belonged to a splinter group of the LTTE, his mother tongue was Sinhalese and he was working in a government firm. He was with TELO before that. He was tortured by the Sri Lankan government while writing something on the wall. Then he joined the LTTE, and after some training, left the place. He came to Delhi in order to settle in Europe. There he met Chandraswami. Sivarasan used to mention ‘Mamaji’ very frequently. . . .”

According to Ranganath, Sivarasan had told him that he belonged to a ‘splinter group’ of LTTE. To quote,

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

“Sivarasan said he had never missed an RPG aimed at tanks. He told me his splinter group had about 15 women in its cadre and around 35 sympathisers. He had gone to Chandraswami’s ashram for monetary help, and had done two or three jobs for him abroad. As for killing Rajiv Gandhi, Sivarasan said his godfather had told him to do it.

Sivarasan said Chandraswami, who had financed him, had a link with William Webster, ex-head of an American intelligence agency, who had become the head of the Heritage Foundation here. Chandraswami, it seems, is very close to him. So money was not a problem for any kind of work he wanted.

The big suitcase with wheels was missing when the police raided my Bangalore house where Sivarasan and others stayed for 16 days. Until August 18 we were together. On that day I came out, met DCP Kempayya and surrendered to him. And on August 19 Sivarasan died. I was called to identify the bodies after they had raided the place. When I went I could see ash everywhere. The suitcase was missing. Some people were cleaning the place. I saw half-burnt currency in the big sump.”

SHIELDING THE CHANDRASWAMI LINK

Then, Ranganath contributed an unflattering portrayal of the SIT chief D. R. Kartikeyan for distorting the evidence and threatening him utter consequences if Chandraswami’s links were revealed further. To quote Ranganath,

“My conscience told me that the police were the real culprits. At the same time the junior officers were doing their duty well. SIT chief D. R. Kartikeyan was knowingly shielding Chandraswami and others. I know Karthikeyan was close to Rajiv Gandhi. But I don’t know what made him shield Chandraswami. But he did.

I had asked Sivarasan how he had managed to go to Sriperumbudur though he was not very fluent in Tamil spoken in Tamil Nadu. He said he was ready as he had got Rajiv Gandhi’s tour programme three days before the local Congress people came to know about it. He said he got it from his sources in the office of a former woman Union Minister.

I am ready to appear before the Congress Working Committee and the Youth Congress people to answer their questions. If there is a trace of doubt that I had anything to do with Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination, they can stone me to death. The place I stayed belonged to E. Anjanayappa, the Karnataka Congress president. He is the brother of Ashok Narayana who is like Margaret Alva’s PA. According to Sivarasan, Alva charted Rajiv’s tour two days before he came to Tamil Nadu. . . .

Indian investigating agencies had a nexus with Chandraswami. While I was in SIT custody, I was taken to the Kumarakrupa guest house near the Asoka Hotel in Bangalore by a DIG from Delhi who had settled in Bangalore. There were twin bungalows there. I was handcuffed and made to sit on the floor.

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One gentleman came there and he was wearing a rudraksha mala. He asked the DIG in Hindi, ‘*Yeh sala hai kya?*’ I had pretended that I didn’t know Hindi. The DIG told me to stand but I just bowed my head. This man asked, ‘What is he expecting?’ The DIG told me that I should obey the SIT chief, I would get less punishment if I did, and that I should not tell what I had heard from Sivarasan about Chandraswami. Later on I knew that man was ‘Mamaji’.

When I was in illegal custody Kartikeyan told somebody in Delhi on the phone in my presence: ‘*Yeh sale ko sabi maloom hoga, ab kya karna padege?*’ This was at the CBI office in Bangalore. I was taken to the Jayanagar police station. I met Kartikeyan. I told them everything. But Kartikeyan told me to be silent about the Delhi connection and said I could reveal everything at the CBI office. He asked how I could discuss the matter with the local police. I told him I couldn’t distinguish between the different police.

Karthikeyan asked me how I had come to know about Chandraswami. I told him I was moving closely with Sivarasan. He said they must have referred to some other name. He became violent and told me not to mention Chandraswami’s name. ‘Are you aware of the capacity of Chandraswami?’ he asked me. I told him I was not bothered about Chandraswami. The police officers tortured me. You can see my middle finger. They pierced it and passed electricity through it. They told me not to say anything about this, not to repeat Chandraswami’s name.”¹¹

CREDIBILITY OF RANGANATH

How much one can rely on Ranganath’s information relating to Sivarasan’s activities need to be assessed critically. From May 1992 to April 1999, while he was an accused in the Rajiv assassination trial, Ranganath’s position in the credibility totem pole was low. Contrastingly, the SIT official Kartikeyan’s credibility was in zenith. But on May 11, 1999, tables were turned and Karikeyan’s credibility sank to nadir, and Ranganath’s credibility rose. Acquitting Ranganath, Justice Thomas had written in his verdict,

“The trial court at the close of the discussion of evidence against A-26 [*i.e.*, Accused 26] has entered the following finding in paragraph 2419 of the Judgment:

‘From the foregoing discussion and analysis of evidence proved by the prosecution it has to be concluded that A-26 harboured Sivarasan and Suba, who were proclaimed offenders and the other accused A-24 Rangan, Nehru, Suresh Master, Driver Anna and Amman in his house at Puttanahalli and subsequently at Konanakunte voluntarily and willingly without any fear to his life.’

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

The above is the only finding on facts which the learned trial Judge [*i.e.*, Navaneetham, whose credibility also sank abysmally on May 11, 1999] appears to have made regarding the role of A-26. Thereafter no discussion is seen made about his activities. But learned Judge had held in paragraph 2451, that A-26 is also guilty of the offence under Section 120-B read with Section 302 IPC and rest of the offences included in the charge. . . . “But at the same time we have to point out that there is absolutely no evidence whatsoever for connecting A-26 with the conspiracy to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi. In fact, the prosecution did not even bother to establish that A-26 had no knowledge that anybody would be plotting to murder Rajiv Gandhi. It is very unfortunate that the trial court has convicted A-26 also of the offence under Section 120-B read with Section 302 IPC and sentenced him to be hanged.”¹²

Thus, one can believe that Ranganath gained some credibility following his acquittal. Therefore, one tid bit he had stated in his 1999 interview about Sivarasan’s travels prior to Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination, is puzzling. Sivarasan had told him that “he visited Chandraswami’s ashram, 140 km from Delhi on the Hardwar route, about 40 days before the assassination. He went there on a chartered flight that Chandraswami arranged to witness a ‘yagna’ for the success of the mission to kill Rajiv Gandhi. Chandraswami blessed his guns.” 40 days before the assassination can be placed to, around April 10, 1991. *This schedule does not align properly with the pre-assassination travel schedule of Sivarasan prepared by the SIT officials.* According to Justice Wadhwa’s supreme court verdict, Sivarasan had spent much of the time between February and end of April in Sri Lanka, with only one annotation around April 24, 1991 stating that “He was at Madras in the house of Vijayan (A-12).”

The possibility that Sivarasan could have lied about his links with Chandraswami to Ranganath cannot be denied. If that be the case, then Kartikeyan also has some explanation to do to convince the public why he bullied and tortured Ranganath to hide any information pertaining to Sivarasan’s links to Chandraswami. It is plausible that, like Jack Ruby who had links to the FBI, Sivarasan also had deeper links with the Indian intelligence operatives. This could possibly be one reason why, Sivarasan’s mortal remains was disposed quickly — rather than being exhibited as a ‘precious trophy’ representing a vanquished LTTE activist.

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Rajiv Assassination: The Sinhalese Angle

THE SINHALESE angle in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination is conspicuously linked with the conspiracy angle. Quite a few observers in India and elsewhere have commented that for peculiar reasons it has been intentionally ignored by the SIT team led by Mr. Kartikeyan. The facts for questions such as,

1. When was the serious, previous assassination attempt made on Rajiv Gandhi’s life in full glare of public eye?
2. Who was the immediate beneficiary of Rajiv’s death in 1991?
3. Did Rajiv Gandhi had cordial relationship with the then Sri Lankan political leadership of Premadasa?

pointedly show that the suspicion of critical observers on the manner in which the SIT officials plodded through their Procrustean data-torturing mode have some validity. Thus, in this chapter I provide observations made by anti-LTTE analyst Rohan Gunaratna, journalist Rajeev Sharma and Vijay Karan (the chief of India’s Central Bureau of Intelligence at the time of Rajiv’s assassination), related to the above three questions.

(1) OBSERVATIONS OF ROHAN GUNARATNA

Rohan Gunaratna provided some pointed details on the JVP-linked conspiracy behind the assassination attempt on Rajiv Gandhi, made in Colombo on July 30, 1987 and the RAW-JVP links. To quote,

“As Rajiv Gandhi was about to depart for India, he was invited by the commander of the Navy Ananda Silva to inspect a guard of honour. Gandhi obliged. As he was moving past the men, something totally unexpected happened. Vijithamuni Rohana de Silva, a naval rating from the south, suddenly lifted his rifle and brought it on to the visiting Prime Minister of India. Neither Ananda Silva nor Gandhi’s security men responded fast enough either

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

to push Gandhi away from the sailor, or to immobilize the attacker. [Footnote provided by Gunaratna: Film clip and photographs taken by the media covering the entire Gandhi visit clearly show no reaction to save Gandhi or to counter-attack the sailor.] Fortunately, Rajiv Gandhi’s quick reflexes — something which he had probably sharpened in his days as a pilot — came to his rescue: he ducked almost instantaneously, averting head injury which, in the worst case, could have killed him; he was instead hit and badly bruised around the neck and the shoulders.

The plan within a Navy cell was to kill Rajiv Gandhi. The nineteen year old naval rating was to hit Gandhi on the head and make him fall, and then the two men either side of the first attacker were to strike him with their ceremonial bayonets [Footnote provided by Gunaratna: Based on a confession the naval rating made at the CID headquarters to another detainee.] But for some unknown reason, the other two men refrained from going into action during the assault — if they did, Gandhi could have suffered serious injuries, and could have died. This sinister plan has hitherto been kept a secret. During the court martial that followed, Vijithamuni stated that he thought that the [Rajiv Gandhi-Jayewardene] Peace Accord would make Prabhakaran the leader of the northeast, and he would have to honour Prabhakaran in the same way he was ordered to honour Rajiv Gandhi. However, Vijithamuni did not serve his full sentence — he was released under a general amnesty after Premadasa became the President.”¹

Justice Wadhwa in his lengthy Supreme Court verdict had summarized the events relating to Rajiv Gandhi and LTTE, from the year 1987. For instance, he had mentioned about “The Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement to establish peace and normalcy in Sri Lanka [was] signed on 29.7.1987 by Rajiv Gandhi and J. R. Jayewardene in Colombo.” **But he failed to make any mention about what happened to Rajiv Gandhi on the following day in Colombo! One cannot think that this omission was an oversight on Justice Wadhwa’s diligence.** This is because, Justice Wadhwa also specifically mentions the incidents relating to LTTE, which followed in September–October 1987:²

–“On 15.9.1987 one Dileepan of LTTE went on hunger strike... He died fasting on 26.9.1987.”

–“17 important functionaries of LTTE were captured by Sri Lankan Navy in the first week of October 1987.”

–“In the night of 3/4.10.1987 when IPKF convoy was carrying ration it was attacked by LTTE and 11 Indian soldiers were killed.”

Therefore, the selective regurgitation of past events and failure to mention and analyze a serious assassination attempt made on Rajiv Gandhi, by the

Chapter 32. *Rajiv Assassination: The Sinhalese Angle*

Sinhalese elements in the Sri Lankan armed forces, in the Supreme Court verdict creates a credibility gap on the erudition of Indian judicial authorities. The assassination attempt on July 30, 1987 had also been briefly described by Sonia Gandhi³ and J. N. Dixit⁴, who were near the scene; but diplomatically they refrained from pointing fingers on the alleged conspirators. According to Rohan Gunaratna,

“Even though the JVP of the 1980s and the early 1990s is perceived as an anti-India force, RAW kept in close touch with the JVP leadership after Wijeweera’s death RAW sources. . . . stated that it was a tactical necessity. RAW acknowledged that they had established significant links with the JVP. An Indian diplomat Gurjit Singh who had established close connections with the JVP, told the author [*i.e.*, Gunaratna] that the JVP slogan was ‘We are not against Indians but against India.’ Subsequently over 400 JVP activists, who were being hunted down in Sri Lanka, were given accommodation in state run/assisted camps in South India. Subsequently Somawansa Amarasinghe, the new leader of the JVP received sanctuary in India. These developments also reflected RAW’s dual policy *vis-à-vis* Sri Lanka.”⁵

If one believes this *mènage à trois* [Premadasa, JVP and India’s RAW], which prevailed from 1987 to 1993, one can comprehend the assassinations of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 and Premadasa in 1993 as the first one precipitated by Premadasa and the second one as a revenge act masterminded by the RAW team. It cannot be denied that the LTTE also had links with RAW and Premadasa. But one should also note that Pirabhakaran returned to Eelam in January 1987 to free himself from the tentacles of the RAW. The links between Premadasa and LTTE were of short-term duration, mainly lasting a little more than an year during 1989–90 and tactical in nature.

(2) OBSERVATIONS OF RAJEEV SHARMA

On Premadasa’s plausible connections to Rajiv Gandhi assassination, Rajeev Sharma had covered some ground. He also focused on Premadasa’s role and the Israel’s foreign intelligence agency Mossad’s involvement in South Asian politics. Sharma also highlighted the path taken by the SIT officials with a statement, “Several important leads were obtained by the SIT, but for some inexplicable reason, these were not pursued to their logical conclusion.” Now to two excerpts:

“There are two ways of looking at the Premadasa imbroglio. One, Premadasa took his political hatred towards Rajiv to the macabre conclusion of plotting the Indian leader’s assassination. And once the objective of eliminating Rajiv was achieved, Premadasa himself was bumped off in a typical LTTE style

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of eliminating the man who knew too much. This theory seems probable with the assertion of J. Ranganath, sentenced to death by the trial court for sheltering Rajiv’s assassins, Sivarasan and Subha.

Ranganath, who filed an affidavit before the Jain commission accusing the CBI of holding key facts and shielding several culprits, said in an interview to *Outlook* (December 8, 1997) that Sivarasan ‘wanted to go abroad directly from Bangalore’. Sivarasan feared that he might be killed if he were to go back to Jaffna, Ranganath told the magazine. He also said Sivarasan, who regarded controversial tantrik Chandraswami as his ‘godfather’, would arranged safe passage for the one-eyed Jack. . . . Unfortunately, the Jain Commission did not launch any investigation of its own into these allegations. The Commission did not even take cognizance of Ranganath’s affidavit.

The second possible theory about Premadasa’s role could be that he got Rajiv assassinated through former LTTE cadres, and then blamed the Tigers. With this masterly move, according to this theory, Premadasa killed two birds with one stone: a political adversary in a much bigger neighbouring country was removed from the scene, and the all-important foreign support base (Tamil Nadu) of enemy at home (the LTTE), smashed for years to come. This may be a good enough reason for the LTTE to eliminate Premadasa. Ironically, Premadasa died in a shockingly similar manner as Rajiv.”⁶

Ten pages later, Rajeev Sharma reinforced the shortcomings of SIT’s investigational strategy. To quote,

“All through, the SIT pursued a single lead — the LTTE involvement in Rajiv’s assassination. But was it so? Was LTTE so short-sighted so as to invite India’s wrath and lose its only safe haven outside Sri Lanka — Tamil Nadu - as eventually happened? The LTTE, on the other hand, would favour a strong leader in New Delhi to provide it much needed international backing and funds. The meeting of LTTE emissaries like Kasi Anandan and London-based sympathizer, Sitambalam, with Rajiv Gandhi, viewed in this context, are not at all surprising. These two men were reportedly negotiating with Rajiv in order to solicit his support for the LTTE. There is no report to suggest that Rajiv was showing the door to the LTTE.

And the investigators took the Rajiv-LTTE parleys as a smokescreen on the part of the Tigers to hide their true intent and lull their target into a false sense of complacency. Who gained, or could have gained, from Rajiv’s murder? Obviously, Sri Lanka government was the direct and the immediate beneficiary. Sri Lanka stood to gain if Rajiv, who was tipped to return to power, were to be removed from the scene. It helped to create chaos in India and kept a giant weak. It also prevented the new prime minister from trusting the LTTE.

Colombo had its own vested interests in the whole affair. If it could be definitely fixed that the LTTE was in some way involved, nobody would stand

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to benefit more than Colombo as its main adversary, the LTTE, would then lose the sanctuary in Tamil Nadu that kept it alive during the most difficult periods. And precisely this happened. The fortuitous finding of Hari Babu’s loaded camera from the assassination site with tell-tale photographs would not look all that chancy if one looks at the whole affair from this angle.”⁷

The lackadaisical manner in which J. Ranganath’s assertions were treated by the Indian authorities is contemptible. One should also note that when Sharma’s book was released in 1998, Ranganath’s status was pending before the Supreme Court appeal. In May 1999, the Supreme Court acquitted Ranganath.

(3) OBSERVATIONS OF VIJAY KARAN

India’s ex-CBI director Vijay Karan (during whose tenure the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi happened) wrote a seven-page Foreword to Rajeev Sharma’s book, *Beyond the Tigers*. Some of Karan’s vital observations deserve reproduction, since he was in charge of the immediate inquiry process which followed the assassination. Though he do not confirm the inferences and conjectures made by Rajeev Sharma outrightly, Vijay Karan also had highlighted with under-statements quite a number of gray areas which riddle the assassination. Two paragraphs from Vijay Karan’s reminiscences are as follows:

“On May 30 [1991], I flew to Colombo with S. K. Datta and Kartikeyan, looking for clues, but still not sure that the LTTE had done it or that Sivarasan and Dhanu were LTTE operatives. All the Sri Lankan agencies who could help us opened their doors to us, more than ready to help. But none of the Sri Lankan intelligence or investigative agencies could throw any light on whether the LTTE had actually committed the deed or on the identity of the two persons in the Hari Babu pictures. We were loaded with conjectures and presumptions, but nothing really of tantalizing use, except one clue.

We had been five days in Colombo and everyone was getting restive in Delhi. What’s new, I was repeatedly asked every day. Eventually, I was told to return to Delhi and brief the government on the progress of the investigation. On my last day in Colombo, we got the information, provided by a leader of a Tamil outfit other than the LTTE that the man in one of Hari Babu’s pictures was one-eyed and that his name was Pakyaraj. It was in fact one of so many leads and conjectures that we did not know what to make of it. Leaving behind Datta and Kartikeyan in Colombo, I flew to Madras late in the evening. The entire SIT was there at the airport to meet me. . . I was told that the investigation in Madras had shown that the unidentified man of the Hari Babu photographs was a one-eyed LTTE operative called Shivraj Master.”⁸

Vijay Karan also indicated,

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“By June 12 [1991], Nalini, her mother, her brother and her LTTE boyfriend [referring to Murugan] had been arrested. The rest, as the cliché goes, is history.” Is this a minor slip of memory for Vijay Karan in 1998? The 1999 Supreme Court verdict of Justice Wadhwa records, Nalini and her husband Murugan were arrested on June 14, 1991. This contradiction in the date of arrests is not insignificant, I believe.

Furthermore, Vijay Karan had also noted cryptically,

“When we were in Colombo in the first week of June 1991, we were told in whispers by various persons that Premadasa could be behind it. There is a lot of difference between could be and is. I am not trying to say that there was no larger conspiracy.”⁹

The *subtle use of double negatives in the last sentence*, coming from the then Director of the CBI who led the Rajiv assassination inquiries has some significance. Unfortunately, Vijay Karan also has hidden his Colombo sources with the phrase ‘whispers by various persons’. Were they Sinhalese? Or were they Tamils? Were they politicians? Or were they law enforcement personnel?

To summarise the Sinhalese angle of the Rajiv Gandhi assassination, journalist Rajeev Sharma presented two theories. The first is ‘Premadasa did it in collusion with LTTE’. The second is ‘Premadasa did it and pointed the fingers at LTTE, who in vengeance assassinated Premadasa two years later in the similar fashion.’ Subramanian Swamy, an ardent apologist for Israel and Mossad in India, presents his angle with a variant of Rajeev Sharma’s first theory: that is, ‘Premadasa and Pirabhakaran jointly did it to eliminate their common adversary.’¹⁰ But Swamy’s track record on serious matters have as much credibility as Nixon’s on fair play.

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Rajiv Assassination: V. P. Singh’s Views

THAT THE RAJIV Gandhi assassination in May 1991 placed Tamils (living in India, Eelam, Sri Lanka and elsewhere) in a state of shock and utter disbelief is not an exaggeration. As individuals vary in their physical dimensions and intellectual capacities, the reaction of Tamils to this tragic event also varied. One could conveniently categorize the Tamil sentiments into three broad types: naive hearts, *karma*-believers and opportunistic tear-shedders. I provide examples of these three types below.

- naive hearts — quite a segment of journalists in India and elsewhere.
- *karma* believers — quite a segment of Tamil population, who do not express their views openly for reasons of being tagged as politically incorrect.
- opportunistic tear-shedders — quite a segment of politicians in Tamil Nadu and anti-LTTE militant groups in Eelam.

Among these, naive hearts and opportunistic tear-shedders have been voluble and willingly prattle politically-correct sentiments. They also lead a symbiotic existence. Contrastingly, *karma* believers have been mostly silent, due to shyness in expressing their politically incorrect sentiments. I should state where I belong. I’m an unabashed *karma*-believer.

VIEWS OF A NAIVE-HEART TAMIL AND A KARMA-BELIEVER

First, I provide an example of a naive heart’s (*Tamil Times*, London) editorial in excerpts. Then, I submit my critique to this editorial which, though forwarded for publication, went unpublished.

“... The murder of Rajiv Gandhi constitutes an act of unvarnished terrorism. If non-Indian elements were involved in the conspiracy and the commission of this crime, then it graduates into the realm of international terrorism, and

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those who master-minded it must be deemed to be and dealt with as international terrorists. And those who provide postfacto cover must be treated as accessories after the crime.

The cowardly character of the perpetrators of Rajiv’s murder is demonstrated by the fact that they have had no courage to claim responsibility for their own act. They know that they stand condemned before the world and wait in the hope that they would never be found. But when they goaded the woman bomber to wear the belt packed with lethal explosives around her waist, they knew that she also would explode into bits. Having thus helped to kill one of their own in an act of odious savagery, the perpetrators have disowned her in a display of characteristic disloyalty and ingratitude — for loyalty and gratitude are human values which such evil minds do not know or understand — and her unclaimed shattered remains lie embalmed in the corner of an Indian mortuary. Even her parents have not come forward to claim her remains.

The sophisticated nature of the technology used, the method employed and the precision with which the assassination was carried out provide evidence of a sordid plot conceived in secrecy and preparations made months in advance. The plotters struck when Rajiv engaged in a nationwide electoral campaign, an essential activity in a functioning democracy for a leader who wanted to be close to his people. Had he been concerned with his personal safety and surrounded himself with an impregnable security ring, he would be alive today. But he paid the supreme price for having chosen to go out among the people. The assassination of Rajiv dramatically illustrates the vulnerability of those who believe in open politics and democracy. It also demonstrates the utter contempt terrorists of the ilk who conspired to murder him have for open politics and democracy. It is manifestly clear that those who were responsible for his killing were frightened at the prospect of Rajiv returning to power through the electoral process and every indication at the time of his murder was that he would have become Prime Minister after the elections. By his murder they were desperately seeking to undermine the electoral process and subvert the democratic verdict of the people.

Very few countries in the third world remain committed to the ideals of democracy and democratic processes and India is an illustrious example. Indian democracy has been resilient enough to withstand many challenges and such tragedies in the past. One hopes that India and its people will emerge from their recent traumatic experience and continue to thrive as a vibrant democracy by defeating the dark divisive and evil forces who are seeking to subvert democracy and destabilize their country.”¹

That this editorial was a knee-jerk reaction of a naive heart is amply visible, since it glossed over the imperfections of *durbar* democracy and dark-spots of Rajiv Gandhi’s governance in India, between 1984 and 1989. Thus, I submitted a critique, excerpts of which follows:

“... Though you imply that Rajiv Gandhi believed in ‘open politics and democ-

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racy’ and as a consequence met his tragic death, his five year record as the prime minister of India (between 1984 and 1989) shows that he did not come out clean in his adherence to democratic principles. As Barbara Crossette, the *New York Times* correspondent, who was with Rajiv on that fateful day of May 21st correctly noted in her analysis of Rajiv’s legacy, he ‘in 1987 tampered with the Kashmir state politics for the short term advantage of the Congress Party. A rigged election in 1987 drove flocks of young people into the arms of separatism in Kashmir’ (*New York Times Weekly*, May 27, 1991). Rajiv was similarly instrumental in the rigging of Northern-Eeatern provincial council elections of Sri Lanka which was held under the supervision of the IPKF army.

... Also, the way Rajiv manipulated to bring out the dismissal of the duly elected Tamil Nadu government of DMK early this year, also proved that he was no flag-holder for democracy. His motives for extending support for the Chandrasekhar faction of the Janata Dal to form a puppet government and then pulling the strings at a whimsical moment to deny this support also is a mockery of democracy. Thus, your assessment that democratic process in India has flourished since 1947 is a hollow one.

In the article referred above, Barbara Crossette has poignantly noted that, the so-called democracy in India for the past four decades has been, ‘essentially one-party, one-family rule...(with) only five brief periods when someone outside the Nehru family ran India. The dynasty has left a political culture shaped to its own requirements.... What Indians call the Congress culture has also meant corruption and criminality in politics. Both lowly clerks and members of parliament are bought and sold with the help of money from industrial houses seeking privileges and immunities. Public confidence in the democratic system is absent’.... I will believe what Barbara Crossette has written than what you have tried to portray as Rajiv’s contribution to India.”²

Though, the *Tamil Times* failed to publish my critique, another of my letter sent on the same theme to the *Asahi Evening News* in Tokyo appeared in print. It was carried under the caption ‘Democracy in India, West Differ’. Excerpts:

“Many politicians of Western nations, such as British Prime Minister John Major and French Premier Edith Cresson, have a simplistic notion about democracy in India (May 22, 1991). If one is willing to accept that a person perched on a 20 meter totem pole is actually 21.5 meters tall, then I will buy the view that democracy has thrived in post-independent India.

To the chagrin of naive Westerners, I wish to state that the parliamentary democracy system never set roots in the continents of Asia and Africa. In countries with multi-ethnic and multi-religious populations, the system of parliamentary democracy has long been aborted in preference to the *darbar* system of kings (and queens) with a support cast of ministers, though they pretended to act within the boundaries of the parliamentary code of ethics.

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

This has been true for India, as well as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Prime Minister Major’s comments about democracy in India, after Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination, shows his ignorance of the past and contemporary history of India. True, India has held general elections at frequent intervals. But does that trumpet the triumph of democracy? In the year Rajiv Gandhi was born, his grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru (then a freedom fighter against British imperialism) wrote a book called *The Discovery of India*. In it, the first prime minister of India wrote, . . .” General election does not always lead to the success of the better man. Sensitive persons, and those who were not prepared to adopt rough-and-ready methods to push themselves forward, were at a disadvantage and preferred to avoid these contests. Was democracy then to be a close preserve of those possessing thick skins and loud voices and accommodating consciences?”

. . . Eulogies notwithstanding, Rajiv Gandhi did practice what his grandfather had feared. For historical record, one should be reminded that Rajiv Gandhi, during his term as prime minister, did endorse violent election-rigging in Kashmir (1987) as well as in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka (1988). The eulogy of President George Bush to Rajiv Gandhi also sounds hollow and hypocritical. The politician who was chiefly responsible for the loss of more than 100,000 lives in Iraq early this year, now shed some tears for the ‘tragedy’ and condemns the ‘violence’. Holy cow.”³

Apart from the above-noted criticism by Barbara Crossette, then covering India for the *New York Times*, my opinion on Rajiv’s period as prime minister of India, has been substantiated by knowledgeable Mark Tully, the then resident BBC correspondent, who was fluent in Hindi. In his book, published following the death of Rajiv Gandhi, Tully wrote,

“... His [Rajiv’s] political apprenticeship lasted only three years. Then, on 31 October 1984, his mother was assassinated and he found himself prime minister of India. The goodwill with which he started his premiership was demonstrated by the record majority he won in the general election two months later. But that was not goodwill he had won for himself. He had gained it because of sympathy for his mother and because he had played on Indian’s fear that their country might breakup — a fear he had aroused by exploiting hostility towards Sikhs after the assassination of his mother by two of her Sikh bodyguards. Five years later, a humiliating electoral defeat showed that Rajiv Gandhi had dissipated his stock of goodwill. Its constitution commits India to socialism, secularism and democracy. All three had come under unparalleled pressure by the time Rajiv Gandhi stepped down as prime minister. . . .”⁴

It should be noted that in this appraisal of Rajiv’s performance as the prime minister, Mark Tully failed to mention the foray and fumbling entanglement

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of Rajiv Gandhi with J. R. Jayewardene’s war against the LTTE.

OPPORTUNISTIC TEAR-SHEDDERS

Among those belonging to this category, the Tamil Nadu politicians Jayalalitha and Subramanian Swamy stand out. What journalist A. S. Panneerselvam wrote about Jayalalitha in 1999 in a profile on her political antics, is as follows:

“...She became chief minister by riding the sympathy wave generated by Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination in Tamil Nadu in 1991. The following year, she snapped her ties with Congress saying: ‘Rajiv Gandhi’s killing has nothing to do with my political ascendancy. I was voted to power because I am the most popular leader in the state’. However in 1996, just before the national elections, she rushed to Congress leaders with a begging bowl and managed to secure an alliance.”⁵

Subramanian Swamy, in 1988, equated Rajiv Gandhi and his wife Sonia to the disgraced ex-Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos and his wife Imelda. Commenting on Sonia Gandhi’s shopping, Swamy was quoted as follows:

“When she [Sonia] returns from abroad she carries not less than sixteen bags and those sail through customs without being checked. India is not the Philippines but within the constraints of the situation, she is a blossoming Imelda to Rajiv’s Marcos.”⁶

In 1988, Rajiv Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India. Then in 2002, the same Swamy had opined as follows:

Question: “You were said to be a friend of the late Congress leader Rajiv Gandhi.”

Swamy: “I was a very good friend of Rajiv Gandhi and I had affection for Sonia as his wife. But then I found that in every action of hers, she was doing what Rajiv would never have liked. For instance, take Rajiv Gandhi’s killer, (insert by the copywriter: *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam leader Vellupillai*) Prabhakaran. Sonia has never once got up in Parliament to ask what happened to her husband’s killers or allowed any Congress MP to get up and ask what happened to Prabhakaran. Why has the government not caught Prabhakaran?”⁷

Swamy’s “affection” for Sonia soured following his perception that she had been, to use the words of journalist Sachidananda Murthy, “soft towards the LTTE, especially as she wrote to President K. R. Narayanan seeking commutation of the sentence on Nalini in the Rajiv assassination case.”⁸

That Swamy was a crass opportunist is an open secret in India. To quote Murthy again,

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“Two years ago [in 1999] Subramanian Swamy was an admirer and personal friend of Sonia Gandhi. When he wrote a book on the conspiracies behind the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, Swamy presented the first copy to Sonia. He told her of his friendship with Rajiv and how Rajiv preferred Swamy to become prime minister in 1990 instead of Chandra Shekhar. He was the one who brought Sonia close to AIADMK supremo Jayalalitha in the summer of 1999 at a tea party that brought down the Vajpayee government. But Swamy was soon angry with both ladies because they did not support him in the Lok Sabha elections later than year.”⁹

RAJIV GANDHI AS A KARMA-BELIEVER

Where did Rajiv Gandhi himself stood with respect to his assassination? I’m of the opinion, *based solely on his 1984 confession* made to his wife Sonia before being elevated as the prime minister, that though being born to a non-Hindu father (Feroze Gandhi) and a nominally Hindu mother (Indira Nehru), Rajiv himself had subscribed, *at least partially*, to the theory of karma. His entry into politics and then prime ministership was forced on him by the premature deaths of his younger brother Sanjay in 1980 and his mother Indira in 1984. Proof of Rajiv’s fatalism, or should one say a cryptic belief in karma, was presented by his wife Sonia Gandhi, in her coffee-table book entitled *Rajiv* (1992). In it, Sonia has recalled Rajiv’s reaction to her plea for rejecting the primeminister-ship which was forced on to him by the sycophants of the Congress Party following Indira’s assassination. According to Sonia,

“I begged him not to let them do this. I pleaded with him, with others around him, too. He would be killed as well. He held my hands, hugged me, tried to soothe my desperation. *He had no choice, he said; he would be killed anyway.*”¹⁰[italics added for emphasis.]

Though the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial provided so many testimonies of bigwigs and small fries in Indian politics and law enforcement circles implicating LTTE, the learned judges while compulsively nit-picking on the validity and probability of these testimonies, conveniently bypassed Rajiv’s premonition of his assassination and his confession to his wife. Reliability of this premonition is hardly in doubt, unless one suspects that Sonia Gandhi made up such a comment to boost the sales for her book. One should also note that Rajiv Gandhi had made his premonition in 1984, long before he became entangled in the trap laid by the patronizing J. R. Jayewardene and the pundits who manned the Indian foreign policy desk. In sum, I could infer that Rajiv Gandhi himself, following the tragic deaths of Sanjay and his mother, had come to believe in his *karma*.

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V. P. SINGH’S VIEWS ON THE ASSASSINATION

V. P. Singh is not a Tamil. But he is the one who succeeded Rajiv Gandhi as the prime minister of India. He held the prime minister rank from December 2, 1989 to November 10, 1990 — a vital period during which Rajiv Gandhi was in the Opposition and had repeatedly visited Tamil Nadu without any recorded threat for his life from LTTE, even though LTTE was engaged in war with the Indian army, until March 1990. Thus, the views of V. P. Singh deserve merit and recognition, in multiple contexts. First, he is privy to information on the links Rajiv Gandhi wanted to forge with Pirabhakaran via Karunanidhi in 1989, when Indian army was engaged in fighting LTTE in Eelam. Secondly, with persuasive logic and nuance, V. P. Singh alludes that Rajiv himself has to take a major share of blame for his tragic death, which by not-so illogical extrapolation, can be interpreted as abetted suicide. [see *below*, Singh’s answer to the question of ‘*negligence or complicity*’.] Thirdly, V. P. Singh’s information falsify quite a number of assumptions made by the prosecution team in the Rajiv assassination trial, relating to the purported motive of Pirabhakaran.

V. P. Singh’s provocative views were presented in a “two-hour long interview” given by him to Sukumar Muralidharan and N. Ram in 1997. The *Frontline* magazine and its editor N. Ram are not friendly to Pirabhakaran or LTTE by any yardstick. Thus, because of its relevance, first I reproduce this interview in length¹¹ and then make my inferences.

Question: What is your first reaction to the findings of the Jain Commission?

V. P. Singh: “The proof of the pudding is in the eating. During my tenure as Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was safe, despite the fact that he visited Tamil Nadu eight times during my tenure and 11 times during Karunanidhi’s. Now if the Prime Minister was unmindful and the LTTE was there in force, could Rajiv have been safe? It only shows that extra care was taken. This is my final explanation. Now something happened seven months after I demitted office and when I had no authority. How can you fix responsibility when I was not in authority?”

Question: But did the decisions taken in your tenure have a bearing on the subsequent course of events?

V. P. Singh: “You cannot put things that way. That brings up several other questions. Did the decisions of Rajiv Gandhi not have a bearing on us? Let me tell you of one case, of the SPG withdrawal, where we followed Rajiv’s law. There is no order of withdrawal under my signature. If there is, then it is an order of Rajiv Gandhi’s expressed in the form of the SPG Act.”

Question: You did not sign that order?

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

V. P. Singh: “Rajiv Gandhi made that Act, not me. There is no order of withdrawal, because legally a thing that has lapsed is simply not there — it cannot be withdrawn. Physically we may have assigned the SPG there, but then there was no legal basis for it. But if Rajiv’s law was at fault, as the Congressmen now say, then they had occasion to amend it when they had a friendly government — not only friendly, but a dependent government — in office. But Chandra Sekhar has said that this matter was never brought up by the Congress Party during his tenure. And its is not as if Rajiv never used to speak about his security. He has issued press statements about his security. I have pointed out that this claim by Congressmen — that he never used to talk about his security — is belied by the facts. A further lapse, perhaps even the ultimate crime, is that the deadliest of the LTTE cadre, the human bomb Dhanu, was taken to Rajiv by the Congress. The photograph of her body, and that of the Congress lady worker who took her to Rajiv lying side by side, is evidence of this.”

Question: **There are some suspicions that she may have been staying on the premises owned by a former Congress MP.**

V. P. Singh: “She (Dhanu) had connections in the Congress — there is no doubt about that. She could not have come from Sri Lanka and just caught hold of one lady worker and got in to the Rajiv Gandhi meeting. So the Congress is guilty on all counts. The security ring was tight, because there were nine policemen killed along with Rajiv. But Dhanu was called by Rajiv himself. (Former Union Home Minister) S. B. Chavan has mentioned this somewhere. Even if you put the Army on guard, if access control is breached by your own men, or by the protectee himself — how can you blame the security people? Rajiv was killed by a proximate assassin and proximity cannot be achieved without insider help, and here insider help was given by the Congress. And if the protectee himself — who is the highest level of insider — fails to cooperate, then we cannot really blame the security agencies.”

Question: **Are you making a charge of negligence or complicity?**

V. P. Singh: “All I am saying is that somewhere in these matters, the responsibilities of the protectee have to be fixed. No security cover can work without the co-operation of the protectee. When the assassination took place, there was President’s rule in the State. A Governor appointed by the Congress was in power and a Congress-supported government was in place at the Centre. Whatever the Congress may say, assassinations have not taken place in States controlled by other parties. They have always occurred in Congress-controlled States and they always insist on making a big political issue out of it...”

Question: **Let us come to the other point made by the Jain Commission, on the LTTE’s activities in Tamil Nadu during your regime at the Centre and Karunanidhi’s in the State.**

V. P. Singh: “I would like to place certain facts before you. In March 1989, Rajiv contacted Karunanidhi and said that he wanted to meet Prabhakaran. But

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Karunanidhi did not act on it because the Congress was getting closer to Jayalalitha. And he said that if they are getting closer, then they will use this against me, I will be in a quandary. In May perhaps, or June, Rajiv sent for Murasoli Maran from Chennai. He told Maran to convey to Prabhakaran that if he distances himself from Premadasa, he would see to it that matters are settled on favourable terms for him — which means that he was virtually promising Eelam. Now this was Rajiv’s personal initiative and was totally against Government of India policy.

The situation was like this: twice in that year — he is very much the Prime Minister at the time — he affirms that he wants to have the friendship and confidence of Prabhakaran. Could he have imagined that while he was greeting Prabhakaran with open arms, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu would shower the LTTE with bullets? If this is the mind of the Prime Minister, then administratively how do you expect the Chief Minister to react?

Another point is that the Nag tribunal, which banned the LTTE, said that since early 1989 the situation in the State of Tamil Nadu became ominous. Who was Prime Minister then? Rajiv was there for eleven months of 1989. Why did he not do something to stop these ominous events? Now no State government has the power to seal the sea coasts; only the Centre has that power. There is nothing on record to suggest that he ever did any such thing during that period.

The question also arises: When the LTTE was in battle with the IPKF, why did they not ban it? Unless there was something going on behind the backs of the soldiers, behind the back of the Government of India. Then you should also note that the order issued during Rajiv’s time against the LTTE was of search and seizure of weapons and wireless sets — arrests was prescribed only when resistance was encountered. There was not even the political will to arrest the LTTE when your men were fighting them. Why was Kittu freely moving about in Chennai all through those months of IPKF hostilities against the LTTE? And now they say that the State Government did not act. All these matters were placed before Justice Jain, who has ignored them in his report. This is most unfair, since as a judge he must consider all the depositions.”

Question: If you are saying that Justice Jain was less than fair, are you suggesting that he was working to a predetermined agenda?

V. P. Singh: “Jain has just paraphrased the Congress affidavit and returned it duly signed! The affidavit that was filed six years back by (Congress counsel) R. N. Mittal has been signed and released to the public as a commission report.”

Question: The Jain thesis seems to be that until 1986 we armed and trained the LTTE cadre, but this did not amount to supporting anti-national activities. But after hostilities broke out with the Indian Army, the LTTE became a hostile force and should have been unequivocally opposed.

V. P. Singh: “In which case the point arises, why were they not arrested — or banned? Why were large numbers of their cadre sent back to Sri Lanka? And why was

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the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu being pressed for contacts with the LTTE, with nobody in the government, except for certain bureaucrats, knowing about it. The IPKF went with a mandate to maintain peace. Not only did they have to fight, they also became victims of duplicity. Premadasa finally gave an ultimatum to the IPKF to return, and we got the impression that he had negotiated with Prabhakaran also. So we became targets of both — Premadasa and the Tamils. These are the events leading to the Rajiv assassination. . .

I have also pointed out — and this is part of the DMK deposition also — that there are several newspaper reports from that time quoting speeches made by Jayalalitha, in which she said that the LTTE is fighting a just war. Rajiv often sat through such meetings and he never once said that the LTTE is an anti-national force. What would the people understand from this? And then we say that the Government of Tamil Nadu is at fault?”

COMMENTS ON V. P. SINGH’S VIEWS

Lest one thinks that V. P. Singh is a partisan to either Pirabhakaran’s or LTTE’s interests, he also stated in the same interview to Muralidharan and Ram, “If ever there was a time when we did not negotiate with the LTTE, that was during my tenure. We knew that even after the IPKF was withdrawn, there would be a fight between the EPRLF and the LTTE and between the Sri Lankan army and all the rest, and that there would be an influx of refugees into our soil.” Thus, V. P. Singh’s observations on Rajiv assassination gains credibility.

Unlike Subramanian Swamy or Jayalalitha or J. N. Dixit who had unabashedly asserted that Pirabhakaran “killed” Rajiv Gandhi, V. P. Singh has not linked Pirabhakaran to Rajiv’s death. Rather, he has stressed the neglected fact that no one has bothered to look into the “responsibilities of the protectee” and asserted that “No security cover can work without the cooperation of the protectee.”

One of the questionable assumptions in the Rajiv assassination trial in ascribing the motive for the crime was that Pirabhakaran harbored a hatred for Rajiv Gandhi since he was placed under restriction before the announcement of Jayewardene-Gandhi Accord in 1987, and this led to Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination in 1991. If that is so, as V. P. Singh pointed out, how come Rajiv Gandhi was not attacked during the tenure of V. P. Singh’s prime ministership [between Dec. 2, 1989 and Nov. 10, 1990] and that he was able to visit Tamil Nadu eleven times between Dec. 1989 and January 1991 until the State was placed under President’s rule? In his interview, V. P. Singh also exposed the selfish mentality of Karunanidhi in March 1989, who was most keen on saving his skin rather than helping Rajiv Gandhi to “meet” Pirabhakaran.

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ONE OF THE tortured reasonings presented by the media analysts in attributing a motive to Pirabhakaran’s alleged ‘decision’ to eliminate Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 was that he feared re-induction of the Indian army in Eelam, if the Congress Party formed the government in India following the general election. As Rohan Gunaratna, presented it,

“The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi was imperative for the LTTE. If the LTTE did not, the IPKF that withdrew would have returned heralding another period of bloody fighting. Prabhakaran’s calculus was right. As a leader, he had done his duty by his rank and file. By assassinating Rajiv Gandhi, he prevented the reintroduction of the IPKF to Sri Lanka.”¹

That this inference is nothing but baloney can be asserted by comparing the deeds of President J. R. Jayewardene and his nominal deputy in the 1980s, R. Premadasa. The Indian army was brought into Sri Lanka by Jayewardene in 1987, and this action was vehemently opposed by Premadasa. When he assumed power in 1989, Premadasa was keen on sending back the Indian army and reverse the faulty step taken by his predecessor. While he was rightfully boasting this as his major contribution to protect the sovereignty of Sri Lanka, it is inconvincing to think that Premadasa would have willingly invited the Indian army again into Sri Lanka, even if Rajiv Gandhi and his coterie were inclined to do the same. What Jayewardene performed in 1987 was a consensual act, about which Premadasa was screaming ‘rape’. Whatever his faults were, abrasive Premadasa was a Buddhist moralist to the core, and it is incredulous to even consider that he would have committed the same ‘consensual act’ in 1991 which would have tarnished his image for which he had labored for decades. Then, it is also laughable to think that Pirabhakaran could not comprehend Premadasa’s mind.

QUESTIONING THE PROBABILITY ANALYSIS ON NON-LTTE SUSPECTS

Just as evading the documentable evidence for LTTE involvement in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination is unacceptable, equally detestable is the outright elimi-

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nation of the international links to the assassination, which question the ‘LTTE did it’ hypothesis of the Indian law enforcement personnel. Other than LTTE, identifiable parties who had political, economical and financial motives for eliminating Rajiv Gandhi included,

1. The Sri Lankan State and Sinhalese chauvinist elements.
2. Secessional elements in India such as Khalistan group and Kashmir group.
3. Rajiv Gandhi’s opponents with the Congress Party
4. International mercenaries, in alignment with the Intelligence Agencies such as Mossad of Israel.

Subramanian Swamy had noted that the CBI sleuths in India carried out a ‘Probability Analysis’ following Rajiv Gandhi assassination and by May 31, 1991, and identified the suspects as belonging to the LTTE, from a list of seven.² I provide the details of this probability analysis and briefly comment on its reliability.

Eight parameters (identified as ‘variants’) had been chosen and each was scored from 1 to 5 in increasing order of probability against the 7 targeted suspects. The chosen eight parameters were,

1. Intelligence inputs regarding known earlier plans or level of antagonism
2. Beneficiary analysis probability
3. Level of improvised explosive device (IED) fabrication expertise — known/probable
4. Accessibility to Materials Used.
5. Availability of cadres who can perform such a task
6. Probability on the basis of modus of operandi and circumstances of the case
7. Capability analysis on the basis of area of strike
8. Probability considering unidentified (UI) lady as the prime suspect

Then, the 7 targeted suspects in the books of CBI sleuths were,

1. Sikh terrorists

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2. Kashmiri militants
3. United Liberation Front of Assam
4. People’s War Group (alias Naxalites) in India
5. Tamil militant groups [non-LTTE]
6. Sri Lankan government/mercenary
7. LTTE

So far, so good. The scores received by these 7 targeted suspects for each of the above 8 parameters ranking consecutively from 1 to 8 are given below.

1. Sikh terrorists: $5 + 5 + 4 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 1 + 1 = 23$ out of 40.
2. Kashmiri militants: $3 + 4 + 2 + 5 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 0 = 17$ out of 40.
3. United Liberation Front of Assam: $2 + 3 + 1 + 0 + 0 + 0 + 1 + 0 = 07$ out of 40.
4. Naxalites of India: $2 + 3 + 1 + 0 + 2 + 1 + 2 + 2 = 13$ out of 40.
5. non-LTTE Tamil militant groups: $1 + 1 + 1 + 0 + 1 + 3 + 3 + 3 = 13$ out of 40.
6. Sri Lankan government/mercenary: $0 + 3 + 4 + 5 + 2 + 3 + 3 + 3 = 23$ out of 40.
7. LTTE: $2 + 2 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 4 = 33$ out of 40.

Thus, in the books of CBI, the suspect which received the highest ‘probability score’ turned out to be LTTE. That this type of arbitrary scaling is **flawed** can be shown as follows:

First, the designated scores are highly questionable. To cite one example, for the first parameter (*i.e.*, the level of antagonism), Sikh terrorists had received the maximum score of 5; LTTE received 2 and the Sri Lanka Government/Mercenary had received a zero score. If the CBI sleuths have studied the history without amnesia, the Sri Lanka Government/Mercenary also should have been scored 5, since there was a serious assassination attempt on Rajiv in July 1987 at Colombo. The anti-Indian speeches of the then Sri Lankan President Premadasa (between 1984 and 1991) make a mockery of the zero score granted for the first parameter given for No. 6 targeted suspect, *i.e.* Sri Lankan government/mercenary.

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Secondly, considering the antagonism Rajiv Gandhi faced within his Congress Party, the anti-Rajiv forces within his party or even the power peddlers (such as Chandra Swamy) should have formed another suspect group. Probability of their collusion with shady Eelam Tamil militants who were trained by the RAW personnel (such as Sivarasan) or with whom RAW officials developed some affinity (such as Mahattaya, the ex-Deputy Leader of LTTE) to weaken Pirabhakaran has been ignored for convenience.

Thirdly, by design or ignorance, the probability of two suspects [such as the non-LTTE militants and the Sri Lankan Government/Mercenary] joining hands to achieve their mission has been conveniently ignored by the CBI sleuths in their calculation. If this additive probability is calculated, the total score of the two suspects could equal or even exceed the total score of LTTE.

Fourthly, though the mere mention of numbers may project the analysis to be scientific, how the CBI eliminated or decreased its self-observer bias has not been explained.

NORMAN BAKER ON IGNORED SUSPECTS

How flawed is the probability analysis of the CBI sleuths can be illustrated by a pungent opinion-piece by Norman Baker, and published in the *The Illustrated Weekly of India* in 1992. In this highly relevant piece, Baker had focused on elements who were ignored by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) officials, but deserved notice relating to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi.

The identity of Norman Baker is somewhat a puzzle, since I have not read any of his other published contributions on India affairs, prior to or after the Rajiv assassination, though he began his commentary with the sentence, “As a student of the history and politics of India, the events following the assassination of the former Indian prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, have been a subject of intense interest to me.” A Google search generated two candidates with the name Norman Baker. One is a historian belonging to the University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, who was awarded the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching. Another Norman Baker (b. 1957), is currently a Liberal Democrat MP in Britain, representing Lewes constituency since 1997. His bio-data states that he was a teacher previously. In late 2000, his name has appeared in Indian press related to his queries on the issue of British passport in 1999 to business baron running the Hinduja Group. It is also feasible that neither of these two individuals authored this critical commentary.

Despite this caveat on the identity of Norman Baker, this 1992 opinion-piece deserve notice for its vigor. As such, lengthy excerpts of this article are given below:

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“...In my opinion, the investigation by the SIT was flawed from the very beginning. As one looks into statements made by SIT officials, leaks from SIT sources and the general direction which the investigation took, it is rather evident that the SIT had started with the assumption (maybe even the conclusion) that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was responsible for the assassination. Instead of looking for and analyzing evidence in order to find who the culprits behind the assassination were, the SIT seems to have been looking for and analysing evidence to prove their assumption that the LTTE was guilty. Even when some pieces of evidence at hand suggested that the LTTE might not have anything to do with the assassination, the SIT tried to force-fit such evidence to support their pre-conceived notion that the LTTE was guilty....

The Sri Lankan government under President Premadasa was as anti-Rajiv as the LTTE. Premadasa opposed the India-Sri Lanka Peace Accord of 1987 and the induction of Indian troops into Sri Lanka in 1987 from the very beginning. His presidential election campaign included a pledge to get the Indian troops out of Sri Lanka. His first foreign policy initiative as the newly elected president was to request India to withdraw its troops from Sri Lanka. When Rajiv Gandhi procrastinated, Premadasa did the unexpected and the unthinkable — he secretly supplied large quantities of arms to the Sri Lankan government’s long-term enemy, the LTTE. Finally, the Indian troops were withdrawn in 1990 and the new Indian prime minister V. P. Singh, pursued a hands-off policy on the Sri Lankan civil war.

Premadasa likened Singh’s hands-off policy to Gandhi’s activist policy. Premadasa feared the latter’s return to power. He feared that Rajiv Gandhi might interfere in the Sri Lankan civil war again, possibly in support of the LTTE, as he and his mother Indira Gandhi did until July 1987. Thus, the Sri Lankan government under President Premadasa had a motive to see that Rajiv Gandhi did not come to power again. Did the Sri Lankan government have the means (the ability) to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi in Tamil Nadu?”³

Baker continued further,

“The Sri Lankan government might not have had the means to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi directly but it had close relationships with some Sri Lankan Tamil guerrilla groups, namely the EPRLF, the PLOTE and the TELO. At least two of these groups (PLOTE and TELO) were helping the Sri Lankan army in its civil war with the LTTE. These groups had operatives in Tamil Nadu for many years and thus had the ability to plan and execute the assassination. These groups also had the necessary expertise with explosives. Moreover, these groups are armed militants without a cause. (They had long given up the cause of creating a homeland for the Sri Lankan Tamils.) The history of mercenary operations tells us that such groups are fertile grounds for mercenaries.

In fact, a few years ago PLOTE was involved in an unsuccessful mercenary operation to overthrow the government of the tiny island nation, Maldives. In

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addition to these Tamil guerrilla groups, it is believed that the Sri Lankan government also had some Tamils in its intelligence service and the Sri Lankan government did not hesitate to use them on Indian soil when necessary. During the mid-80s, the LTTE’s political advisor, Balasingham, lived in Madras. A Tamil Sri Lankan intelligence operative named Kandaswamy Naidu — a former Sri Lankan government employee — allegedly tried to blow up Balasingham’s Madras residence. A case was filed against him in Tamil Nadu but he escaped to Sri Lanka. Interestingly, Sivarasan, the mastermind of the Rajiv Gandhi assassination, was allegedly a former Sri Lankan government employee...”⁴

According to Baker,

“Throughout the investigation, while every piece of evidence that could possibly link the LTTE to the assassination was painstakingly pursued, other evidence was not given serious attention. One piece of information was that Sivarasan was a former Sri Lanka government employee. Especially in view of the Kandaswamy Naidu episode mentioned earlier, the SIT should have investigated any possible connections between Sivarasan and Sri Lankan intelligence agencies. But this was not done. Also, the question remains unanswered: Why did the Sri Lankan government tell the SIT in May–June 1991 that Sivarasan was an LTTE operative but failed to mention his former employment with them? The Sri Lankan government distributed Sivarasan’s photograph to its offices in eastern Sri Lanka. Why wasn’t his past government employment revealed? Was it a case of incompetency or cover-up?

While the SIT was quick to examine the LTTE’s bank transactions in European banks to uncover any incriminating financial transactions between the LTTE and foreign governments, it made no such attempt to investigate if the Sri Lankan government had any questionable financial dealings with the EPRLF, PLOTE, TELO or other mercenaries.”⁵

Furthermore, Baker has questioned the validity of the assumption that Sivarasan was an LTTE cadre. To quote,

“The SIT had information that Sivarasan smoked cigarettes and drank alcohol. This does not fit the profile of an LTTE operative. LTTE militants are prohibited from smoking and drinking. This code of conduct is strictly enforced from the very top to the newest recruit. The fact that Sivarasan smoked and drank would seriously undermine the theory that Sivarasan was an LTTE operative. However, the SIT simply brushed it aside. Was Sivarasan a former LTTE, EPRLF, PLOTE or TELO operative? Did he become a mercenary, using the skills he learned from these groups and the connections he made when he was with these groups?

In fact, there was evidence to suggest that Sivarasan might have been involved in a mercenary operation. According to the SIT, Sivarasan had visited Sweden, Singapore, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates some

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months before the assassination. The LTTE had representatives in all these countries. If Sivarasan was planning the assassination on behalf of the LTTE, there was no reason for him to visit these countries to meet foreign government agencies or collect monies or secure explosives; the LTTE networks in these countries are better suited to do these back-up tasks. It is highly unlikely that the LTTE would send Sivarasan to foreign countries for this purpose. Sivarasan’s foreign trips would make sense if he were a mercenary. But the SIT chose to go around this piece of evidence and tried to force-fit it to its ‘LTTE is guilty’ hypothesis. What was the SIT’s analysis? It concluded that Sivarasan, while planning the assassination for the LTTE, was at the same time on the payroll of (under contract to) an unidentified foreign government without the knowledge of the LTTE.

Is such a scenario plausible? Highly unlikely. The LTTE is a well-disciplined, tightly-knit organization and it is highly unlikely that an operative assigned for the most sensitive and critical operation in the history of the LTTE (namely the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi) would be able to establish contact with a foreign government and travel to many foreign countries for weeks without the knowledge of the LTTE. It is more likely that Sivarasan was a mercenary than a mercenary and an LTTE operative at the same time. However, the SIT chose to propound the latter theory.”⁶

Baker’s view of Dhanu, the woman assassin of Rajiv Gandhi, was as follows:

“An experienced covert operative—whether a Sri Lankan Tamil guerrilla or a Sri Lankan intelligence operative — could have ‘persuaded’ a suitable young Tamil lady raped by Indian soldiers and thus enraged against Rajiv Gandhi, to act as a suicide-assassin. (The assassin, Dhanu, allegedly told her friend, Nalini, that Indian soldiers had raped her. The fact that Indian soldiers raped some Tamil women has been established beyond any doubt; if Dhanu was a rape victim may never be known for sure).”⁷

BAKER ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RAJIV GANDHI — LTTE MEETING

Baker attributed this vital meeting of March 1991, as the signal for the anti-LTTE operatives to speed their mission on assassinating Rajiv Gandhi. To quote,

“Within days of the assassination, the *Hindu* reported that an LTTE emissary met Rajiv Gandhi earlier in 1991 to re-establish a cordial relationship. The Congress Party spokesman, Pranab Mukherjee, denied that such a meeting took place. Later, it became evident that the meeting in fact took place on March 5, 1991, at Rajiv Gandhi’s New Delhi residence. This is a critical piece of evidence. If the meeting ended amicably and if the LTTE believed that Rajiv Gandhi would not be hostile to the LTTE, then it would no longer

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have a motive to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi. (If the LTTE’s foes were to know of the meeting, they might have a motive to assassinate Rajiv.)

By giving false information that no such meeting took place, the Congress spokesman essentially misled the investigation until the truth emerged from other sources. Why did the Congress Party spokesman mislead the investigation? The only one to be adversely affected by the denial is the LTTE. Were the anti-LTTE leaders within the Congress party and its ally, the AIADMK, responsible for the denial?

The Rajiv-LTTE meeting is an important piece of evidence and the gist of the conversation could be useful in assessing the LTTE’s motives. The SIT simply brushed it aside as a diversive tactic used by the LTTE. But there is some prima facie evidence to suggest that the Rajiv-LTTE meeting did go well. The very fact that Rajiv Gandhi agreed to meet an LTTE emissary indicates that he had an open mind about the LTTE.

Furthermore, the June 1, 1991 issue of the *Illustrated Weekly of India* reported that ‘intelligence sources, on condition of anonymity, confirm this (the meeting) and are inclined to view that the compromise worked out between Rajiv and the LTTE could have been the cause for the assassination and that international forces who stood to lose by Rajiv becoming prime minister, standing by the LTTE’s demand for an independent Tamil Eelam could have been behind the blast (assassination).’ Who has more to lose by a rapprochement between Rajiv and the LTTE than the Sri Lankan government?...’⁸

Baker, concluded his commentary with the following note:

“Even if the LTTE chief [i.e., Pirabhakaran] is found guilty by an Indian court, there will always be a lingering doubt about whether the LTTE was really guilty of assassinating Rajiv Gandhi. The recent order by Judge Siddick prohibiting the publication of the proceedings of the court is more cause for concern.”⁹

THE ROLE OF MOSSAD OPERATIVES AND MERCENARIES

It is not a hyperbole to state that the role of Mossad operatives and mercenaries in the Rajiv assassination conspiracy has been at best under-investigated, and at worst completely ignored. The following facts need notice in this regard.

1. The warning given by the PLO Chief Yasser Arafat to Rajiv Gandhi on the possible threat of latter’s life, five weeks before the event.
2. Existence of records relating to clandestine professional links formed by the RAW operatives and Mossad in the 1980s, while the RAW personnel were providing training for Tamil militants in India. RAW’s most pampered group was TELO and not LTTE. This should be linked

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to the revelation that Sivarasan, the mastermind of Rajiv assassination conspiracy, was identified with TELO before 1987.

3. High decibel campaign by Subramanian Swamy, a noted apologist in India for Israel, in implicating only LTTE for Rajiv’s assassination.
4. Consultancy and services of Mossad operatives in Sri Lanka in mid 1984 by the then President Jayewardene during the incipient stage of civil war, which continued until 1989.
5. President Premadasa’s apprehension of Mossad for ‘fishing’ in South Asian politics, especially following the impeachment campaign initiated by Lalith Athulathmudali (a noted sympathizer and beneficiary from Israel), which followed within few months after Rajiv’s death.

Justice Milap Chand Jain, in his voluminous Commission report (1997) on the Rajiv Gandhi assassination, has strained hard to project a nexus among the LTTE, Mossad and CIA, and had recommended further investigations. His inference was mainly based on the much publicized book ‘*By Way of Deception*’ (1990) by Victor Ostrovsky, an ex-Mossad case officer.¹⁰ While reviewing this book in 1992, I had doubted the authenticity of Ostrovsky’s observations. Excerpts:

“... What shocked the Sinhalese ruling establishment and the journalists (including the editor of *Lanka Guardian*, Mervyn de Silva) was the revelation of Ostrovski that Mossad had trained the Sinhalese military personnel and ‘a group of Tamil guerrilla factions’ simultaneously. Based on the meager details provided by Ostrovski, these power-brokers and opinion-makers had identified LTTE as the beneficiary of Mossad’s patronage.

To me, this sounds too premature and incorrect. Let me repeat what Ostrovski had written on this topic. ‘Around 1983, a group of Tamil guerrilla factions, collectively known as the Tamil Tigers, began an armed struggle to create a Tamil homeland in the north called Eelam — an on-going battle that has claimed thousands of lives on both sides.’ This is the only sentence in the book, where a vague reference is made to the Tamil Tigers. The time-frame Ostrovski had written about was ‘mid-July 1984’, when he was still a trainee at the Mossad Academy. He had not mentioned LTTE by name anywhere in the book. At that time, all the militant groups fighting for Eelam (LTTE, TELO, EPRLF, EROS and PLOTE) were identified as ‘Tamil Tigers’. This point need be stressed. The authors of *Broken Palmyra* also clearly state this fact in page 72 of their book: ‘Upto this time (April 1985), the Tamil population had hardly differentiated between rival groups. They were all referred to as boys and even Tigers.’

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Again the fact is that as reported in the *Economist* of August 3, 1985, in its coverage on the five Tamil militant groups, LTTE was identified as receiving training from the PLO in Lebanon. . . .”¹¹

My inference that **LTTE did not have links to the Mossad** was subsequently confirmed by the Sinhalese sources as well. Rohan Gunaratna, conveniently ignored the embarrassing revelations of Ostrovsky, for obvious reasons. The ex-Mossad agent portrayed the Sinhalese army team who visited Israel for training under Mossad in pejorative terms such as ‘monkeys’. While not mentioning Ostrovsky’s book in his list of references, Gunaratna noted in passing, “Even though Victor Ostrovsky, a former Mossad agent sensationalized LTTE relations with Israel, there was virtually no relationship.”¹²

Furthermore, at the height of Sri Lankan army’s embarrassing battle losses in April-May 2000 at the hand of LTTE, the *Island* newspaper published a heavily censored news report by Keith Warren, which reiterated my 1992 inference. To quote,

“During the Premadasa regime an ex-officer of the Mossad intelligence agency accused the Israelis of helping the LTTE too and Premadasa appointed a commission to investigate that allegation. The then service commanders testified to say that it was the PLO which helped the LTTE and not the Israelis.”¹³

One of the earliest reports on the Sri Lankan army’s links to the Mossad was by Prema de Mel, in 1984. Excerpts:

“...It is being said that over 50 Mossad members (Israeli secret service agents) are training the Sri Lanka armed services to fight northern guerrillas who want a separate state. This claim has been strengthened by the statement of President Junius Jayewardene that he would even ‘seek the help of the devil’ to rid the country of the Tamil terrorists. The assistant director of the Asia and Oceania division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem, who now heads the Israeli interest section, said in an interview with *Asian Monitor* that his country was ready to help Sri Lanka. . . .

The Tamil United Liberation Front and the Tamil Congress issued a joint statement. The secretaries of both parties, Appapillai Amirthalingam and Kumar Ponnambalam, said: ‘TULF and the TC are shocked and alarmed by the decision to open an Israeli interest section. News reports state that this decision of the government is *quid pro quo* for the services of Israeli experts to train military units in antiguerilla warfare and counterinsurgency operations. We further infer from news reports, uncontradicted by the government, that the Israeli secret service, Mossad, is already engaged in security operations in the north and east. These moves have caused great alarm and apprehension among the Tamil-speaking people.”¹⁴

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Two additional sentences from the previously quoted *Island* report by Keith Warren, which provide a plausible link to Sivarasan (the mercenary, as pointed out by Norman Baker) with the Sri Lankan army and Mossad are as follows:

“The Israelis trained our Special Task Force at Maduru-Oya during the Jayewardene rule. The Israeli Interest Section which operated here was directly in contact with those Israeli personnel involved in planning out war strategies.”¹⁵

Michael Jansen reporting from New Delhi, mused on the precise nature of Indo-Israeli relations, which reached a ten year mark in 2002. Some tidbits mentioned in this report are pertinent.

“...[Since 1980s] cooperation also developed between India’s intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), and Israel’s Mossad and among senior armed forces officers of the two countries. One of the factors promoting this connection on the Indian side was anti-Pakistan, anti-Muslim resentment, particularly amongst officers whose homes were in areas which fell in Pakistan after partition. However, the subordination of the military to the civilian authority prevented the pro-Israel sentiments of those officers from surfacing in Indian policy until full diplomatic relations were established in 1992.”¹⁶

What is notable is the date of establishment of full diplomatic relations between India and Israel. It occurred following Rajiv Gandhi’s death. One can postulate that here lies the motive for the role of Mossad’s ‘hands or fingers’ in deciding the fate of Rajiv Gandhi. Michael Jansen provides a synopsis on the historical factors which could have played a role. To quote,

“India’s policy of supporting the Palestinians goes back to the 1920s and 1930s when Mahatma Gandhi stood against the Zionist colonization and expropriation of Palestine. After Independence, India followed Gandhi’s principled policy out of self-interest. India had the largest Muslim population of any non-Muslim state, enjoyed lucrative economic ties with the Arabs, which are further strengthened by the presence of millions of expatriate Indian workers in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia, and shared with the Arabs a policy of non-alignment during the Cold War.”¹⁷

Thus, Nehru, his daughter Indira Gandhi and his grandson Rajiv Gandhi, for obvious political reasons of courting the Muslim vote and minimally for paying allegiance to Mahatma Gandhi’s views, followed a pro-Arab policy in the international arena until the 1980s. Rajiv Gandhi, if he would have regained the prime ministership wouldn’t have deviated much from the pro-Arab stand. But his elimination resulted in the substantial turn-around in

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India’s diplomatic policy of favoring Israel. Though Subramanian Swamy, India’s pro-Israeli voice, debunked the warning issued by Yasser Arafat to Rajiv Gandhi as a red herring, his cited reason for rejection is markedly humorous. To quote Swamy,

“The whole hullabaloo on Arafat’s warning on RG’s [*i.e.*, Rajiv Gandhi] possible assassination was so much Middle East desert hot air, because after hearing from Arafat personally, Chandrasekhar had asked the RAW to find out. Accordingly the RAW had sent messages to all field stations abroad to do an in-depth check and report back. They came up with nothing.”¹⁸

There is a fallacious assumption here that just because RAW’s field stations couldn’t make head or tail about the warning by Arafat, this warning was a ‘Middle East desert hot air’. To prove the efficiency (or, lack) of RAW’s field station, one need not look further than the assassination attempt on Rajiv made in Colombo in July 1987 by the Sinhala naval rating. If the RAW’s field station in Colombo — with all its proximity to India and intelligence links to its Sri Lankan agents — failed miserably in protecting Rajiv Gandhi, what chances the RAW’s field stations in the Middle East and Europe have of detecting a conspiracy better than Arafat’s agents?

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As an aside, it should also be noted that Swamy, did include in his book a photo of him with Arafat while ridiculing Arafat’s warning. But nothing exists in the text, why this photo appears in his book, unless he wished to make amends for his undeserved ridicule. Swamy also asserted that it is the LTTE which had made a mountain out of mole hill from Arafat’s warning to Rajiv. His view may be reliable, if the following documented facts are ignored for convenience.

Fact 1: It is undeniable that the Mossad cultivated links with the Sri Lankan army and simultaneously with India’s RAW since 1984.

Fact 2: LTTE did not have links to the Mossad.

Fact 3: In 1984, the RAW operatives did send some Tamil militants for training under Mossad, and TELO was the pampered group of RAW agents.

Fact 4: Sivarasan belonged to the TELO camp in 1984, and received training by the RAW operatives in India.

Fact 5: Sivarasan also worked for the Sri Lankan government in the Eastern province, during or after IPKF’s operations in Sri Lanka.

Fact 6: Sivarasan also has traveled to Sweden, Singapore, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates some months before the assassination.

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Fact 7: Sivarasan also doesn’t appear in the records as a prominent member of LTTE. If according to the SIT officials, Sivarasan organized the ‘hit’ against the EPRLF chief Padmanabha in 1990 and escaped to Jaffna thus evading capture, it begs the question why he didn’t do the same on the day following Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination, before his identity was revealed by the photos of Haribabu. That Sivarasan was cavalierly dancing around Tamil Nadu and Karnataka for three months, before his reported death in Bangalore, is a fish-bone stuck in the throat of SIT officials which they cannot dislodge.

Like the proverbial six blind men who saw the elephant, one is under the impression that Sivarasan was the ‘elephant’ in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination story. To-date, his links to the RAW operatives, Sri Lankan army-Mossad operatives, ‘heavy weights’ of the Congress Party, and TELO remain hidden. That he was a ‘mole’ prepared by the RAW operatives to penetrate the LTTE is within the realms of truth. This may be an embarrassing fact, even for Pirabhakaran to acknowledge. If Pirabhakaran was indeed the main conspirator in the Rajiv assassination, one clinching evidence is adequate; that is, an authentic, unadulterated document *revealing Pirabhakaran’s motive or instruction to Sivarasan to commit the deed*. Though more than thirteen years have passed, this document has not seen the light of the day.

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Rajiv Assassination: Wheel of Intrigue

RAJIV GANDHI’S ASSASSINATION: ‘ONE IN A BUNCH IN SOUTH ASIA’

TO FULLY COMPREHEND the motive of those who were behind Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination in 1991, it should not be studied in isolation, since it was just one in a bunch of untimely deaths. To repeat, it is one of many assassinations/untimely deaths of nominal heads of state in South Asia, which occurred since 1975 — an arbitrary, but convenient, date in which the Americans quit Vietnam after nearly 15 years of plodding to defeat communism in Asia. The list is rather long.

- *Sheikh Mujibur Rahman* of Bangladesh: assassinated, on Aug. 15, 1975 by military men.
- *Zulfikar Ali Bhutto* of Pakistan: hanged by his successor Zia ul Haq, on April 4, 1979.
- *Ziaur Rahman* of Bangladesh: assassinated, on May 30, 1981 by military men.
- *Indira Gandhi* of India: assassinated, on October 31, 1984 by her personal bodyguards.
- *Zia ul Haq*: killed in a mysterious mid-air explosion of Pakistani Air Force Plane on August 19, 1988.
- *Rajiv Gandhi*: assassinated by a suicide bomber on May 21, 1991.
- *Ranasinghe Premadasa*: assassinated by a suicide bomber on May 1, 1993.
- *King Birendra* (and his immediate family): ‘reportedly’ assassinated by his son Dipendra, the Crown Prince, who himself ‘committed suicide’ on June 1, 2001.

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From the above list, I have excluded the executions of nominal heads of state from Afghanistan, since 1978: Mohammad Daoud and his family in April 1978, Mohammad Taraki in October 1979, Hafizullah Amin in December 1979 and Dr. Mohammad Najibullah in September 1996. The last mentioned was a Communist head of state, propped by India and supported by its RAW operatives, on behalf of India’s nominal ally in the political chess board.

About analysing complex issues, noted science essayist Stephen Jay Gould, wrote elegantly as follows:

“A detail, by itself, is blind; a concept without a concrete illustration is empty. The conjunction defines the essay as a genre, and I draw connections in a manner that feels automatic to me.”¹

Using Stephen Jay Gould’s measure, I assert two facts. First, a generality: that ‘spying’ is a paid job of the Intelligence operatives of muscle-flexing political powers in South Asia. Second, the details: that quite a number of nominal heads of state (including Rajiv Gandhi) in South Asia were eliminated. That other regions in the global political map did not experience such a ‘regular harvesting of heads’ is undeniable. Thus, rather than focusing Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination as an isolated detail, it is prudent to “draw connections”, as indicated by Stephen Jay Gould. Why this simple deductive step of ‘connecting the dots’ is shunned by the government-controlled (or government-manipulated) media and media experts of South Asian nations is not beyond comprehension.

THE ROLE OF PUPPET MASTERS AND THE ‘LOCAL RELAYS’

That I’m not alone in thinking about the existence of links among these assassinations to the ‘plumbing industry’ of political powers is telling from the following observation made by Tariq Ali, while discussing the assassinations of Mujibur Rahman and Indira Gandhi and the hanging of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, all of which occurred within a decade of 1975 and 1984. Excerpts:

“... It may be true that the CIA is no longer as effective a killing machine as Mossad, but the period I was discussing was at the height of the Cold War. In 1973, Nixon and Kissinger had carefully organized and orchestrated the overthrow of Salvador Allende. The CIA took part in this operation, as did the DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency), which usually deals directly with foreign military personnel. The death of Allende and Chilean democracy haunted [the then] all three leaders in South Asia. Mrs Gandhi saw in it an image of her own future.

It is hardly a secret that the military takeovers in Pakistan in 1958 and 1977 were approved by the United States. DIA involvement in the latter was much

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talked about at the time. General Alam, a senior Corps Commander who was against toppling Bhutto, was shocked to receive a reprimand from the US Military Attache. Soon after General Zia gained power it became obvious that he wanted to get rid of Bhutto, but if Washington had seriously objected to the hanging, it would not have taken place. . .

Before he was assassinated the Bangladeshi leader [Mujibur Rahman] had just merged his party with the local pro-Moscow Communists, declared Bangladesh to be a one-party state and agreed to sign a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Moscow. The US already regarded him as an enemy in any case, and had done so ever since Nixon and Kissinger decided to ‘tilt’ in Pakistan’s favour during the civil war of 1971–72. The US often asserts its power through local relays, finding this more effective than direct CIA involvement. Sometimes a combination of the two strategies becomes necessary. . . .”²

Tariq Ali’s observations, should be read in association with a scathing commentary of Wayne Madsen, a Washington DC-based investigative journalist on under-reported news and analysis, which connects the dots between the ‘local relays’ in India and the sole super-power’s ‘plumbing units’. It provides a plausible cause to solving the mystery of the Royal Family massacre in Kathmandu of June 1, 2001. Excerpts:

“Apparently, intelligence agencies allied to the United States, like those of India (a new ‘strategic partner’ of the United States in the ‘War on Terrorism’ and the ‘War to Protect Regional U.S. Oil and Natural Gas Interests’), have decided to take a cue from President Bush’s ‘shoot to kill’ order against activists and independence leaders. On February 11 [2002], a senior separatist leader of the Tripura (northeast India) independence movement was shot and killed by Indian security forces. The assassinated leader was Benjamin Hrangkhawl, a senior leader of the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), a Christian-dominated separatist group. Hrangkhawl had arrived in Tripura from neighboring Bangladesh.

According to the BBC, the state Police Intelligence Chief Kishore Jha, said the killing of Mr. Hrangkhawl was ‘a major success’. Indian intelligence is now pressing Bhutan and Bangladesh to arrest and extradite separatist refugees in those countries. The King of Bhutan and Prime Minister of Bangladesh might want to look at what happened to the entire Royal Family of Nepal last June when the late King decided to negotiate with leftist guerrillas rather than fight them. According to unblemished sources in Kathmandu, the king and his family were quickly dispatched by a Nepali army commando unit trained at the time by US Special Operation forces sent by US Pacific Commander in Chief Adm. Dennis Blair (he’s the same guy who propped up Gen. Wiranto with special training while the good general was committing genocide in East Timor). What was to become the Pentagon’s Office of Strategic Influence (PSYOPs division) prepared a story, with the assistance of India’s Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) intelligence agency, that the

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King and his family were murdered as a result of the Crown Prince going nuts with automatic weapons after being forlorn over his mother’s refusal to allow him to marry a commoner. The entire Western media bought that story faster than George Bush nosediving after choking on a pretzel. The media also bought that one.”³

King Birendra’s assassination and the yarn spun around it by the mainstream Indian media which served as the first outlet to the news of the macabre murders in the Kathmandu palace is repulsive. In the suppression of details which challenge the common sense, one could trace parallels between Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination and the palatial murders of King Birendra and his immediate family. That the assassins in both examples did not live long also conceals the hand of the prime conspirators, enabling the Intelligence operatives in India to manipulate the pliable media. Here is an excerpt from what the *ABC News Online* presented in anticipation of the first anniversary of the Royal massacre in Kathmandu:

“...While a commission set up by Gyanendra, [who succeeded his elder brother King Birendra] laid the full blame for the massacre on Dipendra [the then Crown Prince], the death of a king who had reigned for nearly three decades still seems incredible to many Nepalese....

How could one gunman mow down nine people at the most tightly guarded building in the country? How could the future queen and crown prince, Komal and Paras, both survive the bloodbath at Narayanhiti Palace? And how could the right-handed Dipendra die from a self-inflicted bullet to the left side of his head? The most asked question is the most basic: how could a prince groomed from birth to assume the throne of the Shah dynasty suddenly go berserk and kill his own parents at dinner?

Some say the pressure from his mother and from Devyani, who was several years his senior and feared she was passing child-bearing age, pushed him over the edge. Another, more controversial, explanation is that the queen did not want her royal son to marry a woman with roots in India — the powerful neighbor whose heavy cultural and political influence is deeply resented by Nepal’s elite....”⁴

Some may still naively believe the story that Dipendra’s romance with Devyani Rana, a daughter from a noble family in India, sealed the fate of Nepal’s King Birendra and his immediate family is plausible. But, more convincing is the fact that there has been ‘bad blood’ between India and Nepal since Rajiv Gandhi’s prime ministerial period, due to the ‘plumbing activities’ perpetrated by the muscle-flexing intelligence operatives manned by the RAW agency. During the hearing of the M. C. Jain Commission, which investigated the Rajiv assassination trial, embarrassing evidence buttressing this fact

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was produced from an agent’s report of RAW’s station reporting an unverified source that the then Queen Aishwarya of Nepal had negotiated a ‘hit’ on Rajiv Gandhi through one Major General Aditya Shamsar Jang Bahadur for 10 crore Indian rupees!⁵

I’m *not advocating* that Queen Aishwarya of Nepal was instrumental in Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination, and that her assassination was a ‘return hit’ instigated by the Indian operatives. Rather, it is my contention that Rajiv Gandhi assassination should not be viewed as an isolated killing of a member of a prominent Indian family, but as a single damaged spoke of South Asian wheel of political intrigue.

However, for the over-taxed and constantly blamed law enforcement personnel in India, the LTTE sympathizers who were then domiciled in Tamil Nadu were convenient targets for apprehension. Just to make their case attractive to the mass media, these Indian officials then tagged the name of Pirabhakaran as the first accused in the charge-sheet, released exactly one year following Rajiv’s assassination, in May 1992. Just two weeks following the tragic event of Sriperumbudur, Kondath Mohandas — who could read the mind-set of the Indian police personnel — had predicted this type of development. Moses Manoharan, the then Madras reporter for Reuter, had observed the following:

“He [*i.e.* Mohandas] said a three-month government deadline for a report on the assassination might put undue pressure on investigators and tempt them to make evidence fit the theory. ‘I know the psychology of police in this country. If you set time limits, the police will come up with an accused’”.⁶

Kondath Mohandas was the Tamil Nadu’s chief police officer, during M. G. Ramachandran’s period as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. It is less than a surprise to note after 13 years, that what he prophesied did happen eventually.

That the role of puppet masters and their local relays is neither Tariq Ali’s nor my fantasy is consolidated by a provocative opinion-piece by Major Paul Marks of USA, in 2000. Advocating a role for [only] seven US military advisors in Sri Lanka to support the Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF), Major Marks highlighted the need for ‘intelligence’ and ‘infiltration’. By reading between the lines, one can sense the extent to which camaraderie existed between the RAW’s intelligence operatives in India and the Sri Lankan armed forces. According to Major Marks,⁷

“SLAF has weaknesses in doctrine, training, and force development. While a staff college was recently established, the majority of officers have one year or less of formal training. Foreign training is primarily done in India with a small number of officers going to Pakistan, Bangladesh, Britain and the

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United States. There are branch schools, but in-unit training is the norm. Because of the rapid growth of the army, few officers have any expertise in planning and coordinating large operations. There is no intelligence school. Operational demands necessitated by war have made training and education a second priority.

Overall, SLAF is a professional military — human rights violations, common in the 1980s, are declining — but after 18 years its tactical and operational successes have come to naught because of the lack of an overarching strategic concept to bring the conflict to a close.

U. S. military advisors in Sri Lanka should focus on preparation strategy, operational planning, and assistance in functional skills augmented by instruction by Special Operations Forces on specific tactical skills such as air assault, naval infiltration, and counternaval infiltration. There is also a need for doctrine development that ties functional skills into a battle-focused training system. The goal would be defeat of LTTE in three years and the withdrawal of advisors within five. Measures of effectiveness could include:

1. adopting a national security and military strategy within six months
2. developing a combined plan with India to prevent use of Tamil Nadu as a rebel base
3. reorganizing the chain of command and theater geometry within six months
4. establishing a training center for infantry battalions and combined arms teams in a year
5. organizing intelligence courses for all personnel serving in intelligence positions
6. improving operational level tasks (intelligence, logistics and fires) within 18 months
7. introducing effective combined interdiction operations with the Indian navy in two years
8. denying the insurgents of re-supply by sea within a year.

These objectives could be accomplished with a relatively modest advisory force. The seven military personnel required for this effort include:

1. advises joint staff on national security strategy, national military strategy, operational planning, and theater geometry.
2. advises joint staff on operational planning.
3. advises joint staff on intelligence collection, dissemination, and training, and on establishing intelligence school.
4. advises on operational logistics and reorganization of logistics systems.
5. advises air force for training and coordination of close air support.

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6. advises navy on coastal patrolling and interdiction operations.
7. senior noncommissioned officer — advises training and doctrine command on establishment of joint unit training center.”

This provocative commentary by Major Paul Marks appeared around the time when the Sri Lankan armed forces suffered their humiliating defeat in the Elephant Pass and Jaffna peninsula. It euphemistically indicates the thinking of Pirabhakaran’s adversaries in eliminating him [especially the euphemistic sentence, ‘The goal would be defeat of LTTE in three years and the withdrawal of advisors within five.’] Also, the above stated point no. 3 on intelligence collection, dissemination and training need special notice.

Few weeks later, on June 7, 2000, C. V. Gooneratne, the then minister of Industrial Development, died in a bomb blast while heading a procession for the official first ‘War Heroes’ Day’ in his own constituency of Ratmalana. His assassination has to be noted solely for the reason that Gooneratne, at the time of his death, was a front runner to the prime minister stakes in Sri Lanka. Since the *Economist* magazine has remained nasty and condescending to Pirabhakaran and LTTE since mid-1980s, what it published in reporting Gooneratne’s assassination cannot be thought of as favoring Pirabhakaran by any stretch of imagination. Excerpts:

“...Who set off the bomb is unclear. The police say it was the work of a suicide bomber. Ministers say the bomber was a Tamil Tiger, since the Tigers have used suicide bombers in previous attacks in the capital. As on such occasions in the past, the Tigers have remained silent. In suspicious-minded Colombo, not everyone is prepared to believe that the Tigers are the only killers in a country where political assassination has become a way of life. But if the Tigers were not responsible, who might have killed Mr. Gunaratne in his own stronghold?

Mr. Gunaratne was one of the few ministers whose loyalty to Mrs. Kumaratunga was beyond question. It was widely believed that he would soon be made prime minister, replacing the ailing 84-year-old Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the president’s mother. Mr. Gunaratna would have had plenty of enemies...”⁸

The correspondent for *Economist* further stated how the Sri Lankan army was helped by Israeli operatives in preventing the complete takeover of Jaffna by the LTTE’s forces in May 2000. To quote,

“The army’s successes in the north are largely due to assistance provided by Israel. It has provided arms of quality to match the Tigers’. Some reports say that Israeli officers are now helping to direct the army’s operations. To pay

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for the arms, Sri Lanka is digging even deeper into its pockets to increase defence spending.

The political cost may be more difficult to assess. Israel now has full diplomatic ties with Sri Lanka for the first time, which will not go down well with the Islamist lobby in Colombo. Moreover, though someone appears to have put backbone into Sri Lanka’s previously demoralized troops, it was evidently not the generals. Pushed aside by the Israelis, they may feel almost as aggrieved as the Tigers.”⁹

Thus, that the Israeli hands which began ‘fishing in the troubled South Asian political waters since 1984’, have entrenched strongly in the region including Sri Lanka. They were accommodated by Pirabhakaran’s adversaries, beginning from J. R. Jayewardene and Lalith Athulathmudali, to Chandrika Kumaratunga. The signature of Israeli operatives is visible in some of the slick campaigns against LTTE in the military and non-military encounters. That in the early 1980s, while Rajiv Gandhi was learning his first steps in politics as a rookie, Jayewardene also roped in Pakistan’s dictator Gen. Zia ul Haq to aid the Sri Lankan army is an open secret. In a 1988 obituary note on Zia ul Haq, I inserted my assessment on Rajiv Gandhi’s tenure as the Indian prime minister for the first time. Excerpts:

“In mid-August, by a sudden hair-raising trick resembling that of a master magician, the Grim Reaper zapped the life of Pakistan’s military dictator Zia ul Haq. . . Since 1983 General Zia was one of the central figures involved in the ethnic turmoil in Sri Lanka. The military dictator he is, Zia termed up with the Jayewardene government to suppress political opposition (both Tamil and Sinhalese) in Sri Lanka. Most importantly, General Zia provided military help (armaments, training facilities and personnel) to Jayewardene’s regime for use against Tamil civilians and Tamil rebels. Many Indian journalists had reported that Pakistan’s military pilots were employed for the aerial bombing in the Tamil regions of Sri Lanka. . .

It is an open secret that both, Zia and Jayewardene, shared a common professional enmity to Indira Gandhi. After Indira Gandhi’s tragic death in 1984, her son Rajiv was irked by the Zia-Jayewardene alliance. It had been reported in Indian and international press that the deployment of Indian military personnel in Sri Lanka was made to sever the Jayewardene-Zia military ties, which had created a mess in the southern front of India.

It should be interpreted that, rather than being a savior of Sri Lankan Tamils, Rajiv Gandhi was acting more in concern for his own country’s territorial defence. So Eelam Tamil issue became a pawn in international power play between India and Pakistan. Zia’s intrusion into Sri Lankan military politics was one of the causes for Rajiv’s flexing of military muscles in the Northern and Eastern regions of the island. Of course, I’m not defending Rajiv

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Gandhi's actions since August 1987. But, given the situation he faced (and importantly, the inexperience he has had in dealing with the wily dictators Zia and Jayewardene), one could grasp Rajiv's predicament. Rajiv's mother Indira knew the tricks of the trade of how to keep 'cunning foxes' in their kennel. But Rajiv acted like a novice in international politics. And this explains his bungling of strategy since Aug. 1987.

Now that the Grim Reaper had played His card in removing General Zia from the scene, one fervently hopes that Rajiv Gandhi will come to his senses to provide some leadership, in which his grandfather and mother excelled themselves.”¹⁰

Though in this brief note I did not mention Pirabhakaran by name, I provided the context for Rajiv Gandhi's entanglement with LTTE in 1987. I will *never claim* that Rajiv Gandhi would have read and listened to my opinion; but in hindsight, one could see that Rajiv Gandhi did change his mind on his relationship towards Pirabhakaran in the first half of 1989, as confirmed by his successor V. P. Singh in his interview to the *Frontline* magazine in 1997 (see, chapter 33).

THE GAME OF CREATING A CONSPIRATOR FROM PRESS RELEASES

Boris Yeltsin, Sonia Gandhi and Jayalalitha share three features in common. First, in 1990s all three had name recognition in India, for being politicians or in the case of Sonia Gandhi, a politician in waiting. Secondly, all three are still living. But, many Tamils are not aware of the third fact, which, in the scheme of pea-brained Intelligence operatives in India, all three were targets of 'LTTE assassination plans' in the 1990s. Here is a chronologically arranged selection of RAW-supplied news plants which appeared in the national press of India.

Item 1: “LTTE suicide squad in Tamil Nadu”. *The Hindu International edition*, March 28, 1992.

Item 2: “LTTE Back in Business: The Hit List — J. Jeyalalitha, D. R. Kartikeyan, V. Ramamurthy, S. Sripal.” — news feature by Anirudhya Mitra, *India Today*, April 15, 1992, pp. 28-29.

Item 3: “Tamil militants tried to kill Yeltsin: aide.” *The Hindu International edition*, February 27, 1993.

Item 4: “Threat from air to Jayalalitha?” *The Hindu International edition*, May 15, 1993.

Item 5: “LTTE car bomb threat to Sonia — by a Special Correspondent, *The Hindu*, May 25, 1999.

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When I analyzed these five planted items, *I found a marked correlation with their dates of appearance and some relevant dates in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial.* Items 1 and 2 appeared within two months ahead of the public release of SIT’s charge sheet in May 1992, implicating Pirabhakaran as the first offender. Items 3 and 4 appeared before the commencement of the Rajiv Assassination trial at the Poonamallee Court Complex in Madras on May 5, 1993. The item 5 appeared just two weeks after the Supreme Court appeal verdict on May 11, 1999, when 19 of the 26 accused punished by the Trial Court verdict were released from gaol. Though all five of these news-plants deserve reproduction for the high absurdity quotient packed in them, I chose Items 3 and 4 for critical overview.

In a news brief date-lined, “Moscow, Feb. 19, 1993”, the *Hindu* newspaper informed its readers,

“The Indian security service in coordination with Russian VIP security department officials foiled a plot by Sri Lankan Tamil militants to assassinate the President, Mr. Boris Yeltsin, during his visit to India last month, according to the chief of the presidential security, Lt. Gen. Mikhail Barsukov. He told the influential daily *Nezavisimoya Gazeta* in an interview that the Tamil terrorists had undergone special training and had had combat experience in Lebanon. The terrorists had wanted to attract international attention and force some of their conditions on India, including the release of arrested terrorists, Lt. Gen. Barsukov said.”

Though LTTE was not mentioned by name, other tangential references such as the use of euphemistic term ‘terrorist’ and the phrase ‘Sri Lankan Tamil militants’ in the news release indicated that the RAW operatives had fed the story to be planted in the Moscow daily. Only quoted named source was Lt. Gen. Mikhail Barsukov, who in all probability would have been a toady to Yeltsin, the then Russian leader. What was missing in the planted assassination-plot story was, answers to questions, ‘Who was the assassin?’, ‘Where the assassin was captured’ and ‘How the assassin attempted to kill Yeltsin?’.

If the Yeltsin-assassination attempt (Item 3) published in the *Hindu* newspaper was a yawn-producing yarn, the assassination attempt on Jayalalitha (Item 4) published by the same *Hindu* newspaper ten weeks later was nothing but hog’s fart. I reproduce it in full, for its humor:

“The reported sighting of an unidentified glider-type low-noise aircraft that was said to have made a couple of sorties over the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Ms. Jayalalitha’s residence in Madras in the early hours of May 3 [1993] has caused concern to the State Government and had provided political grist to her opponents.

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According to an official release, the plane with no lights was noticed by the men on sentry duty at about 3 am. They immediately alerted the senior security officers. Ms. Jayalalitha is a ‘high security VIP’ and the State police has intelligence information that she could be attacked by the LTTE from the air. Airport sources said there was no aircraft movement over Madras between 2 am and 4 am that day and no conventional flying object could escape their notice. Also, glider or training aircraft are not permitted to fly during night.

As civil and defence authorities started checking out what the flying object could be, the State Government requested the Centre to provide aerial cover, including anti-aircraft equipment, for Ms. Jayalalitha and also declare the residential complex where her house is located as ‘no flying zone’. The matter was also raised in Parliament.

Following the request, the Centre not only decided to extend aerial cover for the residence of Ms. Jayalalitha, but banned the flying of radio-controlled planes in all the metropolitan cities. Such microlite aircraft are not manufactured in India. Even as these decisions were announced, the State Unit of the Congress (I) ruling at the Centre and the DMK dubbed it all a ‘fabricated story’ and an attempt by the AIADMK to regain its lost sympathy. To which an AIADMK spokesman replied: ‘It is not only an attempt to politicize every issue but most inhuman’. He said that low-flying gliders could not be tracked by radars.”

This news report is a good example of how to prepare a ‘planted story’ to fool gullible readers. Not a single mentioned source in the news report has been identified by name and age.

- Who provided the ‘official release’?
- Who were the ‘men on sentry duty’ at Jayalalitha’s residence?
- Who were the ‘senior security officers?’
- Who were the representatives of State police?
- Who were the ‘Airport sources?’
- Who were the ‘civil and defence authorities?’
- ‘Who took decision on behalf of the euphemistic ‘Centre’ in India?
- Who were the ‘Congress(I) and DMK’ persons in Tamilnadu who called the report as the ‘fabricated story’?
- Who was the ‘AIADMK spokesman’?

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The smut-licking *Hindu* newspaper editors would have fooled only themselves by inserting a lame denial to the news report from the Tamil Nadu state’s Congress Party official and the DMK party representative within the news story. But even these persons have not been identified properly.

CONCLUDING NOTES ON RAJIV GANDHI ASSASSINATION

It is to explore the multi-faceted, inter-connected links of political assassinations in South Asia, I delved into the minute details of Rajiv Gandhi assassination and the assassination trial, as well as the crude attempts by the India’s intelligence operatives to frame Pirabhakaran as the prime conspirator. In 1992, I pointed out the similarities between the John F. Kennedy assassination and that of Rajiv Gandhi assassination. Just as a convincing answer to the question ‘Who killed Kennedy in 1963?’ remains elusive even after 41 years, a definite answer to ‘Who really killed Rajiv in 1991?’ still remains a puzzle. However, Sinhalese adversaries of Pirabhakaran and LTTE, who made a serious assassination attempt to kill Rajiv in 1987, have harvested much political mileage — without any shame in their own hypocrisy and perfidy — by tagging Pirabhakaran’s name prominently with Rajiv Gandhi assassination.

It remains a fact that one had to wait till May 1999 for the delivery of the Supreme Court Appeals verdict to study the intricate details of how the prosecution team formulated its case against Pirabhakaran, as the prime conspirator. Thus, the literature generated between 1991 and 1998, implicating Pirabhakaran’s role in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination is strongly biased and devoid of factual merit. The verdicts of the three Supreme Court Justices who heard the appeal on the case, *do not convincingly prove* that Pirabhakaran was the prime conspirator in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination. Furthermore, contrary to the myth propagated by his adversaries in the 1990s, Pirabhakaran was not under trial in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination trial which concluded in May 1999.

A few additional comments on Subramanian Swamy’s book¹¹ are pertinent here. In presenting his case against Pirabhakaran, Swamy had cited out of context from the verdicts of the Supreme Court Justices, for his convenience. Even the title of his book is a misnomer, since first-third of the text describes how he functioned as the Minister of Commerce and Law in the short-lived Chandrasekhar Cabinet during 1990–1991, and the final-third of the text presents polemics on Swamy’s numerous opponents in Indian politics, judiciary and journalism. Those who have been specifically targeted by Swamy include, Congress Party politicians Arjun Singh and Mani Shankar Aiyar, other politicians like Ram Jethmalani, Jayalalitha and Veeramani, bureaucrat-turned politician T. N. Seshan, Commissioner Milap Chand Jain and journalist

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Vir Sanghvi. Unlike Swamy who indulges in his pet theory that Pirabhakaran was the chief conspirator in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, others who have been tarred by Swamy have publicly pointed an accusing finger on Mossad operatives rather than Pirabhakaran. The genesis of Swamy’s book lies in this difference, and Swamy, a leading Israeli lobbyist in India, had accused those who differ from his view as acolytes of Pirabhakaran!

I conclude my analysis on Rajiv Gandhi assassination by citing the thoughts of Charles Darwin:

“Many of the views which have been advanced are highly speculative, and some no doubt will prove erroneous; but I have in every case given the reasons which have led me to one view rather than to another. . . . False facts are highly injurious to the progress of science, for they often endure long; but false views, if supported by some evidence, do little harm, for every one takes a salutary pleasure in proving their falseness: and when this is done, one path towards error is closed and the road to truth is often at the same time opened.”¹²

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Why is He Loved by the Tamils

THAT LOVE IS universal to all cultures is an unchallenged fact. But the pointer that markers (or tags) of love are culture-specific are routinely overlooked. While an open expression of love is permissible in the Las Vegas or London airports, the same act would raise eyebrows and scorn in Chennai or Tehran airports. Why I mention this is to indicate the ignorance shown by foreign journalists in evaluating whether Pirabhakaran is loved or not by Tamils in Eelam and elsewhere. To cite an example, the unsigned editorialist of the *Economist* magazine began an editorial with the following sentence:

“In Northern Sri Lanka, the secessionist Tamil Tigers are feared and even respected, but seldom loved.”¹

What was not mentioned is how did this editorialist measure the ‘love’ among the Eelam Tamils for Pirabhakaran? It cannot be measured that easily by a fly-by night, non-Tamil speaking journalist, by asking the residents of Jaffna through a translator-interpreter whether they ‘love’ the Tamil Tigers. Even if that particular journalist gathered some ‘negative answers’ to his question from the Eelam residents, unless he or she is a behavioral psychologist or cultural anthropologist, the accuracy and validity of the answers given to strangers would be of dubious quality. To comprehend how love is expressed and shared by Tamil culture, one should study it in depth — investing time, money and energy. Also wanted for this exercise is an unbiassed heart, which seems distinctly lacking in the unsigned pieces published in the *Economist* magazine.

Luckily for Tamils, there exists one study by Margaret Trawick, the professor of social anthropology at the Massey University, New Zealand, who had endured to investigate how love is expressed among the 20th century Tamils. In this chapter, first I will first identify the culture-specific markers for love in Tamil culture so that one can assess how much Pirabhakaran is loved in more objective terms rather than the subjective, half-baked pronouncements of culturally blind-folded journalists who dominate the international newsmedia. Secondly, I will explain *why* Pirabhakaran is loved by the Tamils.

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MARGARET TRAWICK’S STUDY ON TAMIL LOVE

Margaret Trawick, in 1990 espoused that for Tamils, *anpu* (as Tamils know ‘love’ in a broader sense) has the following nine properties.²

1. containment (*adakkam*): Open expression of love is to be restrained, even if it is mother love. Tamils also do not express love among opposite sexes openly.
2. habit (*pazhakkam*): Attachment, or a sense of oneness with a person or thing or activity, grows slowly, by habituation.
3. harshness and cruelty (*kadumai* and *kodumai*): Physical affection for children is expressed not through caresses but roughly, in the form of painful pinches, slaps and tweaks. The movie song, ‘*Adikkira kai thaana Anaikkum; Anaikkira kai thaana adikkum*’ (Hitting hand will hold, and holding hand will hit) expresses this sentiment beautifully.
4. dirtiness (*azhukku*): ‘Defiance of rules or purity conveyed a message of union and equality and was a way of teaching children and onlookers where love was’, tells the author. This is exemplified by mother’s care of baby’s bodily excretions and the host’s cleaning of guest’s plate of food (*echchil*).
5. humility (*panivu*): Love is implicated in expressions of humility and patience (*porumai*, the strength to sustain and endure).
6. poverty and simplicity (*ezhumai* and *elimai*): Self renunciation of luxury (such as fancy clothes and jewellery) for the cause of a loved one, as expressed in sentiments like, ‘I don’t want new clothes... as long as you are sick’.
7. servitude (*adimai*): Illustrated as the servant of God, who receives the highest respect among the civilians. Elimination of the boastful ‘I’ (*Naan*) and substituting with the self deprecating ‘this slave’ (*Adiyen*), exemplified by Tamil saints of the past.
8. opposition and reversal (*ethirttal* and *puratchi*): Characterized by the use of very intimate suffix, *-di* (for girl) and *-da* (for boy) among family members and close pals. When these intimate forms of address are used by acquaintances or strangers, they become derogatory.
9. mingling and confusion (*kalattal* and *mayakkam*): Love erases distinction completely and mingle everyone, typified by the adage, ‘We are

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all one’ (*Onrae kulam — Oruvane Thevan*). In addition, love leads to dizziness, confusion, intoxication and delusion (*mayakkam*).

All these nine cultural markers of Tamil love are indicated in the love Tamils have showered on Pirabhakaran.

1. *containment*: One cannot ask a Tamil, like in Gallup-poll, to find out whether he or she loves Pirabhakaran or not. Prudent Tamils will not answer in the affirmative. It is a very private issue, like what the Americans consider the details of their individual paychecks.
2. *habit*: Remember that in the first 10 years of Tamil militancy (circa 1975-1985), there were many who competed for the leadership role with Pirabhakaran. Some were even trained in the PLO camps and Israeli camps. They only turned out to be mercenaries (for the arms of Sri Lankan and Indian governments) and later metamorphosed into parliamentary seat-warmers. Tamils came to accept Pirabhakaran, only after he proved his mettle. Cynics may quip that Pirabhakaran physically eliminated his rivals to reach the pinnacle. But Eelam Tamils also came to be convinced that his rivals for leadership had self-destructed themselves by ill-judgments, and also by deviating from the path of ‘Eelam’ for which they had pledged to work. It is not an exaggeration to reiterate that among the 60 plus million Tamils living today, considering the impossibility of the aim of establishing an army, none had followed the Edison formula for success (constituting three simple elements: hard work, common sense and ‘stick-to-it’iveness spirit) diligently like Pirabhakaran for the past 25 years. Pirabhakaran also shares some of Edison’s peculiar background in that he was a ‘semi-literate’ in the fool’s world of literacy, boasting of prefixes ‘Oxford’, ‘Harvard’ and ‘Sorbonne’ linked by a hyphen to the word ‘educated’, or prefixes ‘Sandhurst’ and ‘West Point’ linked by a hyphen to the word ‘trained’.
3. *harshness and cruelty*: Loving Pirabhakaran was (and is) no bed of roses. The harshness and cruelty were absorbed as part of the package, for the pride his movement has delivered to the Tamils.
4. *dirtiness*: Of course, that Pirabhakaran was not from the dominant Hindu Vellala caste has been accepted by the Tamils. The ‘dirtiness’ in the Brahminical world view has been completely ignored.
5. *humility*: The pain of routine ridicule, delivered from the political pulpit and press desks in Colombo, Chennai, Washington DC and London, for loving Pirabhakaran is tolerated by Tamils with humility.

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6. *poverty and simplicity*: With whatever scale one measures the quality of life in Eelam during the past two decades, an apparent economic poverty and simplicity is visible in the places where Pirabhakaran is loved. Still the Eelam Tamils endure this hardship for love of Pirabhakaran and his ideological goal.
7. *servitude*: His adversaries, like the operatives of the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna), may ridicule the decorating terms such as ‘*Suriathevan*’ and other word-plays, but Tamils who love Pirabhakaran serve him in various fronts — in his army, and as support cast under much hardship. Servitude is a cultural marker in Tamil love, which cannot be understood by culture-challenged academics, journalists and paid report-writers.
8. *opposition and reversal*: This cultural marker doesn’t need explanation, since there was opposition to Pirabhakaran for his methods, especially among the older generation. The opposition was mainly due to generational conflict, who were familiar with the Gandhian path of non-violence and couldn’t grasp the post-Gandhian scenario that gun holders dictate terms in global politics.
9. *mingling and confusion*: This cultural marker for love among Tamils, towards Pirabhakaran, is self-explanatory if one observes the existing pattern in Tamil Nadu.

WHY PIRABHAKARAN IS LOVED BY TAMILS?

‘In a 1992 monthly column I wrote to the *Tamil Nation* under my nom de plume C. P. Goliard,³ I had hinted the answers for this question. Excerpts:

“... Two millennia ago, the world population was around 250 million. It is an irony that though the message of Jesus Christ had spread all over the world in multitude of languages, the mother tongue of the Messiah is now struggling to survive. The Tamil language was relatively lucky to have strong vitality for the past 2,000 years. It has been estimated that at the time of Jesus, India had a population of about 100 million. The Tamil-speaking population in India and Eelam would have been in the range of 8–10 million, two millennia ago. Within 80 generations, Tamil continue to survive, but Aramaic is now on the verge of extinction. How did this happen?

FOUR ‘C’ POWERS

I can postulate the influence of four ‘C’ powers, which enabled Tamil to live and Aramaic to struggle for survival. These are, cerebral (cultural) power,

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commercial power, crown (and civil) power and combat power. It is the combination of these four powers which had allowed the Tamil language to survive till now. Let me illustrate the significant roles of these four ‘C’ powers briefly.

Cerebral (cultural) power

The cerebral power of approximately 1,000 intellectuals at the most, during the past 80 generations, was influential in elevating Tamil into a culturally rich language. The authors of Tolkappiyam, eight anthologies of secular poetry of the Sangam period and Tirukkural (all written between the 1st and 4th century AD), the religious saints collectively called 63 Nayanars, great poets of merit (Ilanko, Kamban and Auvayar), goliards (Kavi Kalameham and Arumuga Navalar), composers (Arunagirinathar, Arunasala Kavirayar and Gopalakrishna Bharathy), folk physicians collectively named Chittars and religious hymnodists (Pattinattar, Thayumanavar and Ramalinga Swamigal) produced voluminous literary material to enrich the Tamil language.

Commercial power

Tamils had indulged in commerce with other nations from time immemorial. Till 500 years ago, marine navigation has been one of the strong points which symbolized the Tamil commercial power and combat power. Prof. Walter Wallbank observed in his book, *A Short History of India and Pakistan* (1958), ‘In general, Tamil civilization was very advanced, based as it was on a flourishing sea trade, Tamil rulers, especially the Cholas, had great fleets which sailed to Ceylon, Burma, Java and even the Far East. In 45 AD, the use of the monsoon in navigation had been discovered and, taking advantage of these prevailing winds, ships could now cross the Arabian Sea instead of hugging the coast. The trade of Tamil Land with Rome was particularly active, as Europe greatly prized the spices, perfumes, precious stones and textiles of south India. Several Roman colonies were set up in Tamil Land, and it has been estimated that the annual drain from Rome to India approximated 4 million dollars.’

Crown (and Civil) Power

Jawaharlal Nehru, in his *Glimpses of World History*, makes reference to the crown (and civil) power Tamils enjoyed between the 3rd century AD and the end of 12th century. Almost 60 years ago, in a letter dated June 23, 1932, to daughter Indira, Nehru wrote,

‘Farther south and east in India lay the Tamil country. Here from the 3rd century to the 9th, for about 600 years, the Pallavas ruled. . . it was these Pallavas

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who sent out colonizing expeditions to Malaysia and the Eastern Islands. The capital of the Pallava state was Kanchi or Conjeevaram, a beautiful city then and even now remarkable for its wise town-planning.

The Pallavas give place to the aggressive Cholas early in the 10th century. I have told you something of the Chola Empire of Rajaraja and Rajendra, who built great fleets and went conquering to Ceylon, Burma and Bengal. More interesting is the information we have of the elective village panchayat system they had. This system was built up from below, village unions electing many committees to look after various kinds of work, and also electing district unions. Several districts formed a province.’

Then, Nehru describes about the rise of ‘Pandya kingdom, with Madura for its capital and Kayal as its port. A famous traveler from Venice, Marco Polo, visited Kayal, the port, twice in 1288 and in 1293. He describes the town as a great and noble city, full of ships from Arabia and Chgina, and humming with business.’

Combat Power

The combat power, which had been inter-twined with the crown power and commercial power, hardly needs further description. The combat history of the Pallava, Chola and Pandya dynasties has been recorded by many historians, including Nehru.

In the letter quoted above, Nehru succinctly summarized the Tamil combat power in one paragraph. ‘The Tamil Pallavas rise on the east coast and the south and for a very long period they hold sway. They colonize in Malaysia. After 600 years of rule, they give place to the Cholas, who conquer distant lands and sweep the seas with their navies. Three hundred years later they retire from the scene, and the Pandyan kingdom emerges into prominence, and the city of Madura becomes a centre of culture and Kayal a great and busy port in touch with distant countries’.

Nehru also infers another interesting point from the observation recorded by Marco Polo on the medieval Tamil Nadu. The chronicler from Venice had written about the imports of large number of horses into south India by sea from Arabia and Persia (currently Iran). Nehru noted, ‘It is said that one of the reasons why the Muslim invaders of India were better fighters was their possession of the better horses. The best horse-breeding grounds in Asia were under their control.’ This suggests that the medieval Tamil military strategists were preparing themselves to stop the Muslim invasion spreading towards south India, at the time of Marco Polo’s visit.

The Past 500 Years

Well, the history of past five centuries (only 20 generations) show the decline of crown power, combat power and commercial power among the Tamils in

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Tamil Nadu and Eelam. Only the cerebral power sustained the Tamil language to its current status. The languages which were relatively late entrants to the cultural world such as English, French, Spanish and Arabic gained elevated status because those who spoke these languages began to dominate the world by crown power, commercial power and combat power.”

The greatness in Pirabhakaran is that he dreamt and established an army, to reassert the combat power of Tamils, and thereby regain the crown (and civil) power of Tamils. While tens of thousands of other 60 million plus Tamils had concentrated only on achieving some cerebral power to gain status, only Pirabhakaran thought of establishing the combat power for Tamils. By this, Pirabhakaran brought the mind-set of the Tamil ethnics from the ‘bullock-cart’ age of the 19th century to at least the ‘bullet-train’ age of the 20th century. With all due respect to Mahatma Gandhi, whether one likes it or not, guns and bullets have served well in gaining independence, freedom and status from the oppressors. Though handicapped in textbook education, Pirabhakaran chose the paths of Washington and Maorather than Gandhi to liberate the homeland of Eelam Tamils. This is why Pirabhakaran is loved by Tamils.

MAHINDAPALA’S ANGLE ON PIRABHAKARAN’S ‘GREATEST
ACHIEVEMENT’

H. L. D. Mahindapala is one of the most virulent critics of Pirabhakaran. His bias in twisting the history of Ceylon to suit his Sinhala-Buddhist blinders in any debate eliminates him as an impartial analyst of multi-cultural Ceylon. While taking into account these deficiencies, his angle on Pirabhakaran’s ‘greatest achievement’ is worth noting, since the issue he focuses is one which had been an Achilles’ Heel for Eelam Tamils.

In a debate on caste system he engaged with me in 1996, Mahindapala built up a case that the Prevention of Social Disabilities Act, 1957 of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike “stands as a monumental landmark not only to the liberal spirit of the Sinhalese but also to the enlightened and pioneering efforts of reforming the dismal and the discriminatory legacy left behind by five centuries of colonial rulers.”⁴

Mahindapala continued,

“However, the Prevention of Social Disabilities Act ran into serious obstacles laid by the all-powerful upper-caste in Jaffna to block its implementation. Undeniably, the greatest achievement of Mr. Prabhakaran is in the dismantling of the obscene and the oppressive caste system in Jaffna that dehumanized Jaffna society since the coming of the Dutch. The act of Tamil youths taking up arms was a double-edged weapon — (1) against the Sinhalese, and

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(2) against the upper-caste Tamils of Jaffna who have been their oppressors for generations...”⁵

In a subsequent passage, Mahindapala observed,

“...The two-pronged machinations of the Jaffna upper-caste to retain their traditional supremacy were directed simultaneously against (1) the ‘Sinhala-Buddhist governments’ and (2) their own sub-castes. They held on to their precarious positions by pitting (2) against (1). Naturally, they resented any outside interference that would threaten their prestige, position and power in Jaffna. This point is illustrated amply in the obstructionist tactics of the Chelvanayakams and Ponnambalams to the Prevention of Social Disabilities Act...”⁶

Mahindapala is nothing but an obnoxious polemicist, afflicted with amnesia. If the Social Disabilities Act of 1957 passed by the padre Bandaranaike Cabinet was such a boon to the low-caste Tamils in Jaffna, how come the Sri Lankan armed forces which came directly under the purview of widow Sirimavo Bandaranaike failed to notice it? Why the Kandyan Govigama Buddhists (KGB in short) initiated a policy of *ethnic cleansing in the island’s armed forces since 1962*, which in turn facilitated the rise of Pirabhakaran’s army?

BRUCE HOFFMAN’S PERCEPTIONS ON PIRABHAKARAN AND LTTE

A pointed answer to the question ‘Why Pirabhakaran is loved by the Eelam Tamils’ is that he internationalized the Eelam Tamil campaign for freedom and independence, unlike anyone who preceded him as Tamil leaders. The path he took to promote his cause was untouched by the Tamils for the past 500 years. He sharpened the ‘combat power’ of Tamils, which had been blunted by the manacles of casteism.

This point surfaces in Bruce Hoffman’s viewpoint which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine of January 2002. He was identified in the magazine as ‘a terrorism analyst at the Rand Corporation’. This Rand Corporation has extensive links with the Pentagon and it is also not improper to infer that Bruce Hoffman’s links to the Israeli agents are not weak. From his descriptions, he appears to be one of the American advisors who have availed their expertise to the Sri Lankan armed forces (since the days of Lalith Athulathmudali) to neutralize Pirabhakaran. Thus, his *sanitized version of a project report* should be of considerable interest to Eelam Tamils.

Some caveat is needed before I provide Hoffman’s impressions in length. On superficial reading, his description of his experience in Colombo presents

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an uncomplimentary picture of the Tamil Tigers. Thus, the readers are advised first to ignore the pejorative remarks on LTTE, relating to the reported terrorist acts and assassinations, since Hoffman uses *non-confirming words and phrases like, ‘arguably’, ‘believed to be’ and ‘believed to have’*. Secondly, readers should focus on the profile of a Sri Lankan army officer, identified with the pseudonym Thomas. Undoubtedly, Thomas is a Sinhalese and he cannot be a poster-guy to the professional wing of the maligned Sri Lankan armed forces. Hoffman wrote:⁷

“... I learned this some years ago, on a research trip to Sri Lanka. The setting — a swank ocean front hotel in Colombo, a refreshingly cool breeze coming off the ocean, a magnificent sunset on the horizon — could not have been further removed from the carnage and destruction that have afflicted that island country for the past eighteen years and have claimed the lives of more than 60,000 people. Arrayed against the democratically elected Sri Lankan government and its armed forces [*Note by Sri Kantha: Without any criticism, Hoffman had glossed over the emaciated form of Sri Lankan democracy and the racially segregated army akin to the pre-World War II American army.*] is perhaps the most ruthlessly efficient terrorist organization-cum-insurgent force in the world today: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, known also by the acronym LTTE or simply as the Tamil Tigers. The Tigers are unique in the annals of terrorism and arguably eclipse even bin Laden’s al Qaeda in professionalism, capability, and determination. They are believed to be the first nonstate group in history to stage a chemical-weapons attack when they deployed poison gas in a 1990 assault on a Sri Lankan military bases — some five years before the nerve-gas attack on the Tokyo subway by the apocalyptic Japanese religious cult Aum Shinrikyo. Of greater relevance, perhaps, is the fact that at least a decade before the seaborne attack on the U.S.S. *Cole*, in Aden harbor, the LTTE’s special suicide maritime unit, the Sea Tigers, had perfected the same tactics against the Sri Lankan navy. Moreover, the Tamil Tigers are believed to have developed their own embryonic air capability — designed to carry out attacks similar to those of September 11 (though with much smaller, noncommercial aircraft). The most feared Tiger unit, however, is the Black Tigers — the suicide cadre composed of the group’s best-trained, most battle-hardened, and most zealous fighters. A partial list of their operations includes the assassination of the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi at a campaign stop in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, in 1991; the assassination of Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, in 1993; the assassination of the presidential candidate Gamini Dissanayake, which also claimed the lives of fifty-four bystanders and injured about one hundred more, in 1994; the suicide truck bombing of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, in 1996, which killed eighty-six people and wounded 1,400 others; and the attempt on the life of the current President of Sri Lanka, Chandrika Kumaratunga, in December of 1999. The powerful and much venerated leader of the LTTE is Velupillai Prabhakaran, who, like bin Laden, exercises a charis-

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matic influence over his fighters. *The Battle of Algiers* is said to be one of Prabhakaran’s favorite films.”

[*Note by Sri Kantha:* For balance, Hoffman should have provided “a partial list of operations” carried out under the orders of his identified ‘victims’ Rajiv Gandhi, Premadasa, Dissanayake and Kumaratunga, which had caused the lives and limbs of tens of thousands of Eelam Tamils since 1981. But he cannot do it for practical reasons, since he had authored this paragraph to project a cuddly image of his Sri Lankan benefactors, and to show the gullible readers of the *Atlantic Monthly* that his benefactors were fighting a terrorist force on behalf of the ‘democratically elected Sri Lankan government’.]

Hoffman’s description of the action of a former Sri Lankan army officer Thomas, then followed in the next paragraph:

“I sat in that swank hotel drinking tea with a much decorated, battle-hardened Sri Lankan army officer charged with fighting the LTTE and protecting the lives of Colombo’s citizens. I cannot use his real name, so I will call him Thomas. However, I had been told before our meeting, by the mutual friend — a former Sri Lankan intelligence officer who had also long fought the LTTE — who introduced us (and was present at our meeting), that Thomas had another name, one better known to his friends and enemies alike: Terminator. My friend explained how Thomas had acquired his sobriquet; it actually owed less to Arnold Schwarzenegger than to the merciless way in which he discharged his duties as an intelligence officer. This became clear to me during our conversation. ‘By going through the process of laws’, Thomas patiently explained, as a parent or a teacher might speak to a bright yet uncomprehending child, ‘you cannot fight terrorism’. Terrorism, he believed, could be fought only by thoroughly ‘terrorizing’ the terrorists — that is, inflicting on them the same pain that they inflict on the innocent. Thomas had little confidence that I understood what he was saying. I was an academic, he said, with no actual experience of the life-and-death choices and the immense responsibility borne by those charged with protecting society from attack. Accordingly, he would give me an example of the split-second decisions he was called on to make. At the time, Colombo was on ‘code red’ emergency status, because of intelligence that the LTTE was planning to embark on a campaign of bombing public gathering places and other civilian targets. Thomas’s unit had apprehended three terrorists who, it suspected, [Note by Sri Kantha: This should be noted that Thomas’s unit had just suspected! — to comprehend the demented mind of Thomas and what he did subsequently on his suspicion.] had recently planted somewhere in the city a bomb that was then ticking away, the minutes counting down to catastrophe. The three men were brought before Thomas. He asked them where the bomb was. The terrorists — highly dedicated and steeled to resist interrogation — remained silent. Thomas asked the question again, advising them that if they did not tell him what he wanted to know, he would kill them. They

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were unmoved. So Thomas took his pistol from his gun belt, pointed it at the forehead of one of them, and shot him dead. The other two, he said, talked immediately; the bomb, which had been placed in a crowded railway station and set to explode during the evening rush hour, was found and defused, and countless lives were saved. On other occasions, Thomas said, similarly recalcitrant terrorists were brought before him. It was not surprising, he said, that they initially refused to talk; they were schooled to withstand harsh questioning and coercive pressure. No matter: a few drops of gasoline flicked into a plastic bag that is then placed over a terrorist’s head and cinched tight around his neck with a web belt very quickly prompts a full explanation of the details of any planned attack.

I was looking pale and feeling a bit shaken as waiters in starched white jackets smartly cleared the china teapot and cups from the table, and Thomas rose to bid us good-bye and return to his work. He hadn’t exulted in his explanations or revealed any joy or even a hint of pleasure in what he had to do. He had spoken throughout in a measured, somber, even reverential tone. He did not appear to be a sadist, or even manifestly homicidal. (And not a year has passed since our meeting when Thomas has failed to send me an unusually kind Christmas card.)...

The above description by Hoffman on Pirabhakaran and LTTE has to be taken in the spirit it was written. This American ‘expert’ was a paid consultant to the Sri Lankan armed forces and he had presented his impressions to the American readership of the *Atlantic Monthly*, for the payment he and his employer (Rand Corporation) received. Nevertheless, he did expose the activities of sick-minded terrorists like Thomas, though Hoffman states imprudently that “He [Thomas, that is] did not appear to be a sadist, or even manifestly homicidal.” The focal points made by Hoffman are as follows:

1. Hoffman visited Colombo “some years ago”, and he mentions finally that “Not a year has passed since our meeting when Thomas has failed to send me an unusually kind Christmas card.” Literally this means, some years have passed by. Could it be that Hoffman has not met this Thomas again?
2. LTTE cadres involved in such high-profile operations, if they are caught, are known to swallow the cyanide capsules. Nothing is mentioned about any one of the three suspects in the story trying to ingest cyanide, or that the interrogators had successfully prevented such ingestion.
3. Thus, Thomas may have provided a composite story linking the shooting of one innocent suspect in point blank, and another two being interrogated for planting a bomb in Colombo. Other than the point-blank

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shooting, the purported ‘success’ of Thomas could even be a fib to impress the American guest, since other corroborating details are missing. This is important, since in the previous paragraph, Hoffman specifically listed the ‘terrorist acts of LTTE.’ Then, one wonders why he failed to ask Thomas ‘When this particular terrorist act of ‘bomb in a crowded railway station’ during rush hour was averted? Hoffman also does not inform the readers whether how he confirmed the success of Thomas independently.

Nevertheless, the bottom line is that Eelam Tamils know for the past three decades that **Pirabhakaran emerged from the generation of Eelam Tamils who were at the receiving end of the atrocities of the likes of Thomas and his predecessors.** Pirabhakaran and LTTE cadres have been repeatedly criticized for their zeal of puritan ethic, by those who spuriously cloak themselves with the garb of ‘human rights’. But this puritan ethic is nothing different from the motto of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which states *Ense petit placidam sub libertate quietem* (By the sword we seek peace, but peace only under liberty.) It is a pity that only the culture-challenged journalists, including those who contribute to the magazines like *Economist* and the *Atlantic Monthly* cannot comprehend it. I use the term ‘culture-challenged’ in double contexts. The contributors whom I have cited in this chapter are ‘culture-challenged’ in both American and Tamil history.

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Sinhalese Military Competition

A PEEP ON THE POWER ELITES OF THE SRI LANKAN ARMED FORCES

IT IS OPPORTUNE TO present some published information on (and by) the men who had led the Sri Lankan army, to assess the quality of Pirabakaran’s Sinhalese competition. In one of the late 1993 issues, the *Lanka Guardian* had a glaring pink-colored box with black border in its cover. That box carried the caption: ‘The Tiger War: Why Aren’t We Winning? Lt. General Denis Perera, Rear Admiral Basil Gunasekera, Air Vice-Marshal Harry Goonetilleke talk to Mervyn de Silva’.¹ This post-mortem was held to analyze the Pooneryn [Poonagari] Army camp debacle. To editor Mervyn de Silva’s questions General Denis Perera and Air Vice Marshal Harry Goonetilleke provided the following answers:

VIEWS OF DENIS PERERA:

[*Note:* The dots in between the sentences and the bold face fonts are as in the original text.]

“First of all, ‘we must be clear in our own minds on strategy’ General Denis Perera said. What are we trying to achieve? To me, he asked, it is obvious...destroy the military capability of the LTTE. Some people seem to believe that this is a law and order problem. That’s nonsense, of course. Our navy must be asked to close ‘the gaps’, if any at sea; our planes and helicopters must be ‘spotters’ and between the two, the navy and the air force, we must destroy the weapons coming in, or the army must destroy the boats on arrival. It can also be done by air. In this overall strategy, I would suggest a full-time maritime commander...not just a ground commander.

Question: General, are there any other points and constructive criticisms that you can offer...I believe there was a meeting with former service chiefs to pick their brains...?

Lt. Gen. Perera: I’d rather put some points in the form of questions that need to be probed. Are there overall planning weaknesses which need to be studied, and the situation corrected? Is there a delay in sending re-inforcements? Does the army have contingency plans? Do long defence lines lack depth?

Question: General, you haven’t mentioned intelligence...

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Lt. Gen. Perera: I was coming to that, and there too, I have a question. Is there an intelligence failure or is there an unfortunate neglect of the intelligence received?

Question: **Is there in the army as a matter of routine, inquiries into failures, lapses etc?**

Lt. Gen. Perera: Good question. There should be. At a high level, at that. Nothing must be glossed over or covered up. Every institution learns from mistakes... that is part of experience.

Question: **It is always said that LTTE infiltration is very good.**

Lt. Gen. Perera: Yes, we have heard stories... *Ogollan mona unit ekenda?* But the accent should betray the infiltrator, shouldn't it?

Question: **General, what of the command structure?... General Gerry Silva has been placed in charge of the North.**

Lt. Gen. Perera: A full-time field commander is a good idea. But I would have the Chief of Staff concentrate on strategy and coordination. The work of the ground commander, the maritime commander etc needs to be more closely linked.

Question: **The heavily guarded camps have been over-run so easily ...**

Lt. Gen. Perera: They have left gaps ... especially in Pooneryn which has wide areas ... There should be land-mines, trip-wire and 'illumination' ... as soon as an infiltrator trips, the light signals the defender ... these devices are available ... once you have dug in ... your FDL [Note: army jargon for 'forward defence line'] must be strong ... good use must be made of anti-personnel mines ..."

VIEWS OF AIR VICE MARSHAL GOONETILLEKE

[Note: The dots in between the sentences and the bold-face fonts are as in the original text.]

“Air Vice Marshal Goonetilleke: We now know the LTTE has a strong army... quite small but highly motivated, well trained and tough... after all, young women are on the frontline. Now the Tigers are quite good at sea too. But we have a monopoly of the skies. Why didn't we rely on the Air Force when we have total superiority from dawn to dusk.

Question: **Precisely because we have a monopoly of the skies, don't you think that Palaly may be an LTTE top priority? Suicide squads?**

Air Vice Marshal Goonetilleke: Of course. They'll use every means possible to deny us that monopoly. But the problems go deeper. I am worried about morale. There is too much 'Let me look after my life... until I can find some other work... the feeling that they are cannon fodder MUST not spread. We must not allow any demoralization. We need

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to inject new confidence and vitality. We must have a well-knit **Joint Command**...reduce extensions to a minimum...3 commanders and IGP must make almost ALL the strategic decisions, with least interference from non-servicemen. Arms purchases must be strictly **professional**. There should be a WAR COUNCIL, a recruitment drive...a campaign to raise morale.”

Apart from Air Vice Marshal Goonetilleke, the Rear Admiral Gunasekera also had mentioned in his interview to Mervyn de Silva, “I am quite concerned about morale...the will to fight. If there is a serious problem, it must be remedied at once.”

After reading the insipid responses of Pirabhakaran’s elite Sinhalese competition, I submitted a brief sardonic critique to the *Lanka Guardian*, which Mervyn de Silva had discretely rejected from publication. Excerpts:

“Thank you for publishing the ‘sermons’ of the three former Service Commanders — Lt.General Denis Perera, Rear Admiral Basil Gunasekera and Air Vice Marshal Harry Goonetilleke, on why the Tiger War is not progressing well, according to the expectations of the Services. What I gather from the printed excerpts, the chief problem among the service personnel seems to be the lack of morale. Two of the three ex-Service Commanders had lamented about the morale. If only, some biotechnology or pharmaceutical company in Japan can produce and market ‘morale-boosting pills’ (like the ‘morning-after pills’ for unprotected sex) which can be purchased over the counter, I will supply them with such information. Until then, one has to manage with what is available.

In the ‘available’ category, we should include the ‘front-line experience’ of the former Service Commanders. Have they got any? If so, how much percentage of success they can show? What have they done on their part to build up morale in their camps? And how much success they have had in this campaign? I’m disappointed that you failed to ask these elementary questions...”²

A 2001 UPDATE ON SRI LANKAN ARMY MORALE

I did not anticipate the sexploiting ingenuity of the chicken-hearted chieftains of the Sri Lankan army, when I wrote the sardonic letter to Mervyn de Silva about the need for a morale-boosting pill. But in 2001, the Sri Lankan army’s strategy to instil troop morale captured the international headlines. Amal Jayasinghe’s report was humorous and worthy of a belly laugh.

“A year after Sri Lankan troops bought multi-barrel rockets and swing-wing jets to resist a massive offensive by Tamil rebels another key ‘weapon’ is being inducted to fight a different battle. The latest acquisition by the medical

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corps has the potential to raise morale to new heights in an army where nearly a tenth of troops have been wounded while battling separatist Tamil Tiger rebels in the North-East.

The army is experimenting with the new sexual arousal drug, Viagra, in the treatment of war-wounded as rehabilitation is given top billing after President Chandrika Kumaratunga placed the country on a ‘war footing’. ‘We have just got the samples of Viagra’ said Dr. Sriyani Warusawitharana who heads the rehabilitation offensive. ‘We want to start the treatment on some married soldiers who have recovered from their injuries’. She said the war-wounded often suffered psychological problems, particularly due to losing limbs from anti-personnel mines. ‘We are looking at the sexual aspects of treatment’, she said. ‘We are getting help from a university for this program’. Warusawitharana said the injured soldiers initially suffer fears of rejection by society, but with the help of professional counseling and support from colleagues most make remarkable recoveries.

The army set up a separate directorate for rehabilitation in 1989 but the outfit got a new push when the government announced it was placing the country on a ‘war-footing’ following the abortive rebel offensive in Jaffna in April and May last year. Viagra, which was approved as a prescription drug in Sri Lanka only four months ago, was introduced at 685 rupees (eight dollars) for the smaller 25 mg pill and considered expensive by local standards. But money is no object in this case.

The army’s rehabilitation outfit is a show-piece centre for the other military units such as the airforce and the navy and has provided vocational training for about 4,500 wounded troopers. The rehab unit currently has some 9,000 troopers registered with it and re-deployed in various branches of the security forces. Masons, carpenters and even some of the military drivers are soldiers who once fought in the war. About eight percent of the Sri Lankan military is officially listed as ‘disabled’ soldiers....

There had been several US medical teams helping the Sri Lankan army in treating the war-wounded and the US military has also gifted operating theatres and provided specialised training on medical evacuation. But the down side is that the Tigers have not been sparing soldiers wounded in battle. A recently retired army general said Tiger rebels killed injured soldiers because of fears they could be re-deployed back in the army after their recovery.”³

INNOVATION AND INGENUITY OF LTTE STRATEGY

Sometimes, it is worth waiting for the secrets to spill from adversary’s camp to judge the capabilities of innovation and military ingenuity shown by Pirabhakaran’s army. In his eulogy to Major General Cecil Waidyaratne, who died on Dec. 18, 2001, analyst Chandraprema spilled some details on the Pooneryn and Janakapura debacles faced by the Sri Lankan army. Though

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Pirabhakaran is not mentioned, how his skill in making a mince-meat of Waidyaratne’s touted army is nonetheless glaring. To quote,

“General Waidyaratne was able to handle the JVP’s second insurrection very successfully. He later became Commander of the Sri Lankan Army. But he resigned in 1992 over the Pooneryn and Janakapura attacks. Those were the two worst attacks every faced by the Sri Lankan Army while the UNP was in power. The military debacles which became such a conspicuous feature of PA rule actually started when the UNP was in power during the tenure of Cecil Waidyaratne as Army Commander. A lackadaisical attitude appeared to permeate the Army during the last years of UNP rule.

There was no reason for the fall of Janakapura and Pooneryn except sheer negligence. At Pooneryn, around 600 soldiers lost their lives but a small group within the camp held on doggedly until reinforcements arrived. The Pooneryn camp was never overrun completely. The question arises is: If a small group could hold on so easily why couldn’t the whole camp hold on?

This was a case of sheer negligence. The forward defense lines at Pooneryn had not been inspected and reconstituted to suit the manpower availability in the camp. There had been a refugee camp within the forward defense lines and LTTE cadres had been living incognito among the refugees. Later it was found that the attackers had in their possession, Army rations that had been given to the wretched refugees! Access from the sea into the area of the camp had not been properly guarded. By the time the attack had started, there had been around 400 LTTE cadres who had infiltrated the forward defense lines through the refugee camp and via the sea. If these aspects had been looked after, Pooneryn would never have fallen. Many soldiers died in Pooneryn only because of the confusion. Where there was no such confusion, the soldiers managed to hold on.”⁴

Here, Chandraprema seems to be oblivious to the fact that *causing confusion in the enemy camp is an age-old strategy in warfare, and preventing such confusion among foot soldiers is an important function of leadership*. Chandraprema continued,

“A similar story is told about Janakapura. It was in the Janakapura attack that two battle tanks fell into the hands of the LTTE for the first time. Being an Armoured Corps officer General Waidyaratne has eloquently told me with many ‘f’s and ‘b’s the rage and shame he felt when he heard about the loss of the two battle tanks. Unlike in Pooneryn the loss at Janakapura was more in terms of war material than in terms of lives. The LTTE is said to have been able to carry off over 50 million rupees worth of war equipment including the two battle tanks from Janakapura. Here too the loss of the two battle tanks was due to the men on the spot not having adhered to the basic precaution of removing vital moving parts in armoured vehicles when they are idle. This is

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a routine precaution taken in battle zones so that in case of a surprise attack, the enemy will not be able to drive away the armoured vehicles.

General Waidyaratne, with his flair for writing endless instructions and ‘signals’ (as the Army calls them), had earlier on issued a circular to all units in the battle zone that when armoured vehicles are idle, vital moving parts have to be removed as a safety precaution. Despite these written instructions, the troops at Janakapura had failed to take the routine precautions. When the attack began, armoured corps officers had come running to get the tanks operational. But by the time they got to the tanks LTTE cadres had been already in the tanks. Then these armoured corps men had left even their pistols and other equipment and run off in the opposite direction. After the attack, two armored corps personnel had been rescued from the well in the camp! Little wonder that Cecil Waidyaratne was literally beside himself with rage and shame. This episode of the two battle tanks broke his spirit like nothing else did. This clinched his decision to resign from the Army...”⁵

If what was described by Chandraprema, as heard directly from General Waidyaratne, was accurate, it tells something on the quality of combat spirit of LTTE cadres and the leadership of Pirabhakaran. And as Chandraprema informed, General Waidyaratne was a Sandhurst-trained officer. General Denis Perera, cited earlier in the *Lanka Guardian* feature, had gloated to another reporter Hiranthi Fernando in 1999,

“Sandhurst has trained 119 officers and produced seven Commanders of the Sri Lanka Army. I was the first and Gen.Daluwatte, the former Commander was the last.”⁶

But any sensible person in Sri Lanka knows, that not a single one of these 119 Sandhurst-trained military officers can hold a candle to Pirabhakaran, who is a home-grown talent. A lament from the daily ‘tom-tom beater’ for the Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism, emphasizes this point.

“...This country has had many such blundering generals, who would have been court martialled in any other country, being appointed to the top most positions — and in some cases even placed in charge of joint operations. This is not all! Such generals have even been sent to countries of their choice as ambassadors after their retirement following repeated extensions. (Lest it should be misunderstood, no mention is here made to General Janaka Perera, the present Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Australia, who had done the military proud)...”⁷

Whether General Janaka Perera’s deeds in the battle field is that exemplary is open to debate. However the editorialist Gamini Weerakoon tries to make a hero of General Janaka Perera, the fact that this General couldn’t stand the

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heat of the battle ground in Sri Lanka for long suggests that he might have feared for his life and personally preferred the greener pastures in Australia.

The unidentified ‘Defence Correspondent’ of the *Island* newspaper has spilled more beans about the orgy of power and greed for wealth through corruption among the military elites. Excerpts:

“... A number of serving and retired army, navy and air force chiefs are lobbying hard to be appointed the next Chief of Defence Staff. The position became vacant with the appointment of the last Chief of Defence Staff, General Rohan de S. Daluwatte, as Sri Lanka Ambassador to Brazil. ...

[Air Marshal Jayalath] Weerakoddy’s scandal spotlights the disgraceful conduct of many of the past and present service commanders and senior officers, who bend and break rules and regulations, as well as the country’s laws, in what can only be described as an orgy of power and greed for wealth through corruption, forsaking the lives of all those around them.

One former army commander actually spent millions of rupees of army funds in constructing a Hindu kovil to fulfil a vow he had made. [*Note by Sri Kantha*: Who knows whether this guy could have vowed for the safety of his life to a Hindu deity!] Another navy commander did the same with navy funds to build a Buddhist temple. Another army commander has a palatial mansion in the south Indian city where his guru, Sai Baba, resides, just so the service commander can visit him from time to time.

The Defence Ministry is ultimately to blame for not keeping a control over the conduct of officers in the forces. Yet these officers are not youngsters. They are those in their forties and fifties, who should know better about responsibility. It is these same armed forces chiefs who have spent untold millions on themselves, buying bullet-proof vehicles and fleets of luxury cars and escort vehicles at the expense of the public. Yet, here we find a serving air force chief at the wheel of a car, without any escort, driving a young lady air force officer through the streets of Colombo at high speed at 4:15 am!...”⁸

It is not difficult to guess what Air Force Commander Air Marshal Jayalath Weerakoddy was upto with a young lady air force officer at the wheel of a car without any escort. At the time of his unfortunate mishap, he might have been a volunteer participant of the Sri Lankan army’s program of Viagra route to morale enhancement!

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GENERAL MUTTUKUMARU VERSUS PIRABHAKARAN

WHILE analyzing the professional quality of Sri Lanka’s ‘paper Generals’, one cannot bypass the name Gen. Anton Muttukumaru (1908–2001).¹ Comparison between the professional record of Gen. Muttukumaru and Pirabhakaran is inevitable to evaluate latter’s success in establishing a legitimate, albeit small, Tamil army.

Gen. Muttukumaru was an anomaly in the Ceylonese military history, since following the ethnic cleansing procedures instituted in the post-1962 period, he would remain as the first and the last ethnic Tamil to hold the top-most rank in the island’s armed forces. To cite from a published profile about him,

“a lawyer by profession, [he] joined the Ceylon Defence Force as a volunteer officer in 1934 and was commissioned in the Ceylon Light Infantry (CLI). He was mobilized during World War II, and commanded one of the battalions of the CLI. When the new Ceylon Army was inaugurated in 1949, he was selected to be the Chief of Staff under the command of Brigadier the Earl of Caithness. He was also entrusted with the formation of the Army Act. He assumed duties as the first Sri Lankan Army Commander in February 1955 and served up to December 1959...’’²

What was missing in this puff piece are the clear details of Gen. Muttukumaru’s professional achievement during the Second World War. Where did he command the battalion of the CLI? What was the strength of his battalion? Were there any memorable outcomes of his battalion’s engagements?

In 1949, the total budget for Ceylon was only 557 million Sri Lankan rupees and the army’s allocation 0.24 percent amounted to a mere 1.34 million rupees. This number is nothing but ‘peanuts’ compared to the army’s allocation of 52 billion rupees (approximately US\$ 700 million) in 2000. 52 billion is equivalent to 52,000 million. Thus, in 51 years, the military budget in Sri Lanka had magnified to over 90-fold in terms of Sri Lankan currency. Of course, Sri Lankan rupee has been devalued considerably. In 1949, one US dollar was worth for 3.50 rupees; but in 2004 over 100 rupees were needed to purchase the same US dollar. With these figures in background, I quote what Gen. Muttukumaru had reminisced as his major achievement:

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“I consider the greatest contribution I made to the Army was to establish Field Artillery, an Armoured Corps and Field Engineers... at the start, our army was a small force of about 2,500 men.”³

Considering the human power and quality of the current LTTE army, amounting to nearly 10,000 men and women, one could easily infer that what Gen. Muttukumaru handled during his period of command in the second half of 1950s was nothing but an equivalent of a Chicken Cooperative. Thus, Gen. Muttukumaru - with all his touted professional experience in the farmer’s league of the Second World War — was incapable of comprehending the functioning of Pirabhakaran’s LTTE. Despite this lack of expertise, Gen. Muttukumaru made a fool of himself by prattling to his interviewer in 1999,

“the terrorist forces [as he had referred to the LTTE] were not trained or organized to fight a well prepared army in the open field. ‘That is why, when they lost Jaffna, they took to the jungles,’ he said.”⁴

It had escaped the senile Gen. Muttukumaru that given the cumulative strength of Sri Lankan army (with a cumulative number of Active Forces 118,000 – 123,000 men; Reserves 4,200 men), Pirabhakaran was not foolish to waste his resources with a numerical handicap between 10:1 and 15:1. One should add that what Pirabhakaran achieved since 1996 in the military front, after losing Jaffna, against the Sri Lankan army, did not merit any response from the first ‘paper General’ of Ceylon. But an anonymous ‘retired General’ had whispered the following comments:

“...Generals must think of the country and not only of themselves and repeating ‘Yes men’ who remain in their positions doing nothing useful. Our politicians and top brass have wrong notions. Whenever there is a rare success in battle, they take it as winning the war. Winning a battle is certainly not winning the war. A case in point is the capture of Jaffna.

... Yes men are not the answer. The government through the security forces will have to win the hearts and minds of Tamils. Whilst doing so they must not lose the confidence of the major ethnic group, the Sinhalese. This is rather a tall order...”⁵

The fact that this retired General, undoubtedly a Sinhalese, who had written such a sermon was spineless to identify himself openly tells something about the confidence-challenged stature of the top brass of Sri Lankan armed forces. Though I lack military experience of any kind, I had anticipated the thoughts expressed by this retired General of the Sri Lankan army on the 1995 ‘capture of Jaffna’.

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Here is a complete text of my 1995 year-end rebuttal letter to editor Mervyn de Silva’s comments on the ‘fall of Jaffna’. The pronoun ‘you’ in the letter refers to the editor of *Lanka Guardian*.

“I do not want to spoil the party line you have presented that LTTE received a drubbing in the recent military offensive in Jaffna (LG, Nov.15). Since one of the mission statements of the LG is to present the ‘other view’, allow me to be the devil’s advocate. Why is it that when the army hits Jaffna with missiles and bombs, the suffering of commoners is cast aside as ‘collateral damage’ in the international press release, but when the LTTE retaliates in the East or in Colombo, the attack is called ‘terror campaign’ and Prabhakaran is projected as a ‘blood-thirsty Dracula’? (*vide*, your co-authored report with Tony Clifton in *Newsweek*, Nov.13, 1995) Is it because the definition of terror is different for those who hold nominal power and those who challenge the status quo?

The party line that the ‘LTTE and its senior commanders fled [Jaffna] city’ may definitely give a morale boost to the battered and accident-prone image of the army. It will also probably ‘strengthen President Kumaratunga’s case’ in the political stage. But as the old adage says, ‘Don’t count your chicken before the eggs are hatched’.

Like how ‘the Army has been able to pursue its own strategy on its own terms’, as you have stated, Prabhakaran also is using the war on his own terms. He was not foolish to sacrifice resources in a frontal combat, though the spin of the defence pundits that LTTE fled Jaffna city has the Madison Avenue trademark. Prabhakaran gave his cadres a few weeks of ‘field experience’ and then tactically retreated, by borrowing a page from Mao’s book on the *Long March*, to choose his next strategy. The Generals who celebrated their success over Mao’s retreating forces later lived to lick their wounds.

Since you have mentioned Muhammad Ali in your commentary, I would add that Prabhakaran also has proved on numerous occasions his adherence to Ali’s *manthra* in the boxing ring: ‘Float like a butterfly and sting like a bee’. This explains the commando-style attack on Kolonnawa oil depots, which exposed the soft underbelly of the national security forces.

Now a comment about the much-touted ‘army’s resources’. Can you be more specific about these resources in terms of cash? I hardly find any real figures mentioned about the defense expenditure related to military offensives in the pages of LG. Does the Army generate its own resources? Someone (not the 67% of the survey sample who favor a military solution, but the international donors) is paying for the army’s resources and everyone knows that Sri Lanka is not blessed with gold mines and oil fields. If you put a moderate guess, such as one million dollars per day as operational expenses in Jaffna, then one can easily guess that the Army’s resources are not unlimited. There lies Prabhakaran’s strategy.

You may be correct in stating, ‘Just as it administered Jaffna successfully enough to believe that it had established a government, the LTTE felt it could

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take on an army frontally’. Now flip this point to arrive at an answer to the question you have posed in the cover, ‘When Jaffna falls what next?’ Just as they have taken the LTTE frontally, can the Army and the President feel comfortable that they can establish a government in Jaffna? This will be akin to the mental peace of a guy who pretends to sleep in the tiger’s den.”⁶

With a defence-operation budget of more than two million dollars per day in 2001, Pirabhakaran had taught a lesson to the decision makers in the Sri Lankan military ranks and sensible Sinhalese politicians that LTTE cannot be militarily decimated. **This is why I consider him as the foremost paradigm shifter in the military history of Tamil nationalism for the past 500 years.**

THE PARADIGM SHIFTER

First, I introduce the terms ‘paradigms’, ‘paradigm shifter’ and ‘paradigm pioneers’. In science, the term ‘paradigm shift’ gained prominence following the publication of historian Thomas Kuhn’s path-breaking book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in 1962. To quote from a readable brief commentary on paradigm, paradigm shift and paradigm shifter by physician Jeffrey Schwartz,

“Paradigms are sets of rules and regulations that establish boundaries for successful work. As a paradigm changes, the game itself changes. New rules apply. Failure to keep up with change can cause problems — even failure. Since change is inevitable, and paradigms are constantly changing, watching for these changes enables growth. A paradigm shift occurs when a problem is discovered that cannot be solved by the existing set of rules.”⁷

Eelam Tamils faced a paradigm shift in 1956. For subsequent two decades, the then Tamil leaders tested the established rules, regulations and boundaries — such as parliamentary debates, extra-parliamentary agitation by non-violent methods and pilgrimage to the power-outlets in India — to disastrous consequences. The chapter 11 was titled as ‘Paradigm Shift in Eelam’ referring to the year 1987. The person who shifted the paradigm in Sri Lanka (and India) was Pirabhakaran. Three of his Tamil rivals who led other Tamil militant groups in the early 1980s — TELO (Sri Sabaratnam), PLOTE (Uma Maheswaran) and EPRLF (Padmanabha) — having misread the nefarious minds of Sri Lankan and Indian manipulators failed to click and fell victims to their shortsightedness. With foresight and humility, V. Balakumar — the leader of EROS — had joined his group with the LTTE.

To quote Jeffrey Schwartz again,

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“A paradigm shifter is someone who asks you to forsake your investment in the present paradigm to move towards a new paradigm. They are able to see new solutions in old problems. Paradigm pioneers are the first people to follow what the shifters have uncovered. Paradigm pioneers bring the brains, brawn, time, effort and capital to help create the critical mass necessary to drive a new paradigm forward.”⁸

Brains, brawn, time, effort and capital were the ingredients Pirabhakaran needed to push a new paradigm. This is how, the *Economist* magazine had summarized the growth of LTTE in the past 15 years.

“Since 1987, when India unwisely intervened to keep a ‘peace’, the Tigers have evolved from a band of 1,000 – 2,000 cadres into a force of 7,000 capable of operating ‘at all five spectra of conflict’, according to a military analyst. They have a field army equivalent to three brigades, armed with artillery, armour, radios with encryption devices and other paraphernalia, which now fights on the Jaffna peninsula. They have a 1,000 — cadre guerrilla force in the Eastern Province, which specializes in ambushes and mortar attacks. They have a terrorist outfit, which sends suicide bombers to Colombo and blows up electricity transformers. They have a global propaganda network of websites, broadcasters and newspapers, and a diplomatic wing. All this is paid for with contributions, mostly from expatriate Tamils, and profits from businesses, such as restaurants and shipping. The [Sri Lankan] government guesses that the Tigers take in \$80 m[illion] a year.”⁹

That the cited unnamed ‘military analyst’ was most probably Rohan Gunaratna.

A PURSE OF \$80 MILLION PER ANNUM?

The guestimate figure of \$80 million as an annual purse for LTTE operations cannot be verified easily. But if it happens to be true, it can be inferred that to maintain an army of 10,000-strong motivated cadres, on a per head basis, LTTE spends the equivalent sum drained by the Sri Lankan defence establishment (i.e., \$850 million defence budget for an army of over 100,000 active personnel: according to analyst Alastair Lawson, *BBC News* of Nov.10, 1999). Financing a war need ingenious strategies. Even if the figure of \$80 million per annum generated by the LTTE is a hyperbole and the real figure is merely one-tenth of it (i.e. \$8 million per annum), generating such an amount largely from a constituency of Eelam Tamil diaspora who are known for their frugal means deserves credit. Thus Pirabhakaran and his advisors are paradigm shifters in this aspect as well.

The value of this economic ingenuity is better understood if the critical commentary authored by journalist S. P. Amarasingam in the aftermath

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of 1983 riots against Tamils is digested simultaneously. In this commentary providing a synopsis of the period from 1900 to 1980, Amarasingam had faulted the previous generation of politicians and businessmen among the Eelam Tamils who fattened their purses by contributing to the development of the southern and hill-country regions of the island to the detriment of Eelam region. Excerpts:

“... The question that has not been answered is why (at least from the time of Independence and even earlier) the Jaffna Tamils did not develop the North and the East. It is not that they did not have the capital for such development. It is not that they did not have skills. But the fact is that the kind of education imparted by the colonial administration and the missionary societies had made them prisoners of a thought-process that fitted them only to be cog-wheels in a government administrative machine. The Jaffna Tamils were taken by the British as clerks and subordinate officials to Malaya and elsewhere starting from the closing decades of the last [19th] century.

With the cash they earned, the Jaffna Tamils did nothing more than establish what has been called a money order economy in the Jaffna peninsula and also create a pensioner’s paradise for old age residence. With a little of this expatriate capital, market gardening was streamlined and made profitable in Jaffna. This had brought good profit for a small coterie of farmers but it was only a fraction of the remittances received. The bulk of the population depended on employment in the public and private sector in Sri Lanka and abroad, and the only industry was education to fit them for that kind of employment. Later, from being clerks and pen-pushers the newer generations went into the professions and the new technocracy.

In the thirties and forties of this [20th] century, when emigration to Malaya had dried up, Jaffna Tamil agriculture was extended to the Iranamadu Tank area in Kilinochchi, a part of the Jaffna district. But the investment was meager and the development was marginal. *With greater private capital investment in agriculture, agro-industries and even industries, the Kilinochchi district could have become an economic miracle a long time ago. But the Jaffna Tamil considered such investment as risk capital. All the surplus Jaffna Tamil capital, however, was invested in Colombo and the already developed parts of South Ceylon.* [Italics, as in the original].

There was further exodus of Jaffna Tamils for employment to the developed countries of the West, Africa, Australia and elsewhere after Independence and more especially after 1956. After the oil boom of 1973, many Tamils found employment in the Gulf States. But the surplus expatriate capital that flowed into Jaffna in the [nineteen] sixties, seventies and eighties, apart from jacking up the price of land in the Jaffna Peninsula (mainly for residential purposes) to dizzy heights of uneconomic absurdity, it was, like before, invested in the South, mainly in fixed deposits in State Banks or finance companies. A sizeable portion went into real estate in Colombo and the suburbs

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and a smaller portion into the new ‘tax holiday’ industries like tourism, travel, hotels, export industries and the like. Very, very little, or hardly anything was invested in the North or the East — the so-called traditional homelands of the Tamils.

There were no legal or any other restriction to prevent this investment. Only the infrastructure in these areas was less than marginal. No doubt the areas were in jungle. There was malaria, elephants and snakes. It had to be a pioneer’s existence — a far cry from the semi-urban calm of Jaffna or the flesh-pots and urban amenities of Colombo. It was also easier to collect interest on fixed deposits in arm chair comfort than toil and sweat in new ventures in the undeveloped areas.”¹⁰

These observations of Amarasingam tell how much the LTTE cadres had endured in the jungles of Eelam to establish the vibrant Tamil army, *by leading a pioneer’s existence*. The arm-chair critics of LTTE belonging to the upper crust of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims — the quasy literate scribes, analysts and journalists — *live in the flesh-pots and urban amenities of Colombo*. Two additional paragraphs from Amarasingam’s commentary deserve self introspection:

“But what has disappointed many is that a Jaffna Tamil who talks so much about ‘Tamil areas’ and who could have done much to develop them did nothing to switch his investments from the South to these areas in the North and the East. If this had been done, the accusation that the Jaffna Tamils were seeking to swallow up Colombo and other southern areas would not have come. Furthermore, the Sri Lankan Tamils could easily have developed agriculture and industry and homes for themselves in the North and East. A very large number who had obtained lands under various schemes, especially in the years after 1956, failed to make the necessary investment in them to make them economically viable. Instead the available Tamil capital was invested and re-invested in Colombo, in the upcountry and other areas in the South. A tea estate in Talawakelle or an oil extraction plant in the Coconut Belt was a more attractive proposition than an investment in agriculture or industry in the North or the East.

One does not know whether the present [1983] holocaust will bring a change in the thinking of the Sri Lankan Tamil. Many argue that such investment in the North and East would be feasible only after a political settlement. Those who indulge in such casuistry are silent when asked whether they did not think that a political settlement would have been easier if such development had taken place. Nor do they have an answer as to why they put all their investments into one basket in the South which some of them regard as ‘alien territory’ . . .”¹¹

Amarasingam had a visceral distaste for the business entrepreneurship of G. G. Ponnambalam and Chelvanayakam. Not only Ponnambalam and Chel-

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vanayakam, but also Gunaratnams, Sellamuthus, Thambaiyahs, Gardiners, Pages and Maharajahs reaped obscene amount of capital wealth by investing and re-investing in the South Ceylon, which hardly benefited the Tamil folks residing in the North-East regions of the island. Viewed in this angle, LTTE’s business ventures since mid 1980s in the territories beyond Sri Lanka deserve a pat in the back. It was a paradigm shift indeed. Critics may carp loud but paradigm shifting has been a difficult and dirty job. Science has numerous names in its honor roll to prove it; Galileo, Darwin, Wright brothers and Einstein suffered rejection, ridicule and ostracism for their paradigm shifting efforts. Thus Pirabhakaran cannot be an exception.

Geld, Geld, und nochmals Geld (money, money, and once more money) was an old slogan in German language extolling the need for money to raise an army and wage war. Pirabhakaran’s acumen in understanding the double significance of this adage has been under-appreciated. Among his Tamil militant competitors, only Pirabhakaran established the vital links of earning money by legitimate business ventures to support an army. Simultaneously by exploiting the weaknesses in egos, strategy and incompetence of his professional rivals, he also made sure that the defence expenditure of his prime adversary to sky rocket and bite the treasury coffers. One will be hard-pressed to deny the label that Pirabhakaran is a shrewd manipulator. Of course he is. Eelam Tamils badly needed a commander who cannot be manipulated.

INTRANSIGENCE TRAIT OF A PARADIGM SHIFTER

The word ‘intransigence’ is being continually tagged on Pirabhakaran as a ‘dirty word’ by critics like N. Ram. But, intransigence is a trait of paradigm shifters in every sphere of expertise. ‘Not losing focus of one’s aim’ is a positive interpretation for the word ‘intransigence’. For four decades, Mahatma Gandhi was intransigent in his objective of eliminating the servile mentality of Indian nationals to the white-skinned rulers. He did not find the white-skinned individuals as despicable. In fact, he had quite a number of white-skinned friends who treated him as an equal. He detested only the servile mentality (of the Indians) and the dominance attitude (of the white-skinned rulers). Thus, his strong-willed personality reflected an intransigence trait of a paradigm shifter. Only the weak-willed persons who posture as leaders allow themselves to be manipulated.

In psychological terms, Pirabhakaran leads a *cohesive* group. His rivals for Tamil militant leadership led only *ad hoc* groups. A cohesive group is a close knit group, as defined by the sum of the attractions of a group to its members. Contrastingly, an ad hoc group is a group created to perform a single, time-limited function; once this function is completed, such an ad hoc

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group dissipates. While LTTE became a cohesive group, others like TELO, EPRLF and PLOTE were tuned out to be ad hoc groups by the Indian Intelligence operatives. When these groups were trained in the Indian soil, the RAW personnel and the puppeteers manning the Sri Lankan desk in New Delhi had only a single, time-limited objective for them; to be of nuisance value to the then J. R. Jayewardene’s regime so as to elicit responses from Sri Lankan government which were thought to be favorable for India’s then policy objectives. Pirabhakaran’s brilliance was in carving out his own strategy against the designs of India’s then policy puppeteers like J. N. Dixit and their journalist lackeys like N. Ram.

Two published records relating to the phoney leadership qualities of two of Pirabhakaran’s rivals who were assassinated by the LTTE are provided below. One is about TELO’s Sri Sabarattinam and the other is about EPRLF’s Padmanabha.

Narayan Swamy had observed,

“When RAW began training Tamil militants in 1983, it created chasms between the various groups. The LTTE was sore that RAW was resuscitating groups which were as good as dead.... The TELO, for example, was encouraged to think that it was the most favoured group in New Delhi. In the process, TELO chief Sri Sabarattinam consulted RAW on every military operation. He would, according to his former colleagues, even want to know from his RAW advisers the number of guerrillas needed for an attack. But when the D-day came, the RAW simply washed its hands off TELO, letting its members be killed like stray dogs at the hands of LTTE. When surviving TELO members became destitutes in Tamil Nadu, they were not cared for — until the time came when the remnants were found useful to be heaped up to form a proxy militia (TNA) in 1989...”¹²

Ten years after the assassination of Padmanabha, Dayan Jayatilleka let the secret out that EPRLF was willing to ‘join the Sri Lankan army and fight against the LTTE’. To quote,

“...Had he [Padmanabha] lived, I am quite convinced that we would have connected up again because the [EPRLF’s] Central Committee meeting which was to be held in Madras was to discuss a particular subject. I refer to the Central Committee meeting at which 13 of EPRLF leading members were present in Madras, but the meeting was never held because of the mass slaughter carried out by the LTTE. EPRLF MP Yogasangari flew from Colombo for that meeting. He had earlier communicated to Pathmanabha a proposal of the Sri Lankan Government of that time — the Premadasa administration — that the EPRLF should join the Sri Lankan Army and fight against the LTTE. The LTTE had resumed the war ten days before, on the 10th of June 1990. The initial response from the EPRLF was positive in principle,

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but they had one problem. Ranjan Wijeratne was insisting that EPRLF fighters wear Sri Lankan Army uniform and Pathmanabha was reluctant to allow his cadres to do that. . . .”¹³

The sentence, “The initial response from the EPRLF was positive in principle.” need to be stressed. This means that Padmanabha was willing to turn the EPRLF as a mercenary arm of the Sri Lankan army. In the same feature, Dayan Jayatilaka unintentionally exposed the sham of Padmanabha, as follows:

“We must always remember that in the name of EPRLF you do not find the term ‘Tamil Eelam’ unlike the LTTE. But the EPRLF stands for Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front. Nabha deliberately dropped the term Tamil. Because he wanted to keep that open. For him the Eelam struggle finally meant a struggle of the people of the North and East for liberation. . . .”¹⁴

The decision-making qualities, as illustrated by the above descriptions, show that Sri Sabarattinam and Padmanabha led only ad hoc groups, as opposed to the LTTE led by Pirabhakaran. When Sri Sabarattinam was killed in 1986 and when Padmanabha was killed in 1990, there were much breast-beating about the ‘ruthlessness’ of LTTE. Rajan Hoole *et al.*, who were ideologically close to EPRLF, led this *oppari* (loudly-sung funeral lament in Tamil) in 1990. But it takes years for the truth to leak out on the activities of pimps who postured as Tamil militant leaders. Suppose if the militant leadership had passed into the hands of either TELO’s Sri Sabarattinam or EPRLF’s Padmanabha, what was the guarantee that they would not have pawned the future of Tamils for sovereigns or personal privileges? However agonizing were the assassinations of Sri Sabarattinam and Padmanabha, one has to score them as LTTE’s ‘pre-emptive strikes on behalf of self-defence’. This may not be convincing to LTTE’s critics, but so was the Truman defense for the use of two atomic bombs against innocent Japanese in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Truman used the atomic bombs to save the lives of American soldiers which he considered more worthy than the defenceless Japanese civilians.

GELD, GEDULD, GESCHICK UND GLÜCK

Kiyoshi Shiga, the discoverer of *Shigella dysenteriae* – the dysentery bacteria, while studying in the laboratory of Paul Ehrlich (1854–1915), the great German bacteriologist, picked up the motto of his life from his mentor: the significance of four Gs, *geld* (money), *geduld* (patience), *geschick* (skill or dexterity or aptitude) and *glück* (luck or ‘good breaks’) for one’s success in research or any worthy activity in life. Herman Pincus, writing in the *Science*

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of Dec.5, 1957, observed that of these four Gs, the two central Gs (*geduld* and *geschick*) have to be instilled by the person himself or herself while engaged in the worthy activity. To apply these two Gs, one needs *geld*, and be in the look out for *glück*.

Pirabhakaran’s rivals for militant leadership (Uma Maheswaran, Sri Sabaratnam, Padmanabha, Varatharaja Perumal and Douglas Devananda) were distinctly lacking *patience* and *dexterity*, though they went after *money* and *luck*. Harsh truth on two other Tamils (Kadirgamar and Neelan Tiruchelvam) who were shamelessly paraded as the Tamil leaders in the second half of 1990s by Chandrika Kumaratunga and the journalists of Chennai-based *Hindu* group is that they had abundant *money* and *luck*; but were paupers in *patience*. Also their *dexterity* was that of pimps and not of leaders. Contrastingly, Pirabhakaran has been blessed with *patience*, *dexterity* and *luck*. His critics sneer at his efforts to earn *money* for keeping his army in form. But unlike Gen. Anton Muttukumaru who led a Chicken Cooperative equivalent of a Ceylonese army in the 1950s, Pirabhakaran’s army has demonstrated itself as combat worthy since 1987.

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FROM COWARDS TO COMBAT WARRIORS

TWENTY FIVE years is a short period in the life span of vibrant Tamil culture, but significantly long in an individual’s journey of life. To illustrate the impact of Pirabhakaran on Tamil attitude to military matters, I provide two observations made in 1977 (by a Tamil in the aftermath of anti-Tamil riots) and 2001 (by a Sinhalese in the aftermath of Katunayake Airport attack).

ANTON RASIAH IN 1977

“...Tamils are essentially peace-loving cowards. How can they fight a ‘Liberation War’ when a slightest noise at their doorsteps makes them shudder in fear and flee. How can they defend their so-called ‘homeland’ if they cannot get together to resist a few thugs of their area. Just imagine them fighting a ‘liberation war’ with an invading army ha ...ha The terrain of their ‘homeland’ does not even afford a secure hiding place when their enemy decides to launch a land, sea and air attack. Imagine the so-called ‘liberation army’ with their verties tucked up marching on empty stomachs, even before they launch their attack, as they are purely at the mercy of their ‘enemy’ for food and fuel supplies...”¹

ANALYST C. A. CHANDRAPREMA IN 2001

“The attack on the Air Force base and the International Airport at Katunayake was supposed to be the LTTE’s way of commemorating the 1983 July riots.... The LTTE has in the many years since 1983, grown as an organization and they have carried out many spectacular attacks. They have bombed to smithereens the one and only Central Bank, they have bombed one and only oil refinery. In their attacks on military bases, the number of Sinhalese casualties are at World War Two levels. Nowhere else in the world does one find trained soldiers getting wiped out by their thousands in one go in internal conflicts. The casualty rates in the Sri Lankan army are enough to even frighten India...”²

Both of the above-cited observations by Rasiah and Chandraprema are faultlessly true. The natural terrain in Eelam, which Rasiah sarcastically pointed out, has not changed a bit, barring of course the environmental insult caused by the Sri Lankan army during the past 25 years. Then, who else other

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than Pirabhakaran’s army can claim credit for the partially listed debacles by Chandraprema?

Chandraprema has been courteous in acknowledging LTTE’s combat spirit. But, between 1977 and 2002, there have been quite a number of doubting Toms who had to repeatedly eat crow for their errors in analytical skill. One of these is V. Suryanarayan of Chennai, the regular analyst for the *Hindu* news-group and a consultant to the India’s policy makers. Wrote Suryanarayan in mid-1996,

“... It deserves highlighting that the Tigers are past masters in guerilla warfare. But Prabhakaran does not have the human and material resources to build a conventional army.

A few significant features of the LTTE are worth recounting. A number of LTTE veterans have died on the battle field during the three Eelam wars — Pulendran, Kumarappa, Kittu, Victor, Radha, Santhosham, Charles Anthony, Akila and others. A few such as Mahathaya have been killed by Prabhakaran as ‘traitors’. Like Saturn which kills its own progeny, the LTTE has swallowed its own children. Unlike Prabhakaran and Balraj, most of the regional commanders — Soosai, Shankar, Jothi, Kapil Amman, Bosco, Sornam and Karuna — joined the movement after 1983. Whether the second generation has the fighting abilities and dedication of its predecessors, only time can tell. Lacking in manpower, the LTTE is compelled to recruit boys and girls of tender age. What is more, this baby brigade is not given rigorous training before being sent out to the front. . . .

The Sri Lankan Army is slowly but steadily emerging as a professional organization, vastly improved in numbers and equipped with sophisticated weapons. . . . The Army today is definitely more combat-oriented. The Army, the Navy and the Air Force are better equipped. Arms purchases have been diversified, the major suppliers being Israel, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, China, the United States, South Korea, Pakistan and Indonesia. In contrast to the pre-1987 period, when the internationalization of the ethnic conflict led to severe strains in Indo-Sri Lanka relations, there is today greater appreciation in New Delhi of Colombo’s needs and compulsions. . . .”³

Even with all such voluble orchestral support from Chennai columnists like Suryanarayan, the Sri Lankan Army floundered in the battle field, and its recruits fled from the command to become deserters. If, according to the *BBC News* of July 6, 2000, the Sri Lankan security forces had to increase their efforts in tracking down 25,000 members of their military despite more than a dozen amnesties to turn themselves in, the second generation of LTTE’s regional commanders — Soosai, Shankar, Jothi, Kapil Amman, Bosco, Sornam, Karuna and others — who joined the movement after 1983, had disproved the doubts Suryanarayan expressed in 1996.

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While visiting Colombo in 2002, Pakistan’s dictator-cum-President Pervez Musharraf, knowingly or unknowingly, divulged a secret that “over 2,000 Sri Lanka military personnel had received training in Pakistan and this would continue.”⁴ He also had added, “as a military man he wanted to pay a glowing tribute to the Sri Lankan armed forces. I praise the Sri Lankan armed forces for sustaining their effort for 20 long years. Full credit should go to them.”

In the aftermath of the Operation *Agni Kheela* debacle of the Sri Lankan army in April 2001, an anonymous (undoubtedly a Sinhalese) “retired Lt. Colonel” had offered a stinging rebuttal to the compliments of dictator Musharraf and doubting critic Suryanarayan in 2001. Excerpts:

“The advancing forces broke out on the 24th April 2001 at the auspicious time of 1.48 hrs selected in Colombo by a Sil Meniyo who is also said to advice on strategies! But nothing went right from the commencement of the Operation. Troops were massacred and forced to retreat. Everything was over in 72 hours with troops having withdrawn to their original positions on the defense lines.... To advance a mere four kilometers, it cost the Army 400 men dead including 11 officers and almost 1,450 sustaining injuries out of which 500 and over being seriously wounded and another dozen officers in the seriously wounded category....

As seen from the defeats inflicted on us throughout the recent past, it is clear that the top brass has bungled the entire war by working against all established principles of war. Many holding high ranks cannot do a proper military appreciation/evaluation of a military problem and most are unaware of the mechanics of the ‘phases of war’. They are confused about the subtle differences between strategy and tactics. Most of them do not have the basic military degree, without which no officer can aspire to be promoted beyond the rank of Colonel in a professional Army. Furthermore, many of the top brass have risen to great heights without the experience of leading even a jungle patrol. These Generals therefore do not know how to plan a simple Operation. For example, when a tank is said to be ‘blind’ by night, they are used for night operations. Then again when tanks are said to be highly vulnerable in jungles and scrub, they are employed in such terrain, violating basic principles. Check on these and you will be surprised. Many Generals are clever at moving brigades/divisions on maps and sand models though they are totally ignorant of the finer points of the mechanics of war...”⁵

Through this reasonable criticism, the anonymous ‘retired Lt. Colonel’ has just paid compliments to Pirabharan and his military advisors. If some Operations turned out to be miserably handled by the Sri Lankan army, it merely reflects how much Pirabhakaran’s army has grasped the finer points of the mechanics of war.

From the achieved results in the battle front and the bulging rank of 25,000 army deserters, one could only infer that the quality of Pakistan’s military

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training for ‘over 2, 000 Sinhalese army officers’ was nothing but sub-standard. Since Pirabhakaran’s army could not afford such ‘foreign-training’, the expertise needed to neutralize such disadvantage deserves exceptional talent. One could place this expertise as one of Pirabhakaran’s hard-earned gifts. Ignoring widely circulated snide remarks about Pirabhakaran’s lack of higher education as Aesopian ‘sour grapes’, Tamils have so far underestimated the expertise of LTTE’s trainers in molding a combat-hardened army. Establishing and maintaining a standing army which doesn’t crumble after setbacks deserve the utmost degree of sacrifice and diligence. The much publicized recent gripes relating to child combatants and human rights violations of LTTE need to be studied from the perspectives of maintaining a standing army or ‘militia’ in the terminology of America’s Founding Fathers. One of the claims of the Indian military personnel who led the Indian army against its confrontation with LTTE was that during the 30 month period (from Oct.1987 to Mar.1990), they had destroyed the second tier leadership of LTTE. This claim has some merits. However, it is to the credit of Pirabhakaran and the LTTE cadres who survived the Indo-LTTE war, that they rebuilt the damaged pillars of LTTE army by rejuvenation.

Now, I wish to hypothesize what personal factors could have influenced Pirabhakaran to be molded as a military specialist. Attention should be drawn to two of these factors, which have been overlooked. One is his place of birth, and the other is his birth order.

VALVEDDITHURAI IN HISTORY

Valveddithurai (VVT), the home-town of Pirabhakaran, has a reputation as the ‘smuggler capital’ of Sri Lanka. When one thinks about it in-depth, one fact becomes clear. The pejorative monicker to VVT is a recent (post-independent period) currency, following the demarcation of Ceylon as an independent nation. Before February 1948, the island Ceylon was a part of British empire encompassing the current Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar (Burma) and Malaya. Palk Strait and Bay of Bengal were not considered as separating boundaries of different countries. In the colonial era of Portuguese, Dutch and the British, Tamils living in the northern part of the island had their own flag and they wouldn’t have bothered about the dictates originating from Kotte or Kandy rulers. Thus, the legitimate life-style of generations of Tamil mariners who lived at VVT for a millennium or more was not thought of as ‘smuggling’. The pejorative monicker was more or less a creation of the Sri Lankan bureaucrats belonging to the Customs Department.

To emphasize my point, I provide two descriptions about VVT which appeared in the pre-1948 period and three descriptions about VVT written in the

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1980 and 1990s. VVT has been a tongue-twister in the English language and authors have taken liberty with the spelling according to their fancy.

EMERSON TENNENT (1859)

“...In the evening we drove along the shore of Valvettiorre, a village about three miles to the west of Point Pedro, containing a much larger population, and one equally industrious and enterprising. There was a vessel of considerable tonnage on the stocks, the Tamil ship-builders of this little place being amongst the most successful in Ceylon. As we entered the village, we passed by a large well under a grove of palms and tamarind trees, around which, as it was sunset, the females of the place were collected, according to the immemorial custom of the East, ‘at the time of the evening even the time that the women go out to draw water’. In figure and carriage, the Tamil women are much superior to the Singhalese. This is shown to advantage in their singularly graceful and classical costume, consisting of a long fold of cloth, enveloping the body below the waist, and brought tastefully over the left shoulder, leaving the right arm and the bosom free. This, together with the custom of carrying vases of water and other burdens on their heads, gives them an erect and stately gait, and disposes their limbs in attitudes so graceful as to render them, when young and finely featured, the most unadorned models for a sculptor.”⁶

MUDALIYAR C. RASANAYAGAM (1926)

“Casie Chetty, in his *History of Jaffna* says, ‘There can be no doubt, the commercial intercourse of the Greeks and the Romans with Ceylon was confined to the Northern and North Western parts.’⁷ The people of the Coromandel Coast had, from time immemorial, intimate commercial intercourse with the parts of North Ceylon. Many came and settled down at these ports, carrying on a brisk trade, and forming connections with families of the same caste as themselves, as is still the case at Point Pedro and Velvettithurai.”⁸

W. ROBERT HOLMES (1980)

“One of the important by-products of fishing is manpower which is acquainted with the sea. It was estimated in a newspaper article in 1979, that 150 men, especially from KKS [*i.e.*, Kankesanthurai] and also from the neighborhood of Valvettithurai on the northern tip of Jaffna peninsula about five miles west of Point Pedro are seafaring in ocean-going vessels all over the globe today. The previous sentence is one of the few in today’s newspapers in which anything good is said about the activities in and around Valvettithurai of which it is invariably affirmed, ‘VVT is the headquarters of the smuggling between India and Ceylon...’⁹

NARAYAN SWAMY (1996)

“VVT, where Prabhakaran spent much of his early years, was a small and closely-knit coastal town of some 10,000 Tamils with one Catholic church

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and three Hindu temples. One of them, dedicated to Lord Shiva, was a virtual family property of the Velupillais, and the young Prabhakaran would land there to lend a helping hand during all major festivals. VVT’s menfolk were civil servants, traders, fishermen or simply smugglers, thanks to the winding sea coast and the proximity to India. Boats would sail to Rangoon, Chittagong, Rameshwaram, Nagapattinam and Cochin laden with both legitimate cargo and contraband. Smuggling was considered a way of life in VVT and no one ever thought there was anything wrong with it. But it did earn VVT the sobriquet ‘smugglers’ paradise’ and close scrutiny from the Customs Department. It also legitimized crime and played a key role in providing a large number of volunteers when Tamil politics began getting sucked into the web of violence and counterviolence.”¹⁰

S. W. R. DE A. SAMARASINGHE AND VIDYAMALI SAMARASINGHE (1998)

“Prabhakaran, Velupillai (1954–): He is the leader of the most powerful of the Sri Lankan Tamil separatist groups, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Youngest of four children in a Jaffna middle-class family, he came from Velvattiturai, a village in the Jaffna peninsula inhabited largely by people of the Karaiyar caste whose traditional occupation is fishing or smuggling. Prabhakaran also belongs to the same caste. . . .”¹¹

Among the six authors I have cited above, Tennent (a reputed British civil authority of the mid-19th century) and Rasanayagam (a colonial Ceylon’s Tamil civil servant of early 20th century) did not associate VVT with smuggling. Rather, they make laudatory comments related to the marine enterprise and skills of the VVT natives. However, when Robert Holmes (an American missionary-teacher in the post-independent Ceylon), Narayan Swamy (a contemporary Indian journalist) and Samarasinghes (contemporary Sinhalese academics) wrote their descriptions in 1980 and 1990s, linking VVT with ‘smuggling’ has become the routine, though erroneous in historical context of the life style of its inhabitants. Thus, it is of relevance that the ‘law-breaking’ [or better, *the rebellious spirit against the domineering Poo Bahs of the government* — see below for additional details] was a well needed fertilizer in the formation of a legitimate Tamil army of Pirabhakaran. In this context, it also relevant to quote a paragraph from another keen observer of the Jaffna scene.

V. NAVARATNAM (1991), FORMER FEDERAL PARTY MP FOR KAYTS

“There were occasions when I addressed small compact gatherings of activists at Valvettiturai and Point Pedro who were campaigning for the Tamilar Suyadchi Kazhagam candidate at the 1970 General Election. As was my wont in that campaign, I exhorted them to work ceaselessly for an independent Tamil State. I asked them to develop and foster the navigational skills of their ancestors, regardless of breaking revenue laws, and to keep alive the seafaring tradition of their towns. Many of those in the audience were young

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lads in their early or mid teens. I still remember their young eager faces and shining eyes burning with fire as they listened. In later years I used to wonder if some of them might have been Kuttimani and Thangadurai and Velupillai Prabhakaran and the many other heroes of Vadamaradchy whose names later became household words throughout Tamil Ceylon.”¹²

THE FACT OF BEING ‘LAST BORN’

One of the highly-discussed books in the 1990s was a 653 page tome authored by Frank Sulloway.¹³ In this book, the American psychologist (then affiliated to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) after analyzing the biographies of over 1,000 historical figures who contributed to politics, science, arts and religion came to a simple but bold finding that, *even after controlling for all other variables, the birth order of a person influences the type of his or her personality*. In one paragraph of his Introduction to the book, Sulloway had written,

“It is natural for firstborns to identify more strongly with power and authority. They arrive first within the family and employ their superior size and strength to defend their special status. Relative to their younger siblings, firstborns are more assertive, socially dominant, ambitious, jealous of their status, and defensive. As underdogs within the family system, younger siblings are inclined to question the status quo and in some cases to develop a ‘revolutionary personality’. In the name of revolution, laterborns have repeatedly challenged the time-honored assumptions of their day. From their ranks have come the bold explorers, the iconoclasts, and the heretics of history.”

Pirabhakaran was the last born (on November 26, 1954) son among the four siblings to Mr. Thiruvengadam Velupillai and Parvathi Pillai of Valvettithurai. Pirabhakaran’s parents have been described by pestering reporters who had approached them, as ones who won’t wilt even under discomfort and pressure^{14,15}. Pirabhakaran has an elder brother Manoharan and two elder sisters Jegatheswari and Vinothini. True to Sulloway’s findings, Pirabhakaran had turned out to be a ‘bold explorer, an iconoclast and a heretic of history’. Thus it is my inference that the cocktail of a combination of being a ‘last born’ son, tough genes from parents and being born in Valvettithurai brought out a military specialist the Eelam Tamils had wanted for long.

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A Weapon for the Courageous

PIRABHAKARAN ON HIS CHILDHOOD AND FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

PIRABHAKARAN HAS BEEN infrequently featured and interviewed in non-Sri Lankan newspapers, news magazines since 1984. When he was residing in Tamil Nadu, between 1983 and 1986, a couple of journalists like N. Ram and Anita Pratap were able to elicit some little known facts about his juvenile phase by their penetrating questions. During that period, Pirabhakaran made him relatively accessible to journalists covering the international magazines like *Newsweek* and *Asiaweek* as well¹⁻⁶. However, after mid-1987, Pirabhakaran curtailed his access to name-brand scribes and ‘run-of-the mill’ wordsmiths who were keen on establishing their career rather than covering the Eelam Tamil issue with fairness, despite making himself available to journalists of his choice⁷⁻¹². This led to the spread of untruths and half-truths in the international newsmedia about Pirabhakaran, drafted by frustrated journalists who were unable to meet him face to face. To compound this issue, the news-peddlers from the Colombo press conveniently mixed their racist prejudices into the newsfeeds for which they had easy access. Thus, it is pertinent to present information on his juvenile period, *as Pirabhakaran has expressed himself* in his mid-1980s interviews.

RESPONSES TO ANITA PRATAP¹

Anita Pratap was one of the Indian journalists who gained early access to Pirabhakaran. She first interviewed him for the *Sunday* magazine in 1984, when Pirabhakaran was not yet 30. A few of the questions by Pratap elicited the responses related to his unusual development as a rebel.

Pratap: “Could you elaborate on some of your personal experiences that compelled you to believe that an armed struggle was the only solution for the Tamils of Sri Lanka. Were you, your family members and friends, directly victimized by the discriminatory policy of the Sri Lankan government?”

Pirabhakaran: The shocking events of the 1958 racial riots had a profound impact on me when I was a schoolboy. I heard of horrifying incidents of how our people had been mercilessly and brutally put to death by Sinhala racists. Once I met a widowed mother, a friend of my family, who related to me her agonizing

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personal experience of this racial holocaust. During the riots a Sinhala mob attacked her house in Colombo. The rioters set fire to the house and murdered her husband. She and her children escaped with severe burn injuries. I was deeply shocked when I saw the scars on her body. I also heard such stories of cruelty. I felt a deep sense of sympathy and love for my people. A great passion overwhelmed me to redeem my people from this racist system. I strongly felt that armed struggle was the only way to confront a system which employ armed might against unarmed, innocent people.

Pratap: At what point of time did you lose faith in the parliamentary system? What precipitated this disillusionment?

Pirabhakaran: I entered politics at a time — in the early [nineteen] Seventies — when the younger generation had already lost faith in parliamentary politics. I entered politics as an armed revolutionary. What precipitated the disillusionment in parliamentary politics was the total disregard and callousness of the successive governments towards the pathetic plight of our people.

Pratap: How did you come to start the Liberation Tiger movement?

Pirabhakaran: I originally formed the movement with a group of dedicated youths who sincerely believed that armed struggle was the only way to liberate our people.

Pratap: What was the reason for identifying yourselves as ‘Tigers’?

Pirabhakaran: I named the movement ‘Liberation Tigers’, since the tiger emblem had deep roots in the political history of Tamils, symbolizing Tamil patriotic resurgence. The tiger symbol also depicts the mode of our guerrilla warfare.

Pratap: When you decided to form the ‘Liberation Tigers’, what was the reaction of your family members and those close to you?

Pirabhakaran: As soon as the Tiger movement was formed, I went underground and lost contact with my family.

Pratap: When did you last meet your family members? Are they reconciled to your outlawed existence?

Pirabhakaran: I have not seen my family members for the last 11 years. I do not think they regard me as an ordinary person leading an ordinary life. They are reconciled to my existence as a guerrilla fighter.”

RESPONSES TO N. RAM⁵

Two questions posed by N. Ram, then an associate editor of the *Hindu* newspaper in 1986, brought out from Pirabhakaran, the formative influences on his character.

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N. Ram: Could you give us an idea of your personal heroes in revolutionary struggles or liberation movements or in any sphere of life ... people and experiences that have inspired you? And perhaps thereby give us some insight into your own political evolution from the time you were a school-boy?

Pirabhakaran: From my boyhood, the struggle that attracted me most was the Indian freedom struggle. The role of Netaji attracted me very much. I was brought up in an environment of strict discipline from childhood. I was not permitted to mingle freely with outsiders. I used to feel shy of girls. Great store was laid by personal rectitude and discipline. My father set an example through his own personal conduct. He would not even chew betel leaves. I modeled my conduct on his. ... he was a government officer, a district land officer. A very straightforward man. People say in our area: ‘When he walks, he does not hurt even the grass under his feet, but his son is so. ...’

Even while criticising me, they marvel at the fact that such a son was born to such a father! He was strict, yes, but also soft and persuasive. In my own case, he reasoned rather than regimented and his attitude was that of a friend. ... He would give me certain pieces of advice and discuss things with me. As I said, I grew up as a shy boy. ... especially in the matter of mingling with girls.

The life of Subhas Chandra Bose attracted me specially. Even as a boy, I would delve into Gandhiji’s books on Experiments with Truth, on celibacy and so on. Subhas attracted me particularly since even as a boy he went in search of spiritualism and, finding the life of a recluse dissatisfying, returned (laughs). Yet repeatedly, he retreated into spiritualism. ... during moments of great difficulty and crisis. I followed this history and these stories with fascination. He became my special hero and some of his orations gripped me. For example: ‘I shall fight for the freedom of my land until I shed my last drop of blood.’ These words used to thrill me whenever they came to me. Then the story of Bhagat Singh fascinated me.

In other words, the biographies and histories of those who hit back at the perpetrators of injustice, those who counterattacked (the unjust foe) were my special favourite. Because in our land, the Sinhalese behaved so cruelly towards us. ... we would hear stories about this and read about these cruel acts in books and newspapers. ... Later I read about this particular episode that took place during the 1958 attacks on Tamils. ... They broke into a temple, Panadura, found a Brahmin priest sleeping, tied him to his cot, poured petrol over him and burnt him alive. Ours was a god-fearing society and the people were religious minded. The widespread feeling was: when a priest like him was burnt alive, why did we not have the capability to hit back? That was one atrocity that made people think deeply. In another episode, they threw a child into a drum of boiling tar. This left a very deep imprint on my mind and in the minds of those around me. If such innocent lives could be destroyed, why could we not strike back?

In such moments, these heroic examples and models from the Indian freedom struggle came to me. Magazines retold these stories on special occasions

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such as India’s Independence Day celebrations.... This practice continues. Consider another example of Tiruppur Kumaran — in his ahimsa there was a steely determination. If I was attracted by the experience of armed struggle against injustice, I was drawn by the moral force of ahimsa as well. I was inspired by examples of grit and determination. I began to think along these lines early in life. Why can’t we follow their examples? Why can’t we start an armed struggle?

I used to read books on the rise of Napoleon and his exploits. This kind of history held special appeal.... In the Mahabharata, the roles of Bhima and Karna were specially attractive to me ... the spirit of sacrifice appeared crucial. People respond to characters in the Mahabharata in various ways. I value the character and role of Karna the most, on account of his readiness to make the ultimate sacrifice.... I read some of Vivekananda’s sayings and the urge grew in me to work towards a strong youth force. I plunged into this line of thinking....

N. Ram: At what age?

Pirabhakaran: These feelings and ideas began to take shape when I was 16 approximately.

I used to listen to the religious discourses of Kripanantha Variar.... I used to go to all these events... those connected with religion. I would go and observe political meetings... attend dramatic performances.... In my place, they used to enact plays on Socrates and so on.

So quite early on, we absorbed all these influences and the feeling grew in us that we must do something! Looking at our historical background, we had to take up arms to fight for our rights. The lesson was that they could do all this because we were defenceless and disarmed. Why should we remain so? We should take up violence to counter and overthrow their violence.... Only after that did I engage in this movement.

N. Ram: The impression among outsiders who have observed the development of the LTTE is that you — as its leader — have only recently begun to take a deeper or more detailed interest in politics.... Whereas earlier, you used to live in mainly in the realm of military ideas. You were considered shy and did not meet people easily, which would make it difficult in politics. Now they find you speaking out on a number of political issues.

Pirabhakaran: In reality, it has always been clear to me that an armed struggle takes shape only against a political background. If I had been a man without political clarity.... I went underground around 1973 and you know that leading an underground life is a very difficult proposition. I have led an underground life for a long time... between 1973 and 1983, it was a very difficult period for us, with the army on the rampage... to escape their net was very difficult. If we were able to go through this experience and are able to stand firm today, then surely you will concede that we could not have been political innocents or carried on without a political background!

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

But one thing is true, despite this political background. My natural inclination makes me lay less emphasis on words. In serious politics, it won’t do to concentrate on talking; you must grow through action and then talk! You would have observed that only as we grew in our activities, in our activities in the field, did we come up to a position of meeting various people and explaining our ideas — only then did our words carry some value. Words must be matched and indeed preceded by content. This is crucial for our relations with our people.

If people respect our fighters more, it is because of this extra discipline. Certain exemplary personal attributes, a certain personal rectitude; that is why our people are attracted to LTTE fighters. When you speak of a political outlook, people will respect you only if you prove yourself in action. Action gives your programme a political content. When we say during this period, ‘They will use the army to attack us, we will resist and counterattack and we will protect you’, well... only when we actually do it, do we establish our political credibility and role.

That is why we have given due attention to military affairs in our organization. You know the character of your struggle. In a situation where the Sri Lankan state feeds its army on racism and chauvinism and through that army and through forced colonization, tries to displace and subjugate us. Only a political organization with military strength is capable of effective resistance. Look all around the world... any real struggle has had a military background. Even if the Indian freedom struggle was conducted on the basis of ahimsa, Netaji’s Indian National Army had a special place... There is definitely a place today in Indian history for Subhas! His was an action-oriented political approach.

And take the Indian state today. If India is able to stand up in the community of nations, it is in no small measure due to the strength of the Indian armed forces; else, the Chinese would bring their frontiers up to Delhi!

What is notable about this interview of Pirabhakaran by N. Ram for the *Hindu* newspaper is that, it appeared nearly three weeks after the now-famous *Newsweek* magazine’s interview of the LTTE leader. Once Pirabhakaran became news-worthy for international audience, he became respectable for an interview in the eyes of the managers of the *Hindu* newspaper. It was to Sudeep Mazumdar, the *Newsweek* interviewer, Pirabhakaran offered his celebrated answer of Clint Eastwood being a vicarious trainer for his military skills.

THE 1986 *Newsweek*⁴ MAGAZINE INTERVIEW

Though few of the answers to the 13 questions posed by Sudip Mazumdar to Pirabhakaran have lost their value with the passage of time and later unanticipated political developments, still this 1986 *Newsweek* magazine interview

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retains its glamor for the responses delivered and the expressed wishes of LTTE’s leader, then aged 31. Since he was living in Madras then, he had been courteous to his host country. But in his responses Pirabhakaran had shown that he is one who would not bend his knees to dance to the tunes of his host country. This interview is reproduced in full to indicate that, unlike the then parading Eelam militant leadership of other groups, Pirabhakaran has matched his words with deeds.

“For the past 14 years Velupillai Pirabhakaran has led an armed struggle to create a separate Tamil state in Sri Lanka’s volatile northeastern region. Pirabhakaran, 32, commands the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the strongest of Sri Lanka’s numerous Tamil separatist groups. It is generally acknowledged that peace negotiations with Colombo are unlikely to prove effective without LTTE’s involvement. Last week, shortly before his group rejected Colombo’s latest proposal for peace talks, Pirabhakaran spoke with *Newsweek*’s Sudip Mazumdar in Madras. Excerpts:

Mazumdar: Your opponents charge that innocent civilians are often killed in your military offensives. How do you respond.

Pirabhakaran: The LTTE has never killed any civilians. We condemn such acts of violence. There were occasions when we had to kill home-guards. But they are not civilians. They are trained [non-combat draftees who] carry guns.

Mazumdar: How many troops do you have under your command and where do they train?

Pirabhakaran: That’s a secret. I can tell you we are strong enough to take on the 51,000 strong Sri Lankan military and well enough equipped to carry on protracted guerrilla warfare.

Mazumdar: Why do you think LTTE has taken the lead among other guerrilla groups?

Pirabhakaran: Discipline and order are most important. We emphasize personal morality and a sense of patriotism. Our cadres carry cyanide pills with them to avoid falling into enemy hands. Most of all, the people are behind us.

Mazumdar: Critics charge that you rely on drug trafficking to raise money for your military activities. How do you respond?

Pirabhakaran: Our people support us financially. We capture arms and ammunition from the enemy and also buy them on the international market. We don’t get support from any other country. Here in India we are living as political refugees and the government of India extends moral support to our existence here. We have imposed a strict moral code on ourselves, not to use even liquor. How can one suspect us of drug trafficking which we condemn?

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

Mazumdar: Press reports say that you received military training in Cuba. How did you manage to acquire your know-how?

Pirabhakaran: Through sheer personal training. I use my natural instincts and I watch war films and westerns by [American movie actor] Clint Eastwood. If I were trained in Cuba, I would have been a better fighter.

Mazumdar: What is your assessment of the latest round of negotiations between moderate Tamils and the Sri Lankan government on devolution of power to Tamils?

Pirabhakaran: The proposals [put forward by Colombo] are insufficient even to start negotiations. We have enunciated four principles as the basis for talks; the traditional homeland of the Tamils must be recognized; Tamils should be [officially] recognized as a [separate] nationality; their rights to self-determination should be recognized, and the civil rights of stateless Tamils should be recognized. A framework should be worked out incorporating these principles. Then we will consider [negotiations].

Mazumdar: How serious do you think President Junius Jayewardene is in solving the Tamil problem?

Pirabhakaran: This so-called peace initiative by Jayewardene is an attempt to hoodwink the world. That these negotiations are eyewash is clear from the fact that even while the talks were on the military killed nearly 150 innocent Tamils. Talks with Jayewardene? Possible, but only on the question of demarcation of our boundaries [as two separate nations].

Mazumdar: Why do you think India allows you to operate from here?

Pirabhakaran: Purely on humanitarian grounds. There is genocide going on in Sri Lanka. India knows we are fighting against genocide and trying to protect our people.

Mazumdar: Opponents charge that India is abetting ‘terrorists’ by giving you sanctuary, while New Delhi blames Pakistan for training Sikh terrorists? What is your view?

Pirabhakaran: There is a fundamental difference here. Our people are facing genocide whereas the Indian Army is not committing genocide in Punjab.

Mazumdar: India favors a negotiated settlement of the ethnic problem and opposes your goal of a separate Tamil state. What is your view?

Pirabhakaran: The world is constantly changing; so is politics. We rely on the hope that changing circumstances will finally lead to India’s recognition of our struggle. India has recognized various liberation movements. At a later stage India may be compelled to recognize us as it did the PLO and SWAPO.

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Mazumdar: What do you expect from the United States?

Pirabhakaran: We want to appeal to the American people to realize that we are a nation of people facing genocide. And we appeal to the U.S. government to stop all aid to the Sri Lankan government which will be used for the destruction of our people.

Mazumdar: What kind of a political system do you envisage for an independent Tamil state?

Pirabhakaran: We want to establish a socialist society. Ours will be a unique socialist model, neither Soviet nor Chinese nor any other.

Mazumdar: Have you ever considered calling for India’s military intervention to stop what you call genocide?

Pirabhakaran: India’s military intervention is not necessary because we have a fighting force capable of facing the military. In fact, India’s intervention may allow other international forces to meddle in Sri Lanka and create [chaos].

In retrospect, one can infer that Pirabhakaran’s answer to the second question that, “We are strong enough to take on the 51,000 strong Sri Lankan military and well enough equipped to carry on protracted guerrilla warfare” had stood the test of time. Even quite a segment of LTTE’s non-combat sympathizers then would have felt that, without India’s covert assistance, the chances of LTTE being neutralized by the Sri Lankan army (which had been receiving overt help from Pakistan and Israel) were considerable. But, as he had revealed in his 1986 interview with N. Ram a few weeks later, Pirabhakaran had made his actions speak louder than words.

RESPONSES TO T. S. SUBRAMANIAN⁸

Subramanian, the reporter for the *Frontline* magazine interviewed Pirabhakaran in Jaffna, immediately following the Rajiv Gandhi-Jayewardene Peace Accord in August 1987, and before the commencement of Indo-LTTE war. Two questions elicited revealing responses from Pirabhakaran.

Subramanian: What happens to the cyanide capsules that your men wear round their necks? Are they necessary when there are no arms?

Pirabhakaran: I think the capsules are needed most. They are indispensable now. They are the only weapons for the cadres to protect themselves in the Eastern Province from hoodlums, the rival groups and the Sinhala army. Not only that; they would continue to wear them in remembrance of those comrades who fought along with them and sacrificed their lives.

[*Note by author:* This response was practically demonstrated by twelve of LTTE’s cadres on October 5, 1987; Lt. Col. Kumarappa, Lt. Col. Pulentran, Maj. Abdullah, Capt. Nalan, Capt. Ragu, 2nd Lt. Ananthakumar, Lt.

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Thavakumar, Lt. Anbalagan, Capt. Karan, Capt. Miresh, 2nd Lt. Reginald and Capt. Palani.]

Subramanian: What are the shaping influences on your life?

Pirabhakaran: Ra. Su. Nallaperumal’s serial *Kallukkul Eeram* (It’s wet inside the stone) published in *Kalki* magazine. I have read it five times. It revolves round the Indian freedom struggle. Mr. Nallaperumal balances the ahimsaic struggle and the armed struggle. Generally, I read anything on any freedom movement. I used to read books on Joan of Arc, Napoleon and so on. I was always interested in history. Shivaji was the first guerrilla to have fought against the Mughal rule. When I was young, I always had a picture of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. I used to keep his picture on my table when I used to study. I had written on my table, ‘I will fight till the last drop of my blood for the liberation of my mother-land’.

THE CANARD OF BEING A HITLER FAN

Pirabhakaran’s fascination with Subhas Chandra Bose has been mischievously projected as he being a fan of Hitler, by extension. In the aftermath of the Jaffna offensive by the LTTE in 2000, Ian MacKinnon reported for the *News-week* magazine as follows:

“How has Prabhakaran, 46, a soft-spoken fan of Clint Eastwood movies who likes to quote the thoughts of Mao Zedong, outmaneuvered the Sri Lankan forces? He seems to hold almost cult-like powers over his followers. Prabhakaran founded the Tamil Tigers in 1976 when he was 22, in response to government discrimination against the country’s Tamil minority. His rebels have been fighting a full-fledged war with Colombo for 17 years; about 60,000 people have been killed. Prabhakaran, a socialist who has said he is inspired by such disparate leaders as Hitler, Napoleon and Che Guevara, gets funding for and weapons from the Tamil diaspora. . . .”¹³

It appears that reporter Ian MacKinnon’s passing mention of Pirabhakaran being inspired by Hitler, is based on the LTTE leader’s expressed fascination with the career of Subhas Chandra Bose, who linked with Hitler for a few years in the early 1940s, as part of his anti-British activism. That Pirabhakaran himself gained inspiration from Hitler is baloney and not based on any factual record. MacKinnon has hidden the real facts that colonial Ceylon produced its share of Sinhala Aryan Hitler-imitators such as A. E. Goonesinghe (1891–1967) and padre Bandaranaike (1899–1959) who dreamt of conquering power in the 1930s by spell binding oratory and using goon-squads to target the skulls of opponents. Both of them even competed with each other in the Colombo Municipality elections in 1920s. Another fact deserves notice; both Bandaranaike and Goonesinghe became household names when Hitler was at

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his prime in the 1930s, and both exploited the ‘Aryan’ shrill of Hitler in the local politics of the island. While Goonesinghe’s star faded in the early 1950s, Bandaranaike exploited the ‘Heil Sinhala’ demagoguery to reach the pinnacle of prime-ministership in mid 1950s. Then Federal Party militant Amirthalingam was a notable victim of ‘Heil Sinhala’ goon-squad attack when Bandaranaike gained power in 1956. Even Tarzie Vittachi, the Sinhalese journalist, who courageously penned the acclaimed *Emergency* ’58 book had to escape from the island for fear of his life and limb from such goon squad threat.

The 1980s decade saw the second generation of Sinhala Aryan Hitler-Mussolini imitators in power, who made a mockery of parliamentary democracy, after being voted into power in 1977. These two became the target of derision for Pirabhakaran. If J. R. Jayewardene (1906–1996) postured as the Mussolini-clone in Asia, Ranasinghe Premadasa (1924–1993) — the erstwhile protégé of A. E. Goonesinghe — played the role of Hitler-imitator with better professional success than his mentor. But Jayewardene and Premadasa ‘the tweedledum and tweedledee of the 1980s decade’ were cunning politicians who could mask their Hitler-Mussolini act with supple democratic faade such as referendum and by-elections. To top their act, they also buttressed their Hitler-Mussolini act with Morarji Desai-style of ascetic Gandhism (donned by Jayewardene) and Marcos-brand of populism (paraded by Premadasa and his partner in life — Hema). This detail is needed to comprehend Pirabhakaran’s revulsion of Sinhalese parliamentary leadership of the 1970s and 1980s, as he has stated in his 1984 interview with Anita Pratap. Thus, MacKinnon’s mention of Pirabhakaran being inspired by Hitler can also be inferred as nothing but a ‘plant’ by media-savvy Dayan Jayatilleka to mask the despotism of Premadasa.

‘EVEN THE GRASS IS A WEAPON FOR THE COURAGEOUS’

Some Sinhalese analysts, especially Jayatilleka, are fond of quoting a few idioms and proverbs in Tamil (which they have learnt casually from their Tamil contacts) to critique Pirabhakaran’s thoughts and actions. One which has been used in the past is the proverb, *Puli pasithaalum pullai thinnaaathu* [in translation: Tiger will not eat grass even in hunger.] In my reading, a better Tamil proverb featuring grass to describe Pirabhakaran’s action is *Vallavanukku Pul-lum Aayutham* [in translation: Even the grass is a weapon for the courageous.] Only a talented person fully drenched with an attitude depicted by this proverb could lead an army, using the video cassettes of Clint Eastwood’s westerns as inspiration. Unbelievable to the ordinary souls in 1986. But Pirabhakaran is not an ordinary individual.

Pirabhakaran’s remark to the *Newsweek* magazine about his fascination

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with Clint Eastwood’s movies elicited a humorous commentary from a journalist, then living in Japan. Though appears as patronizing to Pirabhakaran, the joke of Jared Lubarsky was on the Poo Bahs of American culture. Wrote Lubarsky,

“Make My Day Department: The leader of a Tamil separatist group in Sri Lanka, dear friends, was asked in a magazine interview last week if he had received any military training in Cuba. He denied it. ‘I use my natural instincts’, he said, ‘and I watch war films and Westerns by Clint Eastwood.’

Think of all the people who devote whole careers to bringing the representative best of their own cultures to audiences in other lands. Goethe Institute, British Council, USIA — thousands of folks on the public payroll, and earning every penny of it. Cultural agencies work hard; they take their role seriously because they know it can have real political consequences. That’s one thing they all have to disavow, of course: politics. But anything a culture in transition puts on display from another — and all cultures are in transition — changes the way people see and think. An exhibition, a lecture, a festival; somewhere down the line, these things are going to alter the very shape of the host country and the way it behaves in the world community: cultural bureaucrats give a lot of thought to the images they send abroad. It must make the people at the USIA feel a little low, I suppose, to think that they come in behind Dirty Harry as a force for social change in the Third World.¹⁴

Lubarsky continued:

“I find it a little disconcerting myself, that this particular freedom fighter learned his notions of warfare from Eastwood sphagetti Westerns. As far as I can tell, Eastwood’s loftiest strategy in these movies is to shoot the shit out of anything that moves. That doesn’t bode well for the future of Sri Lanka.

Then again, why should we expect things to be otherwise? If the president of the United States [*Note by Sri Kantha:* Then, Ronald Reagan was the President] can derive his whole outlook on life from the movies, why shouldn’t a Tamil Tiger? Matter of fact, why should he be the only one?...”¹⁵

Lubarsky’s joking aside, serious students of history will not deny that Clint Eastwood and his use of gun *is the most potent symbol of American culture*; far more potent than the creations of Americans like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Emily Dickinson, Henry Ford, Ansel Adams and Andy Warhol. If one scans the American history from 1620, when the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth aboard *Mayflower* ship, the gun helped the European immigrants to defend, conquer and establish their thriving vibrant culture. Ballads, folk poetry and art in the earlier centuries, as well as novels and movies in the 20th century extolled the virtue of the gun. If not for the gun, Washington and his gang couldn’t have bested the rule of King George III. Thus, Pirabhakaran

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was not wrong in identifying Eastwood’s gun as his guiding light to liberate Eelam Tamils from Sinhalese oppression.

Though Lubarsky wrote this humorous piece in 1986, in the aftermath of Clint Eastwood’s critical success of his movie *Unforgiven* in 1993, the *Time* magazine provided a profile of the Hollywood icon to felicitate his oeuvre, with a caption ‘Go Ahead, Make My Career’. Some points made by Paul Witteman who penned this profile are interesting to note. According to this profile,

“[Clint] Eastwood plans his productions like military campaigns and compares his role to that of an officer in combat. ‘Making a film takes on a life of its own’, he says, ‘You guide that life along like a platoon leader, getting everybody kind of enthused to charge the hill’.”¹⁶

This comment from Clint Eastwood is rather fascinating. Come to think of it, there appears a symmetry between the movie idol (Eastwood) and the fan (Pirabhakaran), which had gone unnoticed. While Eastwood prepared his movies like military campaigns, Pirabhakaran gained inspiration for his military campaigns from Eastwood’s Westerns. Also the character traits which came to identify Clint Eastwood’s phenomenal success — prudence, intelligent shyness, self reliance, suspicion of the intentions of strangers and dogged determination — are the identified virtues of a pioneer American. These same traits also have some resonance in Pirabhakaran’s success as a Tamil leader.

A quote of Clint Eastwood mentioned in the *Time* magazine’s profile is also a memorable one. “Hollywood pays too much attention to home runs. Singles and doubles can win the game when longevity is the goal. Besides, if all I ever did was hit one home run, the only thing I’d be now a celebrity has-been.” Even Pirabhakaran’s record in the field attests to the fact that, like his idol, he also concentrated on singles and doubles in the 1980s. In contrast, some of his rivals to the leadership like Uma Maheswaran and Padmanabha were fooling themselves by aiming for ‘home runs’ with the never-materialised support from the Sinhalese peasants and masses.

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Prime Antagonist of Buddhist Aryanism

SINHALA MAHA SABHA AND THE BROWN-SKINNED BUDDHIST ARYANISM

IN THIS CHAPTER, an aspect which has been shunned by many of these professional cross-dressers is focused; this is relevant to Pirabhakaran’s task in tackling the viles of brown-skinned Buddhist Aryan violence in Sri Lanka. Prior to this, I provide a simple example on the pitfalls of history writing, pertaining to Sri Lanka. The precursor of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) was the Sinhala Maha Sabha founded by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, whom I identified as the first generation of Brown-skinned Buddhist Aryan advocates in the previous chapter.

When did Bandaranaike found this Sabha in the 1930s? Seven sources checked provide five answers; 1937^{1,2}, 1936³, 1935⁴, 1934^{5,6} and 1932⁷. This is not an issue of nit-picking on years; but to mark how much Hitler’s rise to power in 1933 influenced the rise of brown-skinned Buddhist Aryanism in colonial Ceylon. It appears that Jane Russell may be correct, since she mentions the month of the year as well. To quote Jane Russell:

“The Sinhala Maha Sabha was founded in November 1936. Its inaugural meeting consisted of a heterogeneous collection of the more radical young Sinhalese politicians, including S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, R. S. S. Gunawardena and Dudley Senanayake. A number of teaching figures from the Sinhala literary world, including Piyadasa Sirisena and Munidasa Cumaratunga, and a number of lesser figures involved in local politics, and men interested in the culture and religion of the Sinhalese community were also present. Sirisena proposed Sinhala Maha Sabha as the name of the society; Bandaranaike countered this with a suggestion that the name adopted be Swadeshiya Maha Sabha, or ‘the Greater Congress of the Indigenous Peoples’. This latter suggestion was opposed by Cumaratunga and others, including Abeygunasekera, the State Council member for Nuwara Eliya and Sirisena’s suggested name was adopted. At this point several participants at the meeting, including Dudley Senanayake left the newly-formed society.”⁸

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Then, Jane Russell states how Bandaranaike came to lead the Sinhala Maha Sabha and in two foot-notes include G. G. Ponnambalam’s — the then rising star in Tamil politics representing the Point Pedro constituency in the State Council — observations;

“By the late 1930s, Sirisena and Cumaratunga had severed their connection with it, and the Sinhala Maha Sabha had developed into a very effective political organisation under the leadership of Bandaranaike. In State Council it was nominally the largest of the political groupings in 1939 [Foot-note: According to G. G. Ponnambalam, the Sinhala Maha Sabha had thirty Members in Council. This was a gross exaggeration on Ponnambalam’s behalf; in my estimation there were at the most fifteen Sinhala Maha Sabha Members in Council, of which only the handful on Bandaranaike’s Executive Committee were effectively unified. *Hansard*, 1939, Col. 959.], and it had a very substantial following among the electors in the Sinhalese provinces. The Ceylon Tamil political leaders cited the existence of the Sinhala Maha Sabha as a dire threat to their continuance as a differentiated community in Ceylon. [Foot-note: For example, G. G. Ponnambalam’s speech (*‘The Sinhala Maha Sabha caucus is of very deep, sinister significance... (as e.g.)... the Sinhala Maha Sabha meeting at Anuradhapura when the Tamils were called usurpers and there was an injunction issued that a Dutugemunu should arise and throw these usurpers out.’* *Hansard*, 1939, 890 ff).⁹

In sum, Hitler’s rise to power in 1933 influenced the Buddhist Aryan demagoguery strongly in colonial Ceylon and Bandaranaike exploited it via his Sinhala Maha Sabha vehicle. As revealed, originally he preferred the name of Swadeshiya Maha Sabha in place of Sinhala Maha Sabha. He lost out at first to the literati. Then, after the departure of literati Sirisena and Cumaratunga who stood for the name Sinhala Maha Sabha, Bandaranaike captured the leadership; but continued the activities of his caucus under the name Sinhala Maha Sabha which was more expedient politically. Hitler gave a bad name to the ‘Aryan’ cause. Thus, following Hitler’s demise in 1945, Bandaranaike muffled his ‘Aryan’ voice for a while and joined the UNP with his clique when it was formed in 1947. In September 1951, the Sinhala Maha Sabha was reborn as the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, whose leadership has remained within the pocket Fuehrer’s family for the past 53 years.

Dayan Jayatilleka, a professional cross-dresser who mixes hearsay, gossip and innuendo to his cocktail of political commentaries glibly noted,

“Ernest Gold did the haunting soundtrack for the movie *Exodus*, starring Paul Newman and Eva Marie Saint. Prabhakaran loved the book. D. B. S. Jeyaraj related the tale in his version of the portrait of the separatist leader as a young man, penned as a birthday tribute in the *Sunday Leader*. (What Jeyaraj does not add is something he can check with *iyekkam* oldsters such as the

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Nithyanandans, namely that *Mein Kampf* was also on Prabhakaran’s short list of favourite texts). Be that as it may, the key lies in the latter’s deep identification with the Zionist experience and achievement.”¹⁰

Exodus, Paul Newman, Prabhakaran, *iyekkam* (i.e., an endearing Tamil word for the ‘Movement’), *Mein Kampf* and Zionist experience — phew! Jayatilleka is a spin-meister who can drop names like bullets from a machine gun in a few sentences and simultaneously pass innuendo on Pirabhakaran by noting that *Mein Kampf*, Hitler’s book, is in his “short list of favourite texts”. His source of information are the Nithyanandan couple [wife Nirmala, being the sister of Rajani Thiranagama], who were once members of LTTE. Jayatilleka does not reveal under what context Nithyanandans blurted this tidbit on Pirabhakaran. He also fails to mention whether he cross-checked this tidbit with any other confidants of Pirabhakaran. Even if *Mein Kampf* was in the ‘short list of favourite texts’ of Pirabhakaran, what harm could it have done? Millions of non-Germans have read that book in translation to understand Hitler’s mind, as akin to millions of non-Germans who read *Das Kapital* of Marx in translation.

Senator Alan Cranston translated *Mein Kampf* from German to English, word to word, and he was sued by Hitler for copyright infringement. Just because Cranston took the trouble to translate *Mein Kampf*, should one castigate him as an admirer of Hitler’s policies? In Jayatilleka’s logic, it has to be so. It also appears that Jayatilleka has mastered the deception of what Hitler described in *Mein Kampf*, as follows:

“The masses are poorly acquainted with abstract ideas, their reactions lie more in the domain of feelings. . . . Whoever wishes to win over the masses must know the key to open the door to their hearts. . . . The masses’ receptive powers are very restricted and their understanding feeble. . . . Effective propaganda must be confined to a few bare necessities expressed in a few stereotyped formulas.”¹¹

THE FOUNDER OF BROWN-SKINNED BUDDHIST ARYANISM

While Jayatilleka continuously smears Pirabhakaran as a practitioner of Aryan Nazi methods, it is of interest to revisit, who had admired Hitler’s message and practised it with vengeance against Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933), the pre-eminent Buddhist reformer, is one of the now-revered names of colonial Ceylon. He was a generation ahead of S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike and he died in the year of Hitler’s ascent to power. Gananath Obeyesekere, anthropology professor at Princeton University, had identified Dharmapala as the founder of Buddhist Aryanism in the

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island, in his essay entitled ‘Buddhism and Conscience’. Wrote Obeyesekere, in the penultimate paragraph of this essay:

“Through his familiarity with Bengali intellectuals, Dharmapala also used the term Aryan, not in its traditional meaning of ‘noble’ but in its racist sense. It is Dharmapala who identified non-Sinhala civilian populations for verbal attack: the Muslims, Borah merchants, and especially Tamils, whom he referred to as *hadi demalu* (filthy Tamils). The Tamil issue was just beginning to be a serious social and political problem owing to the introduction by the British of South Indian Tamil labor into the plantations and the creation in the central highlands of a new Tamil community hemmed in by Sinhala populations.”¹²

Then in the concluding paragraph consisting of two sentences, Obeyesekere summed up:

“Dharmapala himself never encouraged violence against minority ethnic groups, but he framed the ethnic issue in terms of a modern Buddhist nationalism and paved the way for the emergence of a specific modern Sinhala Buddhist national consciousness laying bare for many — especially for those who live in modern overcrowded cities — the dark underside of Buddhism without the mitigating humanism of the Buddhist conscience. Without that conscience and humanism, Buddhism must become a religion that has betrayed the heritage of its founder.”¹³

While Anagarika Dharmapala preached the Aryan doctrine and foul-mouthed other ethnic groups, his nominal adherents like Bandaranaike and A. E. Goonesinghe gained inspiration from Hitler’s oral pyrotechnics and goon squads respectively. The second generation of Brown-skinned Buddhist Aryanism [Jayewardene, Premadasa and his fellow rivals Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Dissanayake of the 1980s] adopted lock stock and barrel the Nazi treatment methods on Eelam Tamils.

Mervyn de Silva (the journalist father of Dayan Jayatilaka), blessed with little more wisdom, had occasionally allowed records of Nazi-type harassments meted out to Eelam Tamils in the 1980s to appear in his *Lanka Guardian* journal. Here is a vivid example, penned by S. Velupillai from Vadamardchy region. Excerpts:

“... *Operation Liberation* commenced on May 26 [1987], ended on May 31, and resulted in over 1,000 deaths and 2,000 arrests in Vadamardchy on its liberation from the LTTE. On the last day of the offensive I was arrested from one of the 16 temples specified as havens by the Forces in a notice dropped from the air across Vadamardchy. We, the captives, were chained and shipped to a makeshift detention camp in Galle, though our destination,

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according to our papers, was to be the notorious Boosa Detention Camp. Later, we came to know that Boosa was already full.

We were confined to a warehouse turned into a detention camp, adjacent to the port of Galle, about 200 metres long, and 20 metres wide. There were 6 latrines, outside the camp. At a time 6 detainees would be led out at gun point to spend 6 minutes in the latrines. Most of us had no option other than defecating and urinating into a gutter deep inside the camp. The gutter overflowed. We wallowed in our own faeces and urine that flowed from the gutter, under our feet, towards the centre of the camp which teemed with worms and flies, vomit and spittle. There were no baths. None of us had bathed or changed for days. Both the camp and the inmates stank.

The camp was packed to capacity. The detainees were split into over 50 groups, with 50 in each, each headed by one of its members. I headed group 52. A barbed-wire fence divided the head and the body of the camp. . . .”¹⁴

It is not an exaggeration to state that the sufferings of Eelam Tamils in the torture camps of Sri Lanka in 1990s, have been on par with the Nazi treatment meted to the Jews and Gypsies in the first half of 1940s. Peel, Mahtani, Hinchelwood and Forrest, reported on this theme in the *Lancet* medical journal in 2000. Excerpts:

“We reviewed records of all Sri Lankan men who had been referred to the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture between January 1997 and December 1998. . . . Medicolegal reports were written by 17 doctors that supported the allegations of torture in Sri Lanka made by 184 Tamil men who had been referred during this period. . . 74 (40%) were aged between 25 and 30 at the time of the analysis, so they would have been several years younger when they were detained and tortured by the Sri Lankan authorities, principally the army. 25 (13%) were younger than 25 when they were first seen at the Medical Foundation, 71 (38%) were aged 30–40 years, and 14 (6%) were older than 40. . . .

Of the 184 men, 38 (21%) said they had been sexually abused during their detention. Three (7%) of the 38 said they had been given electric shocks to their genitals, 26 (68%) had been assaulted on their genitals, and four (9%) had sticks pushed through the anus, usually with chillies rubbed on the stick first. One said he had been forced to masturbate soldiers orally, and one had been forced with his friends to rape each other in front of soldiers for their ‘entertainment’.

Of the men who said they had been sexually abused, 11 reported being raped as part of that sexual abuse; this represents 5% of the total number of men on whom reports were written. The men who had been raped were much younger, on average, than the men who said they had not been raped. This suggests that the soldiers choose the younger and more vulnerable men to rape.

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Of the 38 men who had been sexually abused, only four (10)% had scarring of the genitals, and none of them were found to have significant scarring around the anus. Since there are very rarely any physical signs caused by acute sexual assault of men, it is not surprising that there were so few men with physical signs of their sexual abuse. The injuries were: thickening and tenderness of final 1–2 cm on urethra of a man who described a soldier pushing an object inside his penis; a scar on the base of shaft of penis of a man who said that soldiers had repeatedly slapped a heavy desk drawer shut on it; an irregularly defined defect in the foreskin of a man who said that soldiers had tied some string around his penis and pulled, tearing off a piece of his foreskin; and a cigarette burn on the scrotum of a man who said that soldiers had stubbed cigarettes out on his genitals. . . .”¹⁵

In his classic work *Roots*, Alex Haley agonised about how his slave ancestor would have felt when given the option of castration and leg amputation, his ancestor chose to lose his legs so that at least he could pass his genes to his progeny. The above-cited descriptions of Peel and colleagues on the torture and victimisation suffered, especially in the genital region, by Eelam Tamil detainees at the hands of Sri Lankan army suggest that practising adherents of Hitler’s genocide techniques are not absent among the Brown-skinned Buddhist Aryan enthusiasts serving the Sri Lankan army.

Few months after the appearance of this shocking report in the *Lancet*, Sri Lanka had its general election on October 10, 2000. This election witnessed the third generation of brown-skinned Buddhist Aryan racists coming to the stage, under the label *Sihala Urumaya* [Sinhala Heritage]. This party’s national organizer Champika Ranawaka became a member of parliament, after a tussle for nomination among the party members. G. Senaratne and Deepal Jayasekera, contributing a commentary to the World Socialist Web Site, noted the mind-set of Ranawaka as follows:

“The Ranawaka faction, backed by the Buddhist clergy, represents a more overtly fascistic layer, comprising gangster elements drawn from students, younger small-scale businessmen in Colombo and Buddhist monks, and a handful of army men. Ranawaka commented during the election that the movement would treat Tamils in the way that Hitler treated the Jewish masses. The comment is not a mistaken slip of the tongue. One of the underlying themes of Sinhala chauvinism is the superiority of the Aryan Sinhalese over the southern Indian Dravidians or Tamils. In the 1930s, leading figures in the Sinhala Buddhist movement were open admirers of the Aryan supremacist philosophy of the German Nazis and their policies. Ranawaka was a JVP student leader in the late 1980s when the JVP carried out murderous attacks on the working class and its organisations. He has repeatedly called for the formation of what amounts to fascist shock troops. . . .”¹⁶

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‘OUT-GESTAPOING’ THE ORIGINAL GESTAPO IN BOOK BURNING

Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police) or Gestapo in abbreviation, was the notorious Nazi contribution established by Hermann Goring from a section of the Prussian police force. In the first half of 1980s, the Sri Lankan version of Gestapo goon squads created history in book burning to a degree which quantitatively exceeded the vandalism which occurred under Nazi Germany in the 1930s. This aspect of recent history has been glossed over by authentic historians like K. M. de Silva and pretending historians like Rajan Hoole, as indicated below:

“These Councils [*i.e.* District Development Councils] were ill-fated from the start, when the Council elections in July 1981 resulted in such untoward incidents as the burning of the Jaffna Public Library by government forces.”¹⁷

“... To meet the threat posed by this mounting violence the police force was strengthened by a large contingent of policemen and police reservists sent from Colombo. These reinforcements checked the violence temporarily, but became themselves the target of violence. On the eve of the [District Development Council] elections, a terrorist group shot and killed some policemen who were on election duty. This incident provoked just the response the perpetrators of this violent act had anticipated and desired: the unfocused anger of the police and one of the worst incidents of police reprisals in the encounter between them and the young political activists in Jaffna. The violence was inflicted on property more than persons, culminating in a mindless act of barbarism, the burning of the Jaffna Municipal Library.”¹⁸

While de Silva and Wiggins correctly describe this shocking event as ‘mindless act of barbarism’, they — as well as the authors of *Broken Palmyra* previously — conveniently smoothened the vandalism by not even quantitating the loss of historical documents and books. de Silva and Wiggins also presented an unconvincing opinion that the June 1, 1981 book burning of Jaffna Municipal Library was an unfortunate one-time retaliation event. This opinion is inaccurate since book burning was a continuing event in the 1980s, as indicated below. Where was Pirabhakaran when the Jaffna Municipal Library burnt? According to Narayan Swamy,

“One of the hundreds who saw the monument of Tamil glory burn down with its invaluable collections was Prabhakaran. But Prabhakaran’s main worry was then to escape [to India]”¹⁹

Even Narayan Swamy had failed to mention the number of volumes which was engulfed in fire. The then head of state, J. R. Jayewardene was interviewed by the Indian journalist S. Venkat Narayan a couple of months later,

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and was asked about the Jaffna book burning. His responses, as typical of the foxy politician, were nothing but dismissive and condescending to the sentiments of book lovers. To quote,

“Question: In Jaffna people are very upset. The policemen set fire to the 50 year old library and burnt 97,000 valuable books. They also set fire to a TULF MP’s house.

Jayewardene: That’s because they think he is in touch with the terrorists.

Question: It seems they were trying to catch him so they could kill him.

Jayewardene: Terrorists do that too.”²⁰

Michael Kauman from the *New York Times* who visited Jaffna around the same time informed

“Mr. Yogeswaran’s [the TULF MP unnamed in Venkat Narayan’s interview] anger was very personal. Three months ago his house was burned by what many Jaffna people say were Sinhalese policemen. On the same night, the large library with its collection of 97,000 books and Tamil manuscripts was burned and destroyed.”²¹

Kaufman’s report appeared under the caption, ‘Harassed Sri Lanka Minority Hears call to Arms’. Quantity-wise, 97,000 books and manuscripts were more than four fold higher than the infamous May 10, 1933 book burning event first held under the Nazi regime. According to Rodgers,

“On 10 May 1933 the first book burning took place, when, in scenes that looked spontaneous but were actually highly organized, students, academics and others took books from libraries, bookshops and schools and burnt them in squares throughout Germany, incinerating about 20, 000 volumes.”²²

It need to be reiterated that the June 1, 1981 book burning of Jaffna Municipal Library was not an isolated event, as opined by the biographers of J. R. Jayewardene. **The books located in Pirabhakaran’s birth zone were specially targeted and suffered similar fate in 1984.** The library of Hartley College-Point Pedro, containing 6,690 books were burnt by the armed force personnel who occupied the buildings closer to the school. Furthermore, in August of that year, the local library of Valvettithurai was set ablaze by the armed troops, as informed by S. P. Raju, a former school teacher and a secretary of the Valvettithurai Citizen’s Council, to Sanjoy Hazarika, of *New York Times*.²³

Apart from books available in institutions of learning and public service, even private book collections of Tamil individuals were not spared by the

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goon squads of Brown-skinned Buddhist Aryanism. Parthasarathy from India, while visiting the Jaffna peninsula in September–October 1984, reiterated the Sri Lankan army-enforced book burning, in a two-part series entitled, ‘Misdeeds of the army, cultural genocide’, as follows:

“The ‘security forces’ have to their credit a hat trick performance. First it was the Jaffna Public Library, destroyed in 1981. Then came the burning of the Hartley College Library earlier this year followed by the burning of the collection of 500 odd books belonging to one Nagamani Vijayaratnam in Point Pedro.

Founded by an English scholar missionary, Peter Percival Hartley over a century ago, Hartley College, an apex institution for the whole of Vadamarachi area which has produced engineers, doctors, distinguished civil servants and scientists including Prof. Eliezer (mathematician of renown) and Alwarpillai (a distinguished civil servant), had the misfortune of being in the vandals’ path. The second major library to go up in flames in three years, the Point Pedro Hartley College library was burnt along with the class rooms and care was taken to ensure that no books were spared. . . .”²⁴

To my personal knowledge, in Colombo itself, the then TULF (Colombo branch) leader M. K. Eelaventhana’s book collection and TULF President M. Sivasithamparam’s book collection were specifically targeted and destroyed in the 1977 and 1983 ethnic riots respectively. In an unsigned feature in 1990, the *Asiaweek* magazine had captured the agony of an Eelam Tamil bibliophile. Excerpts:

“ ‘My 30-year library’, sobbed Villalarajah Thiagalingam, his shaking finger pointing at the ashes of what once was his study at 261 Dyke St. in Trincomalee late last week. ‘All my books and 30 years of research’. In nearby streets in the Northeastern Sri Lankan port town, police kicked doors and fired indiscriminately at the few Tamil houses and shops that remained standing. On the outskirts of twin sounds of government shelling added to the tension. ‘We were hiding in the shed and we could hear them shouting’, said Thiagalingam, referring to the Sinhalese mob that had burned his house. ‘They were carrying knives and swords’”²⁵

It should be stressed that Thiagalingam is just one of thousands of Eelam Tamils who lost their personal collections of books to mob vandalism fed on Brown-skinned Buddhist Aryanism. In sum, despite all the image-tarnishing tactics employed by Pirabhakaran critics like Jayatilleka and abetted by amnesic professional cross-dressers, if Hitler’s brand of genocide has ardent adherents in Sri Lanka, they can be traced along generations linking Anagarika Dharmapala, Bandaranaike family (husband, wife and daughter), Jayewardene, Premadasa, Athulathmudali, Dissanayake and Ranawaka. Pirabhakaran’s

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ascent was the ultimate Tamil reaction to such Brown-skinned Buddhist Aryanism. This has been reiterated by none other than Mervyn de Silva in 1991:

“The two-party game which helped to aggravate the Tamil problem (some analysts say the problem was in fact a by-product of that two-party contest for power and the opportunism it promoted.) still goes on. But the constitutional changes that Mr. J. R. Jayewardene introduced in order to centralise power in an executive presidency at the expense of parliament, the extension of the UNP-dominated parliament’s 6 year term to 12 years, the deep divisions in the Opposition, the dramatic decline of the ‘Old Left’, the chaos and bitter squabbles in the SLFP after Mrs. Bandaranaike was deprived of her civic rights, have all taken quite a toll. While these developments were altering, often imperceptibly, the traditional structure of politics in Sri Lanka, two other parallel processes were under way. The Tamil agitation moved out of parliament, the traditional Tamil leadership was soon marginalised with whatever token gains they had made through parliament becoming more and more meaningless. In that area, the DDC [District Development Council] polls in Jaffna [held in 1981] and the manner in which these were conducted, together with the campaign of terror unleashed by UNP ‘goon squads’, stand out as the turning point...”²⁶

Though Mervyn de Silva did not mention the name Pirabhakaran in this passage, it was obvious to everyone that Pirabhakaran was the individual who moved the Tamil agitation out of parliament. Why? Though the TULF, then prime representatives of Tamils in the parliament, were Gandhians in practice — their strategies were hardly producing any dividends for the Tamils in terms of preventing the state-aided colonisation occurring in the Eastern province, while at the same time the forces of Brown-skinned Buddhist Aryanism were harassing the younger generation in multiple fronts.

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Countering the Buddhist Aryanism

“When of two adjoining tribes one becomes less numerous and less powerful than the other, the contest is soon settled by war, slaughter, cannibalism, slavery, and absorption. Even when a weaker tribe is not thus abruptly swept away, if it once begins to decrease, it generally goes on decreasing until it becomes extinct.”

—DARWIN¹

Darwin’s message on the ‘Survival of the Fittest’ provides a glaring prediction on the impending fate of Eelam Tamils in the island. Sinhalese and Tamils have been two adjoining tribes in the island for centuries, ‘minding their own business’. That the Tamils in the island are less numerous is a given. On top of that, if the Tamils become less powerful, their survival is in question has been best understood by Pirabhakaran than other Tamils of his generation or earlier generations, even though he would not have read a line from Darwin. Among the influencing processes (war, slaughter, cannibalism, slavery and absorption) mentioned by Darwin, Tamil-speaking Colombo Chetties of the 18th and 19th centuries have turned into ‘Sinhalese’ by the absorption process. Slaughter at regular intervals since mid-1950s had depleted the Tamil population. Slavery also plays its insidious role of turning some born Tamils (Names need not be mentioned) into ‘hiding’ Sinhalese. Thus, it is not a surprise that Pirabhakaran’s call for a war against the fanatics of Buddhist Aryanism did elicit favorable response among the younger generation of Eelam Tamils in the early 1980s.

STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY PIRABHAKARAN

To counter the fangs of Brown-skinned Buddhist Aryanism, the following strategies were adopted by Pirabhakaran’s Tamil Tigers. First, severing the complete reliance of Tamils on parliamentary politics. Secondly, establishing a truly viable Tamil guerrilla army — as opposed to the logorrhea pyrotechnics of fringe Leftists of previous generation, like N. Sanmugathasan. Thirdly, adopting a ‘Hit where it Hurts’ strategy in military confrontations. Despite the choleric outburst of self-anointed, partisan human rights activists, in each

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of these strategies, time has proved that Pirabhakaran’s choices were not inappropriate for the occasion.

One can wonder how many Tamils would have chuckled on the observation made by Vipul Boteju, one of the retired army brigadier generals, to Amal Jayasinghe, prior to Sattahip, Thailand, negotiations between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE in the 2002. According to the Agence France-Presse report,

“Retired army brigadier general Vipul Boteju believes it is the military strength of the Tigers that forced the government to talk with them with the help of Norwegian peace brokers. ‘If the [Sri Lankan] army was even half an inch taller than the Tigers, the talks would not have been necessary’, Boteju said. ‘It is the corruption in the army, and conversely, the dedication among the Tigers that brought about this situation’.”²

This candid appreciation from a former battle field opponent of Pirabhakaran deserves merit and proves that the second and third strategies I have listed above did succeed to a significant level, against domineering odds. While knowledgeable combatants like Vipul Boteju had complimented the ‘dedication among the Tigers’ for their stupendous feat, Tamil Tigers have hardly lacked doom-sayers as well. Rajan Hoole *et al.* wrote in 1990,

“The Tigers’ history, their theoretical vacuum, lack of political creativity, intolerance and fanatical dedication will be the ultimate cause of their own break-up. The legendary Tigers will go to their demise with their legends smeared with the blood and tears of victims of their own misdoings. A new Tiger will not emerge from their ashes.”³

SEVERING THE TOTAL RELIANCE OF PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS

Eelam Tamils have produced quite a number of professionals who have enriched the parliamentary debates of colonial and post-independent Sri Lanka. Among those who have passed from the current scene, G. G. Ponnambalam, C. Suntheralingam, S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, C. Vanniasingham, A. Amirthalingam, V. N. Navaratnam, E. M. V. Naganathan and M. Sivasithamparam were leading debaters with conviction who were chosen by the Tamil-speaking population to represent them at the parliament between 1930s and late 1970s. All of them adhered valiantly to the Gandhian concept of non-violence to fight for the rights of Tamils, *but ignored the admonition of Gandhi on the barren state of parliament controlled by the hands of wily adversaries.*

Gandhi had warned about the flaws of parliamentary politics in 1909, and among all the Eelam Tamil leaders, it is now evident that only Pirabhakaran

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took serious note of Gandhi’s warning. What was Gandhi’s warning? To cite Erik Erikson,

“In 1909, on his return from a most discouraging trip to England, where he had found that the Imperial Government was half helpless and half unwilling to support Indian self-respect either in South Africa or in India, Gandhi wrote *Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule*, a rather incendiary manifesto for a man of peace. Written on a steamer in less than a week, it staked out a sphere of leadership reaching from utterly personal and local concerns to the very limits of India. The motto is; Home Rule equals Self Rule and Self Rule equals Self-Control. Only he who is master of himself can be master of his ‘house’, and only a people in command of itself can command respect and freedom...”⁴

Erikson continues on Gandhi’s opinion:

“There follow sweeping denigrations of the British Parliament and of the ‘free’ press, of civilization in general and the railways in particular, of lawyers and doctors, all of whom are said to prostitute, infect, weaken, and cheapen the Indian people, who enjoyed Home Rule in the ancient past...”

‘Prostitution’ is a word used rather often in this document;... the British Parliament is first referred to as the Mother of Parliaments and then derided as no better than a prostitute or an otherwise ‘sterile woman’. To justify such a comparison the pamphleteer uses rather strange metaphors. The Parliament, he says, is like a prostitute — ‘under the control of ministers who change from time to time’. The word ‘under’ appears again and again in what is in all probability not a conscious pun: ‘Today it is under Mr. Asquith, tomorrow, under Mr. Balfour, and the day after it will be somebody else’. Rather than being ‘under one master all the time’, then, Parliament is used by a series of prime ministers who exploit this institution for their purposes without making it fertile, with the result that ‘its movement is not steady but it is buffeted about like a prostitute’...⁵

What Erikson did not stress on Gandhi’s attitude to the British parliament also is notable. Though a trained lawyer, Gandhi was not a parliamentarian. Period. As an activist, who concentrated on deeds and not words, Gandhi would have felt that the parliament set-up prostituted the words which need to be used sparingly. Demagoguery by tub-thumping oratory became the norm since the parliamentary tradition rooted in India and Sri Lanka. Keen observers have recorded how S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, the brown-skinned Hitler-imitator, exploited such oratorical technique to pour scorn on his opponents in the 1950s. Two examples:

“I heard Bandaranaike speak at a mass rally near the Kandy market, a short-while before they killed him. It was a classic discourse in Sinhala. He poured

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sarcasm on his UNP adversaries, quite effortlessly. One had to hear him pour vitriol through the microphone to comprehend the contempt he reserved for the *ancien regime*. He intoned in the most ironical of voices. People listened to him with wrapt attention. He knew he was giving a command performance.”⁶

“S. W. R. D. [Bandaranaike] used, in his usual contemptuous style, to lift his forefinger when speaking, and harangue the crowd, telling them that when ‘a Bandaranaike’ lifts his forefinger, there is not a single man in the country who could lift his own forefinger above that of the Bandaranaike.”⁷

While Jeyaratnam Wilson’s observation on padre Bandaranaike was made in 1959, two decades ahead of this observation, the tart-tongued 37 year-old young Tamil leader G. G. Ponnambalam had pulled the populist mask of Bandaranaike and aptly prophesied him as ‘pocket Fuëhrer’. This has been noted by Jane Russell as follows:⁸

“In January 1939 at a meeting in Balapitiya, Bandaranaike appealed to the electors in this vein: ‘I am prepared to sacrifice my life for the sake of my community, the Sinhalese. If anybody were to try to hinder our progress, I am determined to see that he is taught a lesson he will never forget.’

At the conclusion of the meeting, a lady in the audience, Mrs. Srimathie Abeygunawardene likened Mr. Bandaranaike to Hitler and appealed to the Sinhalese community to give him every possible assistance to reach the goal of freedom. (*Hindu Organ*, January 26, 1939). This reported remark caused G. G. Ponnambalam to term Bandaranaike ‘the pocket Fuëhrer’ (*Hindu Organ*, May 24, 1939).”

In the same page, ahead of this passage, Jane Russell also had cited Ponnambalam’s speech at the then State Council in 1939, as a member of Point Pedro constituency, with a foot note that the young Tamil leader had visited Nazi Germany in 1938:

“This is our home. We are inhabitants of this country and we have as much right to claim to have permanent and vested interests in this country, politically and otherwise, as the Sinhalese people. We do not propose to be treated as undesirable aliens. We will not tolerate being segregated into ghettos and treated like Semites in the Nazi states (*Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 1939, col. 890).”

The problem faced by the Eelam Tamils was different in plane from the problem faced by the Jews in Nazi Germany. Hitler did not have a wife and a daughter who came to be elected following the demise of the Fuëhrer. His mistress had committed suicide with him. But in Sri Lanka, following the assassination of ‘pocket Fuëhrer’ in 1959, the Sinhalese public chose pocket

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Fuëhrer’s Frau (Leader’s Wife) as the ‘weeping widow’ Sirimavo, who carried out the first ethnic cleansing in the armed forces of the island and held power from 1960 to 1977, with an intermittent 1965–70 period as the Leader of the Opposition. Following pocket Fuëhrer’s Frau, 1994 saw the rise of Tochter Fuëhrer (Daughter Leader) replacing her mother. The despicable assassination of a noted sympathiser of LTTE who had tussled openly with Tochter Fuëhrer in the 1990s, G. G. (Kumar) Ponnambalam Jr.— the son of G. G. Ponnambalam — in January 2000, by the Gestapo-style agents in Colombo exposed the fangs of Buddhist Aryanism prominently. It may not even be a hyperbole to think whether Tochter Fuëhrer was taking a revenge on the son of Ponnambalam who had aptly tagged her father with the mischievous monicker ‘pocket Fuëhrer’. This is because, the British academic Jane Russell, who had described the political antics of the pocket Fuëhrer of colonial Ceylon in her 1982 book, was also unceremoniously deported from the island in 1996 on flimsy grounds, though she has been a resident in Sri Lanka for 23 years. Reports and letters on this issue had appeared in the Colombo press.^{9–11}

While pocket Fuëhrer’s Frau could not distinguish herself as a grand practitioner of tub-thumping oratory, since early 1970s for two decades, Premadasa—who can be tagged as Schatten Fuëhrer (shadow Fuëhrer) — hijacked pocket Fuëhrer’s oratorical scorn and harangue effortlessly. His parliamentary speech during the Motion to deprive the civic rights of none other than Fuëhrer’s Frau in 1980 was a landmark in such despicable oratory. When one heard that speech, one could have wondered whether Premadasa was avenging the defeat of his mentor [A. E. Goonesinghe] by S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike in the early 1930s, by pouring scorn on Bandaranaike’s widow in 1980.

It is revealing that in his first interview to Anita Pratap in 1984, Pirabhakaran had expressed similar sentiments to Gandhi’s on the parliamentary system of Sri Lanka.

Interviewer: ‘What made you opt out of a conventional system and spearhead a liberation movement which you knew would be outlawed?’

Pirabhakaran: ‘The democratic parliamentary system, or what you refer to as the conventional political system in Sri Lanka, has always tried to impose the will of the majority on the minority. This system not only failed to solve the basic problems of our people but, in fact, aggravated our plight. For decades, the repression by the State has made the life of our people miserable. The non-violent democratic struggles of our people were met with military repression. Our just demands were totally ignored, and the oppression continued on such a scale as to threaten the very survival of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. It was these circumstances which led me to form our liberation movement. I felt that an armed struggle was the only alternative left to our people, not only to ensure our survival but ultimately to free ourselves from the Sinhala oppression. I

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have always been aware that our movemet would be outlawed. It is for this reason that we organised our movement as a clandestine underground structure from its inception’.¹²

That Pirabhakaran is not imperfect in his 1984 assessment of the parliamentary democracy as practised by the Sinhalese politicians is proved by the later observations made by non-Tamil natives of the island. In 1992, ex-diplomat Izeth Hussain tagged the prevailing system as ‘nonsense democracy’. To quote,

“...Sri Lankan democracy was made nonsensical by the 1977 Government. It will be remembered that under that Government we were deluged by an unrelenting torrent of rot about Sri Lanka’s far-famed five-star democracy, a performance that was vastly impressive for its sheer zaniness. The more appropriate term might therefore be ‘nonsense democracy’.”¹³

K. Godage, another ex-diplomat (who is also a voluble Pirabhakaran critic nonetheless) labeled it as ‘deformed democracy’ and even reiterated Pirabhakaran’s viewpoint, if not by word, but in spirit:

“Sri Lankan democracy has a form all its own. It is deformed. For many years we confused Majoritarianism with democracy. Most politicians understood democracy to mean the vulgar business of majority rule; a situation where the Opposition has no role whatsoever in the governance of the country. This simplistic and vulgar understanding of democracy prevails seventy years after universal suffrage was introduced and fifty three years after we started to govern ourselves.”¹⁴

Thus, Pirabhakaran’s first strategy of severing the complete reliance of Tamils on parliamentary politics to defang the Brown-skinned Buddhist Aryanism is not without merit. In a 1988 communication, I had briefly expressed why the young Tamil militants were the disillusioned with the parliamentary democracy. Excerpts:

“...The Westminster model of parliamentary democracy could work in the United Kingdom to cater to a single ethnic and single religious constituency. It has failed to take firm root in other countries with multi-ethnic and multi-religious constituencies. So, the younger generation of Tamilians drifted towards the military ideology of Mao Tse Tung, since 1977. One may label it as a reckless move. But it remained as a practical alternative. And among Tamils of Sri Lanka, a small faction led by trade unionist N. Sanmugathan had espoused this cause, though not with much popular support...”¹⁵

Subsequently I also had communicated [originally written to commemorate Gandhi’s 53rd anniversary of death] on the shifting of Mahatma Gandhi’s

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thoughts from non-violence agitation to recognizing the value in violence agitation along the decades, and the reason *why such a shift occurred*. This commentary was written by me to negate the argument of the authors of *The Broken Palmyra* (1990), who had blindly extolled the virtues of non-violence¹⁶. Expressed opinions of Rajan Hoole and colleagues have completely ignored Gandhi’s as well as Nehru’s caveat on the limitations of non-violence strategy. Excerpts from my commentary are as follows:¹⁷

“Though non-violence was his chosen method of agitation, Gandhi did not underestimate the need for violent methods to overcome aggression of the demonic State and its authorities. This is because, *especially during the last decade of his life*, he recognized the limitations of non-violent methods against adversaries who were rabid, reckless and not given to reason. It could be inferred that though he developed the non-violent confrontation with his oppressors [British imperialists] in the late 19th century in South Africa, the events of Second World War as well as the parallel liberation war conducted by Mao Ze Dong in China, made Gandhi to realize that his non-violent methods of agitation had limits.

However, selective regurgitation of Gandhi’s thoughts on overcoming fear by the politicians and pundits (who had their own axes to grind) had made it difficult for millions to agitate against oppression. One possible reason for this occurrence is because the popular autobiography of Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiment with Truth*, comes to a close in the year 1921. But he lived for another full 26 eventful years, during which he continued to write passionately and modified his beliefs according to the new developments in India and the world.

Let me offer six quotes of Gandhi [between 1940 and 1947, when the Aryan Nazi oppression peaked and was vanquished by the Allies] on the use of violence, as culled from the book, *The Way to Communal Harmony — a Gandhi anthology*, compiled and edited by U. R. Rao [Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1963]. The original dates of these quotes from the *Harijan* newspaper are mentioned at the end within parentheses.

‘Every Indian, be he Hindu or any other, must learn the act of protecting himself. It is the condition of real democracy. The State has a duty. But no State can protect those who will not share with it the duty of protecting themselves’. [*Harijan*, Feb. 10, 1940]

‘Self-defence can be violent or non-violent. I have always advised and insisted on non-violent defence. But I recognize that it has to be learnt like violent defence. It requires a different training from that which is required for violent defence. Therefore, if the capacity for non-violent self-defence is lacking, there need be no hesitation in using violent means’. [*Harijan*, Mar. 2, 1940; suggestion to Manoranjan Babu and other friends from Noakhali, regarding the difficult situation faced there by the Hindus.]

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‘I have said that for those who do not believe in non-violence, armed defence is the only remedy. But if I am asked to advise how it can be done, I can only say, ‘I don’t know’. [*Harijan*, Oct. 16, 1940; in the context of terrorization of Sindh Hindus by Muslims, Gandhi received a letter from Shamlal Gidwani holding Gandhi’s advice of non-violence as contrary to the teachings of Lord Krishna.]

‘Cowardice is impotence worse than violence. The coward desires revenge but being afraid to die, he looks to others, may be the Government of the day, to do the work of defence for him. A coward is less than man. He does not deserve to be a member of a society of men and women’. [*Harijan*, Sept. 15, 1946]

‘What I saw and heard showed me that people are apt to forget self-respect in order to save themselves. There is no Swadeshi and Swaraj for persons who will not sacrifice themselves or their belongings for their honour’. [*Harijan*, Jan. 5, 1947]

‘My Ahimsa forbids me from denying credit where it is due, even though the creditor is a believer in violence. Thus, though I did not accept Subhas Bose’s belief in violence and his consequent action, I have not refrained from giving unstinted praise to his patriotism, resourcefulness and bravery’. [*Harijan*, Nov. 16, 1947]

It is interesting to ask why Gandhi, towards the end of his life, came to acknowledge the need for violence against oppressors. I think that he came to understand that the arsenal of oppressors were becoming more powerful. When he began non-violent agitation in South Africa, Gandhi’s adversary was not using aerial bombs. But in the 1930s and 1940s, air-attack became a chosen arsenal for aggressors against their opponents and non-combatant civilians. This could have made Gandhi to reluctantly revise his complete reliance on non-violent agitational methods.”

Then, I commented on the quasi-pundits who have critiqued Pirabhakaran for his use of suicide warriors using the cyanide pill.

“The quasi-pundits in their sermons, show revulsion to Pirabhakaran’s addiction to cyanide pill. But Mahatma Gandhi has endorsed such a mode of action for freedom fighters. Here is one of his quotes in late 1947, written after India achieved its independence from Britain.

‘Man does not live but to escape death. If he does so, he is advised not to do so. He is advised to learn to love death as well as life, if not more so. A hard saying, harder to act up to, one may say. Every worthy act is difficult. Ascent is always difficult. Descent is easy and often slippery. Life becomes liveable only to the extent that death is treated as a friend, never as an enemy. To conquer life’s temptations, summon death to your aid. In order to postpone death a coward surrenders honour, wife, daughter and all. A courageous man prefers death to the surrender of self-respect. When the time comes, as it

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conceivably can, I would not leave my advice to be inferred, but it will be given in precise language. That today my advice might be followed only by one or none does not detract from its value. A beginning is always made by a few, even one’. [*Harijan*, Nov. 30, 1947]

Exactly two months after this passage appeared in print, the Great Man met his death peacefully at the age of 78 years and 120 days.”¹⁸

Gandhi was not alone in shifting his belief on the limitations of non-violence vehicle during the 1940s. His equally talented contemporaries like Bertrand Russell and Einstein, who were ardent pacifists during the First World War, also shifted their stance to support aggression against Hitler’s Aryanism during the Second World War. Bertrand Russell had reminisced as follows:

“Even during the First War I had maintained publicly that some wars are justifiable. But I had allowed a larger sphere to the method of non-resistance — or, rather non-violent resistance — than later experience seemed to warrant. It certainly has an important sphere; as against the British in India, Gandhi led it to triumph. But it depends upon the existence of certain virtues in those against whom it is employed. When Indians lay down on railways, and challenged the authorities to crush them under trains, the British found such cruelty intolerable. But the Nazis had no scruples in analogous situations. The doctrine which Tolstoy preached with great persuasive force, that the holders of power could be morally regenerated if met by non-resistance, was obviously untrue in Germany after 1933. Clearly Tolstoy was right only when the holders of power were not ruthless beyond a point, and clearly the Nazis went beyond this point.”¹⁹

Einstein, as is typical of him, was brief to the point. In a letter to a pacifist student, dated July 14, 1941, he had stated, “Organized power can be opposed only by organized power. Much as I regret this, there is no other way.”²⁰

Thus, it is nothing but ignorance on the part of the authors of *The Broken Palmyra* (who have had nominal tertiary education) and the pseudo-Gandhian commentators in India to project a view that Pirabhakaran, without the benefit of tertiary education, was foolhardy and irrational to reject the path of non-violence for his objectives.

THE STRATEGY OF ‘HIT WHERE IT HURTS’

That Pirabhakaran’s adopted strategy of ‘Hit Where it Hurts’ to de-fang the Brown-skinned Buddhist Aryanism was beginning to show results by 1992 was revealed by the following realistic appraisal of the situation by Mervyn de Silva. Wrote the editor of *Lanka Guardian*,

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“... The unwinnable war goes on, with each massacre not underlying that self evident fact but strengthening the conviction of ‘wannabe’ winners of the Glory Boys Club that only more men, weapons and a Sinhalese ‘Patton’ or ‘Sharon’ is needed to storm Jaffna, fly the flag and bury Prabhakaran.

The irony is that the ‘enemy’ Prabhakaran, is one of these gifted and daring guerrilla commanders whose mindset is totally, unalterably militarist. Unless he is captured, he cannot be converted. And capture you can’t, since he has anticipated the possibility and carries his cyanide capsule with him. It is the self-same cyanide which also denies ‘intelligence’ to the security forces. Without ‘intelligence’ the war cannot be carried deep into enemy territory. Since all front-line fighters are armed with the capsule, the chances of gathering productive intelligence are slim.

No great reader, Prabhakaran knows the truisms instinctively. The army cannot be everywhere while the guerrilla can be anywhere. If the guerrilla is not losing, he’s winning; if the army is not winning, it is losing. Your armchair pundit will say ‘recruit more, double the strength of the army, buy the most modern weapons and equipment’. All that means money, and the willingness of Sinhala youth to join the army. But recruitment has become exceedingly difficult, while desertions multiply. Where does that leave the gung-ho militarist?

Second, our budget is controlled by the IMF and the World Bank, the Aid Consortium. They have placed limits on arms spending, and the limits have narrowed, with the threat of an ‘aid squeeze’ for non-compliance with such percentages on defence, more and more serious. So one doesn’t have the money to recruit the soldiers from the queues that aren’t there; or far too short to recruit enough to meet your target.”²¹

Compared to this realistic appraisal of the Sri Lankan situation in 1992, the following fallacious pontification by the authors of *The Broken Palmyra* made in 1990 expose their myopic overlook. Wrote Rajan Hoole and his colleagues, in their ‘Final Thoughts’ for this book:

“The LTTE’s political line, its obstinacy and shortsightedness left us without any substantive achievement. Even at present, their moves pave the way for total subjugation to Indian domination. For example their recent warning to boycott the civil administration, if heeded, will remove from people the little control they have over civil structures, thereby creating conditions for Indian authority to encroach fully into the society. Thus the move is counter-productive and would signal doom, as control of the civil life of the community slips by default into Indian hands.”²²

This viewpoint when read 14 years later proves unequivocally how far these authors of *The Broken Palmyra* allowed their minds to wander from reality in assessing Pirabhakaran’s strategy. But Mervyn de Silva, though with a liberal Sinhala bias, could read well the mind of LTTE leader, as he opined:

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“An incredibly gifted and unrepentant militarist, Velupillai Prabhakaran, the LTTE supremo, has no great faith in democracy but he appreciates the importance of popular opinion. He knows that the armed struggle that he launched well over a decade ago is all about land and people. He is not impressed with ‘power’ or authority in the abstract. ¿From the very beginning, he has grasped the geo-political — the crucial role of the East, and externally, the vital importance of Tamil Nadu. Both dominate his strategic thinking, except that one factor becomes more crucial than the other in a political-military struggle, which he does not, and cannot, control. What the LTTE leader fears most is a closely coordinated Delhi-Colombo policy.”²³

One should qualify Mervyn de Silva’s opinion that Pirabhakaran “has no great faith in democracy”. Like Gandhi, who tagged the British Parliament with the prostitutes, Pirabhakaran lost faith not in democracy per se, but only in the version of *prostituted democracy as practised in Sri Lanka since Independence*.

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D. S. SENANAYAKE’S NOTORIOUS *Lebensraum* (LIVING SPACE)
STRATEGY: A SYNOPSIS

TO ANALYZE THE dilemma faced by Pirabhakaran at the Eastern Front of Eelam in mid-1980s, I need to review the sinistral significance of the Sinhala-Buddhist *Lebensraum* strategy which occurred in the first half of 1950s, for two reasons. First, for the benefit of Indian analysts who cavalierly pontificate with a belief that the currently existing population dynamics of the Eastern Front is an unadulterated occurrence. Secondly, to rebut an abominable lie presented in the second page of *The Broken Palmyra* book authored by Rajan Hoole and his three colleagues. Commenting on the fervor of Sinhala Buddhist forces during the first decade after Independence, K. M. de Silva, the dean of contemporary Sri Lankan historians, had written:

“If religious fervour was the prime determinant of change, the language question was its sharp cutting edge. Indeed the two elements — Buddhism and Sinhalese — were so closely intertwined that it was impossible to treat either one in isolation. The anxiety to preserve and strengthen the Sinhalese language stemmed partly at least from a fear if it fell into decay in Sri Lanka, its religious and cultural tradition would die with it. What occurred at this time was a profoundly significant transformation of nationalism — with language becoming its basis. (The most appropriate analogy for this would be the linguistic nationalism which erupted in Central Europe in the mid-nineteenth century.) This transformation of nationalism affected both the Sinhalese and Tamil population.”¹

K. M. de Silva is an adept wordsmith who could hide nauseating words such as Aryanism and Buddhist demagoguery by masking the rough edges in euphemistic terms and portraying the horrendous events as inevitable occurrences. His linking of Sinhala-Buddhist power exhibition to a reference to the 19th century linguistic nationalism of Central Europe is an example of such an exercise. His specific choice of the name ‘Central Europe’ in place of Austria-Hungary empire (a legacy with bad connotation, since Hitler was born in the dismantled Austrian empire in 1889) has to be noted. To demonstrate how far K. M. de Silva’s analogy of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism fits

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with the linguistic nationalism of the 19th century Central Europe, here are the excerpts from the first page of Alan Bullock’s biography of Hitler.

“The Europe into which he [Hitler] was born and which he was to destroy gave an unusual impression of stability and permanence at the time of his birth. The Hapsburg Empire, of which his father was a minor official, had survived the storms of the 1860s, ... even the transformation of the old Empire into the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary....

The three republics Hitler was to destroy, the Austria of the Treaty of St Germain, Czechoslovakia and Poland were not yet in existence. Four great empires - the Hapsburg, the Hohenzolern, the Romanov, and the Ottoman - ruled over Central and Eastern Europe....”²

If S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike — born 10 years after Hitler — portrayed the pocket Fuehrer image remarkably (*see*, Chapter 42) in colonial Ceylon of the 1930s, his senior rival and the first prime minister of independent Ceylon D. S. Senanayake (1884–1952) — born five years earlier than Hitler — was no push-over. While padre Bandaranaike was perfecting his act of Hitler-imitation in oratory and linguistic demagoguery, it was the wily padre Senanayake who deliberately planned to implement Hitler’s *Lebensraum* (living space) strategy in the island. It could even be inferred that his son Dudley Senanayake’s interest in the Sinhala Maha Saba, during its inauguration phase would have been a privately planned spying errand for his father who wished to ‘keep an eye’ on his learned competitor Bandaranaike. According to K. M. de Silva,

“D. S. Senanayake was passionately interested in the development of peasant agriculture, and under his leadership the UNP in its early years of power stressed the building-up of traditional agriculture, especially its extension in area through land development and irrigation schemes such as the massive Gal Oya scheme, the first major project since the days of the Polonnaruva kings.”³

de Silva had conveniently hidden the notorious *Lebensraum* plan of Buddhist Aryanism with the above-mentioned lengthy sentence. In reality, from where did Senanayake gain inspiration for Buddhist *Lebensraum* in the island? Parakrama Bahu of the Polonnaruva period, hidden in the obscure past, could only have been a distant model. I could assert that Hitler’s actions in the late 1930s, was a more appropriate answer as a proximal influence on politician Senanayake’s motives. To quote Bullock’s three citations on Hitler’s policy of annexation,

“Germany’s future, Hitler declared, could only be safeguarded by acquiring additional *Lebensraum*. Such living space was to be sought, not overseas, but in Europe, and it could be found only at the risk of conflict.”⁴

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“Hitler began from the same premises as in November 1937: the problem of *Lebensraum*, and the need to solve it by expansion eastwards.”⁵

“Neither agreement with Russia nor the decision to attack in the west represented any change in Hitler’s ultimate intention to carve out Germany’s *Lebensraum* in the east.”⁶

Hitler chose the eastward direction to establish his *Lebensraum*. Similarly, *Senanayake was also adamant with the Eastern front of the island, rather than developing the Southern front* [see below for details]. Following the premature death of his elder brother, padre Senanayake dreamt a life as the ‘Father of independent Ceylon’. It is my contention, that being in competition with Bandaranaike, to clip the wings of his competitor who was threatening to steal the power-base with his Hitler-imitating act, Senanayake instituted the *Lebensraum* plan of Gal Oya Valley development plan. However, to add insult to injury, four Tamil pseudo-historians had even exempted D. S. Senanayake from the *Lebensraum* crime in their much-hyped *The Broken Palmyra* book. To cite,

“It is probably wrong to say that D. S. Senanayake was involved in a deep anti-Tamil conspiracy to bring about Sinhalese domination. Nor is it possible to make a case that Mr. Senanayake was hatching a diabolical master plan to colonise Tamil areas with Sinhalese. When work for the Gal Oya settlement scheme in the Eastern province had been completed, first preference was given to people from the province. It was only after about six months, when faced with the paucity of local applicants, that the doors were opened to applicants from other provinces.”⁷

A contribution by a Sinhalese irrigation engineer who worked for padre Senanayake in this Gal Oya project, proves that *this version by Rajan Hoole and his colleagues is baloney*. Because of its historical importance and other interesting tidbits like how public money was cavalierly transported then, I wish to reproduce this memoir by R. Kahawita in entirety. Wherever appropriate, I have added italics for emphasis; but the ‘three-dot marks’ noting omission of quotes are as in the original.

“The other day, Minister Athulathmudali, speaking at a function at Amparai, referred to the communal harmony in that region and referred to the ideals of D. S. Senanayake. There are many ideas of D. S. Senanayake, not publicized today, nor known or appreciated by the present day politicians. In the present context of ‘communal disagreements’ it may be relevant to revive memories of this great man’s ideas and ideals for a united nation. The writer was asked to design and prepare plans for the construction of Gal Oya Valley and Walawe Schemes in 1945. When the designs were completed I was asked to

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go to America to get the designs checked by that famous ‘Dam Designer’ — Dr. Savage of Denver — and to select a suitable firm and negotiate a contractor to build the two schemes. *I was dispatched to Denver with half a million dollars of public money in my personal account to carry out the assignment.*

In 1947, when Independence was being discussed, I wrote to the then Minister of Agriculture — D. S. Senanayake — suggesting that one way of commemorating the ‘new slice of political independence’ was to construct an entirely new irrigation project where a new pattern of development and settlement could be undertaken and that *the choice was either Gal Oya or Walawe. The reply came asking me to finalize the details of Gal Oya, negotiate a contract, and get back to Colombo.* Morrison Knudson of Boise, Idaho, was selected as the contracting firm and a target estimate of 10. 5 million dollars was negotiated for the construction of the project.

On return to the country and during a discussion on the two schemes, *I asked ‘Why do we go to the Eastern Province to start a new settlement scheme, when there is over population and a land hunger in the Southern Province?’ The answer was ‘They are all Sinhala. If I want to build a new independent Ceylon all communities must be brought together so they understand each other. . . without that there cannot be one people, one country. . . and the ideal setting for this is the Eastern Province, where there are already Tamils, Muslims and a scatter of Sinhala people living harmony. . . . I want to consolidate this peace and communal harmony by bringing in more Sinhala families to live and understand the Tamils and Muslims and work towards a common goal. . . . As a matter of fact Batticaloa Tamils do not like the Jaffna Tamils. . . . The Jaffna Tamils have their own reservations and they do not like the Tam-bimuttus, Casinaders etc. etc. of the East. . . . So I want to settle some Jaffna peasants also in Gal Oya valley so that they will mix and understand their Eastern brethren.’*

This, a summary, was his ideal. The development work went apace. *Land was settled with Sinhala families on the Left Bank, Muslims on the Right Bank, Sinhala around Digavape and Malwattu Vihare and Jaffna Tamils around Kalmunai.* Never for a moment these different communities and sections of a community thought differently that they were anything but one community with common goals — till 1956.

‘Sinhala Only’ became a political cry and *the first language riots started in the Valley in 1956* and the dream of D. S. — ‘One People, One Country’ was shattered by this single phrase coined by the power hungry politicians. From that day onwards, murder, looting, arson became a way of life with us. Not that D. S. did not care for the Sinhala language. His conviction was ‘Leave the language issue alone. Tamils will master the Sinhala language better than you and I and beat us in the game — don’t force it down their throat. Anybody would resent such force.’ The wisdom of this great man we realize today. What the language issue has caused to divide the two communities and destroy each other, we experience since that cry ‘Sinhala Only’ was raised in

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1956.”⁸

My observations after reading this memoir were as follows. First, that the writer R. Kahawita was a D. S. Senanayake loyalist and partisan to his policies is abundantly clear. Thus, he had hidden the vainglorious political motive of Senanayake with a varnish of ‘national harmony’. The vainglorious deed was to emulate King Parakrama Bahu, as K. M. de Silva has indicated in his above-cited sentence ‘massive Gal Oya scheme — the first major project since the days of the Polonnaruwa kings’. Secondly, this memoir was written immediately after the 1983 anti-Tamil riots — thus projecting the ‘shattered vision’ of Senanayake was the main motive. Thirdly, that the Gal Oya Valley *Lebensraum* plan was preconceived with the intention of settling the Sinhalese from the South in the Tamil-Muslim dominated Eastern front has been confirmed. If the alternative Walawe Valley plan would have been chosen, Empilipitiya and Ambalantota regions would have been the recipients of new settlers. Thus the view of Rajan Hoole *et al.* expressed in *The Broken Palmyra* book that padre Senanayake did not hatch a ‘diabolical master plan to colonise Tamil areas with Sinhalese’ is nothing but hogwash. Fourthly, D. S. Senanayake’s observations of the friction between the Jaffna Tamils and Batticaloa Tamils *was true for the colonial Ceylon*, but by 1983, such friction was an anomaly rather than the rule.

What Bullock wrote about Hitler’s policies that, “Hitler’s originality lay not in his ideas, but in the terrifying literal way in which he set to work to translate these ideas into reality, and his unequalled grasp of the means by which to do this.... His comments on everything except politics display a cocksure ignorance and an ineradicable vulgarity...”⁹ may apply to D. S. Senanayake’s experiment on Ceylon’s *Lebensraum* as well. Even 52 years after his death, apologists of padre Senanayake do live in Sri Lanka as evinced by the following appreciation from an anonymous ‘Special Correspondent’:

“I am reminded of the manner in which Mr. D. S. Senanayake not only established new settlements from Padaviya in the North to Ampara in the South-East, but also de-franchised the Tamils of ‘recent Indian origin’ with such formidable Tamil leaders such as Ponnambalam, C. Suntheralingam and C. Sittampalam in his Cabinet! Tact and diplomacy seem to have been significant by their absence when Bandaranaike and those who followed him, dealt with the Tamil issue.”¹⁰

This recent comment focuses on the lack of foresight shown by the three learned Tamil leaders who preceded Pirabhakaran, in not opposing the notorious *Lebensraum* policy of padre Senanayake.

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MERVYN DE SILVA ON THE EASTERN FRONT

Apart from R. Kahawita, even journalist Mervyn de Silva had rebutted the abominable fib of Rajan Hoole and his colleagues, relating to the colonisation issue. To quote,

“... The truth of course lies in the flow of history, colonial and pre-colonial, and at which point you choose to dive into the river. Since history is itself in fierce dispute (and there are few ‘objective’ historians today!) much of all this is purely polemical.

But ‘colonisation’ was certainly a declared policy of successive Sri Lankan governments even before Independence — settling Sinhala families from the ‘overpopulated’ South in the newly irrigated areas of the so-called Dry Zone. Opening new lands supported by irrigation schemes and responding to the land hunger of the Sinhala peasant made economic and political sense. What is ‘colonisation’ for the government, a rational policy, became in the eyes of post-independence Tamil politicians and ideologues, ‘internal colonialism’. And thus the fight for the East, the virtual theatre of this separatist war’.¹¹

Before Chandrika Kumaratunga and her political confidant Lakshman Kadirgamar received diplomatic recognition in India and elsewhere, Mervyn de Silva also knowledgeably wrote about Pirabhakaran’s thinking as follows:

“Though Prabhakaran is often dismissed as a ‘thug’ by his critics and a narrow-minded, if brilliant, strategist by others, the LTTE supremo has intuitively grasped the geo-political aspects of this secessionist struggle. ‘Eelam’ confined to the northern province is neither viable nor makes sense as a mini-state. He needs both space and green pastures. What is the LTTE’s attitude to the eastern province election? Though the military, rather than political, dominates his thinking, Prabhakaran is no crude militarist. He understands the importance of land, people, natural resources, in short, the viability of his EELAM project. He also appreciates the significance of the external factors — India, world opinion, certainly the West and economic assistance (the AID group), propaganda abroad etc.”¹²

I cite this passage for two reasons. One is to refute the vitriol and name-calling peddled by Ms. Kumaratunga and her political confidant Kadirgamar between 1995 and 2001, to present Pirabhakaran as a megalomaniac, terrorist outlaw and child grabber to the international observers. Second is to impress the point that Mervyn de Silva can also play the Sinhala apologist role with a hidden sneer ‘what nerve Pirabhakaran has, to claim the Eastern Front as his own, even if one considers offering the Northern province?’

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EFFECTS OF THE *Lebensraum* STRATEGY IN THE EASTERN FRONT

Six months before Pirabhakaran was born, the *Geographical Review* journal carried a review paper on the Gal Oya Valley settlements authored by Clifford MacFadden, then an associate professor of geography at the University of California, Los Angeles. During the academic years 1950–51 and again 1953–54, he also served as the Chair of Geography at the University of Ceylon, both in Colombo and Peradeniya. MacFadden’s paper provided the statistics about the number of ‘original settlers’:

“Work was begun on the Gal Oya project in late 1949, and within two years the main dam was completed and water began to be impounded in the new reservoir. The spillway dam, the diversion channels, and approximately 1,200 acres of cleared land complete with houses were also readied for use in late 1951. Accordingly, the first contingent of 300 colonist families were able to settle in the valley during the latter months of 1951, only two short years after the project had been officially inaugurated. This was the first real fruit from Ceylon’s courageous new adventure in large-scale national planning and self-assistance. During the second year, 1952, there were 1,500 more new families settled in the valley, and during the third year, 1953, there were 1,360 more, making a total of 3,160 families settled during the first three years of Gal Oya Valley settlement operation. However, the real accomplishments of the Gal Oya Scheme can be best appreciated by reckoning the number of persons, rather than family units, settled during these first three years. The average number of persons per colonist family settled during 1951 was five, during 1952 eight, and during 1953 nine. (In future years the average number of persons per family is expected to be nine or ten.) Consequently, during the latter months of 1951 there were about 1,500 persons settled in the valley, during 1952 there were about 12,000 settled, and during 1953 there were about 12,240 settled, making a grand total of about 25,740 new persons settled in the Gal Oya Valley during its first three years of settlement operations...”¹³

The ‘TVA’ in the title of MacFadden’s paper stands for Tennessee Valley Authority scheme of USA. MacFadden was a geographer and not a sociologist or a cultural anthropologist. Thus he had failed to distinguish the ethnic identities of these original settlers in his review paper. He closed his paper with a prophesy [obviously proved wrong within a decade!] that the Gal Oya Valley settlement would be “a great and lasting credit to the vision, determination and ability of the free people of Ceylon.” But as pointed out by R. Kahawita, the irrigation engineer who did the spade work for D. S. Senanayake, *the first language riots started in the Valley in 1956*, four years following the death of the ‘faulty visionary’. The transplanted Sinhalese settlers from the Southern

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regions, imbibing the ambrosia of Buddhist Aryan vigor, lit the fire on ethnic harmony.

Creation of Amparai electoral constituency

The immediate after-effect of the Gal Oya Valley development scheme was the creation of a new Amparai electoral constituency in 1959 for the benefit of the newly settled Sinhalese voters. Before Independence, in 1946, there were 7 electoral constituencies (Trincomalee, Mutur, Kalkudah, Batticaloa, Paddiruppu, Kalmunai and Pottuvil) in the Eastern Front. In 1959, two additional constituencies Amparai and Nintavur were added to the existing seven. Amparai constituency was carved mainly from Batticaloa and Pottuvil constituencies with small chunks from Paddiruppu and Kalmunai. The distribution of ethnic population in Batticaloa, Pottuvil and the newly formed Amparai constituencies in 1946 and 1959 are given below:

Batticaloa

1946; Total Electorate 27,409 individuals consisting of Tamils 52.6%, Moors 28.7%, Sinhalese 13.0%, Malays 0.2% and Others 5.5%.

1959; Total Electorate 37,832 individuals consisting of Tamils 55.3%, Moors 36.0%, Sinhalese 5.2% and Others 3.5%.

Pottuvil

1946; Total Electorate 18,164 individuals consisting of Moors 60.0%, Tamils 25.5%, Sinhalese 7.0% and Others 7.5%.

1959; Total Electorate 18,250 individuals consisting of Moors 56.0%, Tamils 35.7%, Sinhalese 7.6% and Others 0.7%.

Amparai

1959; Total Electorate 19,535 individuals consisting of Sinhalese 90.9%, Tamils 6.3% and Moors 2.0%.

Amparai constituency was the harbinger which announced the formation of a similar Seruwila constituency 17 years later in Trincomalee district constituting the upper Eastern Front. Amitha Shastri wrote a detailed analysis of this *Lebensraum* strategy in 1990.¹⁴ Few observations made by Shastri need highlighting.

“With the Tamils losing majority status in Amparai and Trincomalee districts, central spokespersons could also argue that the Tamils’ claim to the EP [Eastern Province] as their ‘homeland’ was an exaggerated one.”

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In a foot-note following this sentence, Shastri had exposed the faulty logic of two Sinhalese academics G. H. Peiris and historian K. M. de Silva proposed in such a debate. To quote Shastri,

“Parallel academic arguments using historical and census data have been made to refute the Tamil claim that large areas of the EP are part of their ‘traditional homelands’ (notably G. H. Peiris 1985; K. M. de Silva 1986). While informative, the methodology employed is questionable. For instance, Peiris first isolates the EP for close scrutiny and then argues that the interior areas had been earlier inhabited by Sinhalese and are now depopulated or continue to be (sparsely) inhabited by them. He equates sparse interior settlements (often of fewer than ten persons) to the Tamil and Moor agglomerations of several thousand persons along the coast. No examination of a similar Tamil claim that might be made of parts of Sinhalese-dominated districts is made to balance the analysis. Further, the majority principle for dominance is upheld at the national level but explicitly derogated at the provincial and administrative district level to undermine Tamil claims. Their analyses thus support the homogenizing policies of the central state in regard to language, employment, resettlement, and education. In a fundamental sense, these writers miss the contemporary and dynamic politico-economic nature of the conflict between a majority-dominated expansionary state and a resistant regional minority.”¹⁵

Among contemporary Sri Lankan academics, exhibition of such faulty logic, factual inaccuracy and fallacious prophecies are the norm rather than exceptions.

SNAP-SHOTS ON THE PLIGHT OF EASTERN FRONT TAMILS IN 1985

Two eye-witness accounts penned by international correspondents illustrate the Gestapo-style savagery including book burning perpetrated on the Tamil villagers by pyrophilic Sri Lankan armed forces and the Home Guards in the Eastern Front. These accounts appeared in the international press before the emergence of the self-anointed clique of human rights activists who named themselves as the University Teachers for Human Rights — Jaffna.

BATTICALOA AS SEEN BY STEVEN WEISMAN

“[datelined, Batticaloa, Feb. 3, 1985] Several dozen women stood silently outside the drab, barricaded police headquarters of this quiet fishing town today. They were waiting for word of their husbands, brothers and sons.

Residents say the drama of the waiting women has become a fixture of Batticaloa, near the eastern coast of this island nation. In stifling heat, the women wept openly as they appealed to the Rev. Joshua Ratnam, a Roman Catholic priest, for help in securing the release of men from his area who have been

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arrested by the police.... At the Batticaloa police station, the people tell stories of unrelieved sorrow. ‘The commandos take innocent boys from the paddy fields’, said one man, a Government inspector. ‘They take the boys and torture them’, another man said. ‘We can’t go out on the road without being threatened. We can’t go to our shops. We have no freedom at all.’ The Government authorities have a different story. To them, the mass arrests have led to breakthroughs in the drive to stop the insurgents. The Tamil guerrillas, they say, have preyed on the civilian population to a far greater extent than the Government....

All the police stations in this region are virtually bunkers. Each is surrounded by sandbags and nets strung high to catch stray grenades. A tower with armed sentries has been put up next to the bungalow of Sarath Seneviratne, the Batticaloa police coordinator. Despite the barricades, Mr. Seneviratne said in an interview in his bungalow that only a few random incidents had occurred. ‘We don’t arrest each and every person’, he said. ‘We arrest only the people we know are involved in terrorism.’ Mr. Seneviratne, a square-faced Sinhalese with gray hair clipped in a crew-cut, said Tamil insurgents were failing in Batticaloa because they had no support in the large Moslem population and were losing support among Tamils because of their indiscriminate killing. But none of the dozens of Tamils interviewed at random in Batticaloa agreed. All said the police actions were making Tamils increasingly angry and sympathetic to the arguments for Tamil Eelam, the name that the insurgents want to give to the Tamil state....”¹⁶

TRINCOMALEE AS WITNESSED BY SIMON WINCHESTER

“... a small village called Tiriyai, 50 miles north of Trincomalee. It is a place named in the guidebook for its exquisite 7th century Buddhist pagoda, and is said to have a population of 2,000, most of them Tamils and most in the business of paddy-farming or raising cashew nuts. When we arrived in Tiriyai last week, almost every single house had been wrecked and burned, and fewer than 100 people remained. One resident, an elderly Tamil rice-grower — his characteristically complicated name had 23 letters and seven syllables — said the Sri Lankan army had arrived five days before. ‘A helicopter came first at 8 am, firing guns down at us,’ he said. ‘Then the lorries came with hundreds of soldiers. They fired their guns, and drove us all out into the jungle. Then they poured paraffin on the houses and burned them. They went very quickly. They were gone by 10 am, and they left the whole village on fire.’ Certainly there had been terrible devastation. The few who remained were still stunned and shocked. One man, a farm manager, showed me a letter he was writing to his superior in Trinco: ‘Sir, I beg to inform you that the following properties of mine were damaged, burned, or stolen by the security forces....’ The letter went on to list the pathetic accumulations of a Sri Lankan rural life: ‘One Honda motor cycle, one sewing machine, one push-bicycle, two stools, one umbrella large, one umbrella small, many dresses, 10 gunny sacks, two bags of paddy’. The ruins of his life lay round about him as he wrote, wisps

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of smoke still curling up from the piles of sacking in which he had stored his spring harvest.

Every shop had been looted and smashed. In the tiny public library, all the books had been heaped together to make a pyre, the index cards burned, and the filing cabinets wrecked. The temple had been set on fire. Most villagers were to be found later, camped out at a school 40 miles south, on the outskirts of Trincomalee. Three people had been killed by gunfire, half a dozen had been left wounded and all the rest were homeless. ‘And this is just the tragedy of one village’, said Kandaratnam Sivapalan, the local chairman of the Tamil citizens’ committee. ‘There are 10 villages north of Trinco, and 30 south that have been smashed and burned by the army and by the hooligans they call the Home Guard,’ he said. ‘The Sinhalese are trying to drive the Tamils away from Trinco so that they can keep control of the port. No outsiders can come and see, and the press are not allowed to write about it here.’

In an official comment on the Tiriyai operation, the Ministry of National Security has said that in response to a terrorist attack on a police station near the village in early June ‘operations were carried out in an attempt to isolate the perpetrators’. The government strongly denied claims that it intended to move out Tamil villagers and replace them with Sinhalese. In the flat countryside to the south of Trincomalee harbour — which can be reached only by a rickety ferry boat that carries more fish and live chickens than human passengers — dozens more Tamil villages were found to have been burned and sacked in army operations in the last 10 days. (The security forces’ co-ordinating officer for the Trincomalee region is actually a naval officer, a Commodore Jayasuriya; he commands some 10 battalions of infantry, commando squads and naval assault parties as well as helicopters and reconnaissance aircraft of the airforce.)

Five new refugee camps have sprung up in the neighbourhood of the gutted village of Sampoor and now house some 30,000 refugees, many with appalling tales to tell. We met a man who claims to have been arrested by the army in the village of Killiveti; he had been tied, with 37 others, in a human chain and forced to walk past a machine gun which then opened fire. He was hit by bullets in the throat and right elbow, but feigned death. The troops piled brushwood and timber battens on the bodies and set fire to them. But as one log slipped from the pile, the man who had wriggled free from the rope, was able to dive into the undergrowth and crawl away under cover of the smoke and flames. When we met him he was thin and desperately sick, suffering from loss of blood. But he had already become something of a hero among the younger Tamils...¹⁷

Steven Weisman’s account on Batticaloa appeared in the *New York Times* of Feb. 8, 1985. Simon Winchester’s account on Trincomalee appeared in the *Sunday Times* (London) of June 23, 1985. Between these two dates, the LTTE attack on Anuradhapura took place in May 14, 1985. [see, Chapter 8] Thus,

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one could reasonably infer that the Tiriyaï demolition of Tamil settlements by the Sri Lankan army was nothing but a revenge operation to the Anuradhapura attack. But how could one explain the rationale for the Batticaloa operations of the Special Task Force commandos, other than Tamil hatred fueled by the State’s *Lebensraum* policy?

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Torment in the Eastern Front

PREDICAMENTS OF SCENARIO SKETCHERS

BIAS IS AN OMNIPOTENT presence in any analysis. Good scientists recognize the presence of bias and take steps to reduce and counteract bias in experiments to obtain results of significance. But in social science treatises and commentaries, the problem of bias is hardly addressed. Thus, journalists and chronologists record answers, completely or incompletely, to questions ‘*What*’, ‘*When*’, ‘*Where*’ and ‘*Who*’ about the events they cover. They hardly have the patience (due to deadline demand), intellect (lack of linguistic and analytical skills), and print space (especially before the emergence of internet as a notable source of information) for in-depth understanding on answering the questions ‘*How*’ and ‘*Why*’. Scenario sketchers, who differ from journalists, but who nevertheless contribute to published literature, can be broadly distinguished into three types; local variety, international variety and the expatriate-local variety. In the art world, aficionados know that the output of each scenario sketcher is dependent on multiple factors: intellect, eye sight, prevailing mood of the artist, chosen colors and canvas, and last but not the least, the age of the artist. Similarly the scenario sketchers of Eelam need to be assessed on their merits and limitations.

Literature on Pirabhakaran and LTTE, during the past two decades, is replete with information describing answers to ‘*What*’, ‘*When*’ and ‘*Where*’ by the three varieties of scenario sketchers I have identified. Rajan Hoole and his small cohort are the best examples of scenario sketchers belonging to the local variety. The voluminous output of Rajan Hoole’s University Teachers of Human Rights (Jaffna) since 1990 offer details on ‘*What*’, ‘*When*’ and ‘*Where*’. Pervasive biases in their literature deserve an extensive analysis separately. In their literature, answers to ‘*Who*’ and ‘*How*’ are described either partially or erroneously, with qualifiers. But, answers to ‘*Why*’ are non-existent.

The expatriate-local variety of scenario sketchers is represented by professionals like Rohan Gunaratna, H. L. D. Mahindapala and D. B. S. Jeyaraj. Because of lack of proximity and loss of contacts, the scenario sketchers of the expatriate-local variety mainly spice their contributions with past memories, and occasionally mix hearsay and tidbits (obtained from telephone calls and other communication devices) to pass as erudite opinions. They also face a pe-

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culiar professional syndrome of ‘*Tirisangu Sorgam*’ (literally, ‘the heaven of Tirisangu; an eponymic uncomfortable state, derived from Tirisangu, a Hindu mythological figure who was dangling in the ‘no-where zone’ after failing acceptance in heaven and kept away from hell). They cannot compete professionally with the journalists of their naturalized countries, unless they expand their canvas — which needs tremendous input of effort. Thus, they linger on as correspondents from London, Sydney or Toronto to the Colombo press, while passing their ‘expert opinions’ on LTTE.

The international variety of scenario sketchers are the foreign journalists of some reputation of their own (such as Simon Winchester, Jon Lee Anderson, Barbara Crossette) or those representing establishments with some level of credibility. These foreign journalists also possess biases, which are different from those of Rajan Hoole and his cluster. For instance, to receive a working visa into the interior of the island, the foreign journalist has to meet the top political honcho of the time, incorporate his or her not-so profound ‘sound-bites’ and record some courteous banalities on the virtue of this honcho into their works. Even the scenario sketchers of a respected magazine like the *National Geographic* and *Time* have to do this ritual gimmick. Ignoring this courtesy may mean harassment and deportation. Simon Winchester (*see*, Chapter 43) who described the demolition of Tiriyaï village in the Trincomalee district in 1985 faced this dilemma.

What is interesting to note is that the descriptions of the Eastern Front presented by the occasional scenario sketchers of international tribe hardly appear in the literature generated by Rajan Hoole and his colleagues. This vividly exposes the bias of the scenario sketchers of local variety against Pirabhakaran and LTTE. For this reason, in this chapter I wish to highlight the contributions of Anderson brothers (Jon Lee and Scott), and Pritt Vesilind for the *National Geographic* magazine. Pirabhakaran is not discussed *per se* in this chapter, but his thoughts are represented by his trusted colleagues Kumarappa and Karikalan.

ANDERSONS COVERING THE EASTERN FRONT IN EARLY 1987

As I indicated in the Preface to this book, the chapter ‘Sri Lanka: Burying the Future’ in the 1988 book by Anderson brothers (Jon Lee and Scott)¹ is a gem to comprehend the torment of the Eastern Front. It provides a *relatively balanced* view (Note: I stress the word ‘relatively’), as of 1987 when Andersons visited the scene, on the significance of LTTE’s reputation in the Eastern Front. Their introductory commentary to the interviews spans a little more than four pages. The first six paragraphs are given below in entirety:

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“The women of Batticaloa clutch photographs of their missing sons, tears falling from tired, bloodshot eyes. In small groups they cluster outside the offices of the Catholic bishop or the local human rights group awaiting a turn to tell of their loss, prostrating themselves before the feet of anyone they think might help them. Others seem to recognize the futility of these gestures: they kneel on the long expanse of green grass before the cathedral and hold aloft the photographs of their loved ones, softly crying to God for intervention. But there is no intervention; the men of Batticaloa are disappearing, and no one can do more than watch and keep record of their passing.

The war that has wrenched Sri Lanka since 1983 has been felt throughout this island, but most harshly in areas like Batticaloa, where the Tamils, the nation’s largest minority, are concentrated. In the northern and eastern provinces, where Tamil militants are fighting for independence, the Sri Lankan government has launched a terrifying ‘antiterrorist’ campaign. The result is a civilian population under siege from both sides.

Once an important fishing community on a coastal lagoon of eastern Sri Lanka, Batticaloa today is desolate and eerie. Police stations have been transformed into bunkers, ringed with barbed wire, sandbags and high walls. The heavily armed Special Task Force commandos patrol the streets from the relative safety of armored trucks. After dusk, Batticaloa is deserted; there is no official curfew, but the curfew of fear — of drawing the fire of jumpy commandos, of being detained and tortured as a suspected ‘terrorist’ — is just as effective.

The villagers in the countryside fare worse. When the police commandos raid a village, a thousand Tamils will be picked up for interrogation. While most are released within a day or two, many end up in prison camps without charges. Still others are ‘disappeared’, executed by the police, their bodies burnt. Since 1983, over seven hundred Tamil men have disappeared in the Batticaloa area.

But the people can hardly turn to the Tamil guerrillas for salvation. Based in a hidden camp ten miles away, the local detachment of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, now the dominant Tamil separatist group, has degenerated into banditry. The Tigers appear to devote much of their energies inflicting suffering on those they claim to represent; they demand ‘taxes’ from Tamil civilians, kidnap and ransom Tamil businessmen, and execute others they suspect of being spies.

The young men of the area must choose between terrible alternatives. They can stay in their villages and endure the roundups of the security forces. Or they can join the guerrillas and risk death in battle. Or they can run. Many have taken this last option, fleeing across the Palk Straits to India in small boats, braving the guns of Sri Lankan patrol boats. The result of it all is the virtual destruction of a Tamil generation...²

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THE LIMITATIONS FACED BY ANDERSONS

The bias present in the work of Andersons is manifold. Candidly, the Anderson brothers did record a few limitations they faced in trying to cover the Eastern Front of the island, and also the limitations of their book of record, in their Authors’ Note. They mentioned the time limitation — a one year bird’s eye view ‘to get an international view of war’ with choosing five regions of the world. They stated that ‘All told, we traveled some fifty thousand miles in twelve months to write War Zones. We conducted well over two hundred and fifty interviews and transcribed more than a hundred and fifty hours of tape recordings.’

Andersons mentioned the work’s focus as, ‘It is not an academic survey. Our modus operandi was more instinctual and journalistic than anything else’. They also stated, ‘We have done extensive editing of the original interviews; for the most part, those sections excised dealt with detailed political themes or local specifics that we felt hindered the basic thrust of the stories.’ This point is vital when one reads the interviews presented by Andersons, since what was cleaved from the ‘original interviews’ would have provided context to the interviewee’s actions. Andersons also did not mention their language limitation which could have hindered their understanding of the descriptions of interviewees.

Furthermore, Andersons passingly mention their ‘campaign’ to the Colombo bureaucrats to receive permission to visit Batticaloa as follows:

“In Colombo, we ensconced ourselves in the Galle Face, a beautiful, if slightly dilapidated, old colonial hotel facing the Indian Ocean. From there, we launched a persistent campaign to gain government approval to travel into the contested northern and eastern parts of the country. While we waited, we traveled around the ‘permissible’ parts of the island, the hill country around Kandy, the ancient Buddhist city of Anuradhapura, both to conduct interviews and to see some of the sights of the culturally-rich country.

Finally, we were given permission to go to the front-line eastern city of Batticaloa. In that embattled town, Jon celebrated his thirtieth birthday. Scott, racing against curfew, scurried through the town looking for a celebratory bottle of champagne but could only come up with a bar of stale chocolate.

The next day, we made arrangements to meet up with the TamilTigers. Following their instructions, we began walking down a dirt road when two motorcyclists pulled up and motioned us on board. With the Tiger couriers, we sped out of town, taking detours to avoid military patrols, until we reached a lagoon. Crossing in canoes, we were met on the other side by a larger contingent of guerrillas, bundled aboard a jeep and taken to meet Kumarappa, the local Tiger leader.

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The meeting was an unsettling one, both because of the youthfulness of the guerrillas, and because of the presence of Athuma, a Tamil woman the Tigers were about to execute for spying. Eleven days after our visit, government forces launched a dawn raid and the Tiger camp was wiped out.”³

Despite this caveat, the work of Andersons has to be considered unparalleled for its presentation of Tamil torment in the Eastern Front. Of the 42 interviews presented by Andersons in their chapter on the Sri Lankan war, I reproduce below the interviews Andersons had with S. M. Lena (a Batticaloa Tamil, aged 79), Kumarappa (the then Tiger commander of the Eastern Province, aged 27), Sumith Silva (the then Coordinating Officer of Special Task Force-the STF, formed only in 1983), Christopher Romesh (a Christian Tamil from Batticaloa, aged 30) and Tim (a British mercenary pilot fighting with the Sri Lankan army).

FIVE NOTABLE INTERVIEWS BY ANDERSONS

I chose these five interviews from the Sri Lankan chapter of Andersons’ book for specific reasons. Kumarappa, the LTTE leader, committed suicide in October 1987. Sumith Silva, the then *honcho* of Sri Lankan version of Gestapo-gang, was killed in a landmine attack in the same month. Both were adversaries. To the best of my knowledge, the viewpoints of both had not been brought to light by any other scenario sketchers. *The Broken Palmyra* authors mention only one sentence about this state-designated terrorist as follows: “A landmine explosion killed Batticaloa’s STF chief Nimal Silva. Mr. Anthony-muthu (Government Agent, Batticaloa) who was travelling in the same vehicle was also killed.” [p. 192 of their 1990 revised edition], without providing any detailed context.

Christopher Romesh was one of the thousands of Batticaloa Tamil victims of STF, who lived to tell the torture. S. M. Lena was a Batticaloa Tamil belonging to the elderly population. An incompletely identified British mercenary Tim’s views, though brief, are also illuminating for their gung-ho brutishness. It appears, the deeds of STF, Sri Lanka’s Gestapo-gang, have been hidden from the paid British mercenary. One cannot blame him because Tim and his companions were paid from the Sri Lankan tax payer’s money, and at that time they were filling the role of hired pilots of helicopters, and hidden from the public. So, one can excuse their naïvete on the Buddhist practices of Sri Lankan armed personnel in the land.

(1) INTERVIEW WITH S. M. LENA, AN ELDERLY BATTICALOA TAMIL⁴

‘S. M. Lena, 79 is a wizened, white-haired man whose fiery temperament is

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moderated by his diminutive size and round spectacles. A retired high school teacher, he now devotes his energies to the Batticaloa Citizen’s Committee.

Lena: You see, here we were colonized by the British, and one thing they gave us was a trust in others. So when independence came, we trusted in the political parties. We trusted them! We wanted a political settlement. But they didn’t keep their promises.

J. L. Anderson: What do you think caused the change?

Lena: They have gone back on the promises they made to the Tamil community. They’ve gone back! Because they feel they must enslave us forever! I got involved because it’s my duty, for my community and my people. It’s my duty. We elder people saw the way, and the younger people came. They are liberating us. They have been a great service to us! We don’t call them terrorists; they’re freedom fighters. They’re fighting for a cause. I’m an old man, but I want a new country! Look at this moment. You see the children on their way to school. They are not safe. There is shooting at random. In the school, they are not safe. On the way they are not safe. In the market they are not safe. In the churches they are not safe! They are martyring our children!

You must have so much sympathy for us. That is the thing that we want you to know. Go back to your country and tell them how much we suffer; how much we suffer, how much of the victims are our children, how much of our future generation are going to be affected by this situation here. Please, for God’s sake! (Overwhelmed with emotion, the old man stops talking as he tries to stifle the tears that have appeared in his eyes.)’

(2) A SEGMENT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH KUMARAPPA, THE LTTE
COMMANDER OF THE EASTERN PROVINCE^{5 †}

‘Kumarappa, 27, is the Tiger commander for the Eastern Province. A heavy man with a drooping mustache and cold, brown eyes, he is wearing khaki pants and a white shirt, with a revolver tucked into his belt. Wicker chairs are arranged in a half-circle in a thatched hut; Kumarappa sits and waves for the questions to begin. His men crowd into the hut to watch and listen, and one Tiger with a camera snaps photos throughout the meeting.

Scott Anderson: Why did you join the Tigers?

Kumarappa: Me? Because I am also part of these people. I am losing my freedom. Because when I was studying, you know, advanced level, when I was doing my exams, I had to get more and more marks than the Sinhalese people. Because I was a Tamil, you know? If you want to enter any university, you had to get more marks. For example, in

[†] the three-dots indicating omission whenever they appear, are as in the original text.

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education, in everything education-wise, and agriculture-wise, and job-wise, everything, the government... it’s, you know, at the price of the Tamils. Actually, you know, it turned into genocide.

SA: What’s the average day like for a Tiger?

Kumarappa: Our soldiers, every day when they get up, they do some exercises first of all. Then they have to get out and guard. Then, every day, they have to do some duty, politically, economically — you know, some intellect training. Everything, you know.

Jon Lee Anderson: What are the rules about being a Tiger?

Kumarappa: You mean discipline? You know, no drinks first. Smokes, yeah, we accept — if they want, they can smoke. But no connection with a woman. They can feel with them, you know; I mean, they can love any woman, they can love, but nothing physical. They can’t make love.

JLA: For how long?

Kumarappa: That depends on the length of the war. To a girl, I will say, ‘If you want to marry me, you have to wait for me until we get our freedom.’ I mean, that’s the rule, you know. Because, in the situation in here, in the movement, we believe we can’t survive with women. Afterward, okay, everybody, if they like, they can marry. After some period, maybe three or four years, then the Tiger can marry. In the early days, no ... too much weakness.

JLA: It looks like a static situation, with the STF over in Batticaloa and you here. Is there even any confrontation?

Kumarappa: We face a lot of direct confrontation. At this moment, we are taking the rest in here. But our soldiers, every day they are searching for commandos. Some direct confrontation in Batticaloa town and some other places, around STF commando camps. Every day. At this moment, we face a confrontation against EPRLF (rival Tamil guerrilla force). At this moment, they’re almost finished, EPRLF. We captured their arms and ammunitions and everything. A lot of them have surrendered.

JLA: Why the confrontation with the EPRLF?

Kumarappa: Because, you know, every day EPRLF was doing antisocial activities. Especially here in Batticaloa. We have Tamils and Muslims together here, you know, and they are actually imposing on the Muslim people. We accept the EPRLF, their self-determination and their rights, but they’re looting the Muslim shops and lorries. They’re making anti-social activities every day, day by day. Lots of times we warned them, but they persisted. That is the main reason. Because we are fighting for the liberation, the dedicated fight against the government here. Because we are, deep down, soldiers, you know, politically. That’s why.

SA: Do you find it difficult, as a Tamil, to take the life of a fellow Tamil?

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Kumarappa: No. Because we’re fighting for a cause, you know. I mean, we’re dedicated to a fight, to give our lives. And the EPRLF are doing antisocial activities. We should try to cleanse them. ‘Okay, if you surrender, you can keep your life; we want only your arms and ammunition’. We got a lot of arms from the EPRLF.

JLA: What kind of country do you see for Eelam?

Kumarappa: (long pause) Oh yeah, socialist. A socialist country, yeah. Because in here, sixty percent of the people are poor; only ten percent are very rich. Corruption, you know? We have to develop our country. New socialism.

JLA: Two countries, Sri Lanka and Eelam?

Kumarappa: Yeah. A separate state.

SA: Will the Tigers accept anything less than a separate state?

Kumarappa: No. We will fight, you know. We want it, the Tamils. And to get Eelam we will fight.

JLA: So you don’t think negotiations will work?

Kumarappa: I think that’s a failure. Better to fight. My opinion, and of all the Tigers who have been here in this situation. Because every day, the STF commandos kill innocent people and loot our properties, destroy our economic schemes. Every day.

SA: All your soldiers carry cyanide capsules, is that correct?

Kumarappa: Yes, and, you know, the cyanide, no other army in the world goes into a fight with it. I think the cyanide helps our morale, you know? Especially, it increases our morale... and people have to keep our secrets.

JLA: Have any of your men had to use it?

Kumarappa: A lot of them. Time to time, since ’83. Sometimes men are captured by STF commandos. They take this, and that’s it.

JLA: What if he doesn’t take the cyanide. Say, he gets caught and is afraid?

Kumarappa: He must have to take it. That’s our rules. A Tiger, he will. [*An interrupting note by Sri Kantha:* Here, one should dip his head to Kumarappa’s conviction, because, he ultimately did what he was saying — in Oct. 1987. How many politicians in Sri Lanka or anywhere else — who preach about the worth of giving their lives to their country — can match this deed?] Sometimes there’s no opportunity. For example, two or three of our Tiger soldiers, they didn’t have any cyanide capsules. They were caught, but they fight with the STF so they would shoot them. It’s a good death....

JLA: To make them shoot you?

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Kumarappa: Yeah, it’s a good death. Our soldiers did that. It’s a very brave death. . . . I’m not afraid to die, you know?

SA: **Is this a fight between the Tigers and the government, or between the Tamils and the Sinhalese?**

Kumarappa: The government and the Tigers. We love the Sinhalese people, you know, we love them. They are also innocent. But we are trying to gain the power. When they support the government, they don’t accept our homeland and our self-determination. We are a separate culture — everything, you know, separate religion, separate language. Everything.

JLA: **When the STF goes berserk after an attack by you and kills civilians, does that make you feel partly responsible?**

Kumarappa: Yeah, but that’s a very uncontrolled army, you know, uncontrolled troops. Especially here, the STF commandos react to the civilians. Every day they’re doing that here. Today, one incident, the STF commandos opened fire on the ferry, people that were passing on the river. Two of them killed, two civilians. Sometimes we also feel like doing that, you know. Actually, we don’t like that, but sometimes, you know, we don’t have any alternatives. Sometimes we have to do that job, too. We have to kill them also.

JLA: **Do you feel you have popular support?**

Kumarappa: Yeah. We have the popular support. You know, some government intelligence service, they moderate the people by money and they are getting a lot of information about us. The government intelligence is getting the messages every day. We can show you one spy that we have caught.

JLA: **You have a spy here?**

Kumarappa: Yeah, a spy here. Government-backed, I think MOSSAD-backed, you know? She’s a thirty-six-year-old woman. She infiltrated our area and was getting the message and giving it to the commando camp. We’ve captured a lot of spies.

JLA: **But she’s Tamil?**

Kumarappa: Yeah, she’s a Tamil.

SA: **When did you find her?**

Kumarappa: We knew about her two months ago, but day before yesterday, we captured here. Now there is an inquiry.

JLA: **What will happen to her if you find she is guilty?**

Kumarappa: Sentence her to death. That’s her final punishment. That’s the way it has to be, you know? They can’t survive.

SA: **And how are they executed?**

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Kumarappa: Sometime we put them on the lamppost, sometime, you know, we have the Cordex explosive wire — just around her body and then we detonate it. This is our maximum punishment. We do it sometimes. Two or three times we’ve done it. . . .

The woman ‘spy’ Kanaratnam Athumah Kirikith, is brought into the hut. She is a tiny woman with wild, unkempt hair. Her eyes are unfocused; she seems to be in a state of shock. Athuma limps badly and is made to sit in the chair next to Kumarappa.

SA: How did you catch her?

Kumarappa: In Mandur, some ten miles from here. The officer in charge of Vellaveli police station operated her. All the time, if she wanted to pass a message, she would go to Vellaveli police station commandos.”

Andersons had noted as follows in italics:

‘It can be assumed that Athuma was executed within a few days of the interview. Attempts to intercede on her behalf with Tiger supporters in Batticaloa were futile. Eleven days later, the STF launched a massive raid on Kumarappa’s base. In the battle, at least twenty-one of the Tigers were reported killed, including Kumarappa.[†] The Batticaloa Citizen’s Committee, however, charged the STF with executing twenty-seven people at the nearby shrimp hatchery and estimated the attack’s overall death toll at nearly two hundred, mostly civilians.’

(3) INTERVIEW WITH SUMITH SILVA, THE THEN COORDINATING OFFICER OF STF FOR BATTICALOA DISTRICT^{6‡}

‘The khaki-clad Coordinating Officer of Batticaloa District, Sumith Silva, is a huge, brawny man, his affability and personal civility at odds with the reputation of the forces under his command. The interview is at the Special Task Force (STF) headquarters, a heavily fortified complex several miles outside of Batticaloa. The base also doubles as an interrogation and detention center for Tamil terrorist suspects. Also seated in Silva’s office is a younger officer in jogging gear who won’t identify himself.

Silva: When violence is taken, any state has to take action to counter that violence. This whole problem can be sorted out; if the terrorists lay down their arms, the army packs up and goes. But the terrorists continue their acts of violence.

[†]Note by Sri Kantha: This is incorrect. Kumarappa was not killed in this offensive. He committed suicide by taking cyanide, along with eleven other LTTE cadres, in Oct. 1987 — after being held in detention in Jaffna.

[‡]the three-dots indicating omission whenever they appear, are as in the original text.

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J. L. Anderson: They continue theirs and, according to an overwhelming number of people in Batticaloa, you continue yours.

Silva: We don’t. Now, suppose we act in self-defense — it is not an act of violence. In every action in Batticaloa, the first act of violence has always been committed by the terrorists. This is how it happens. We go out on patrol. The first shot is fired by a terrorist. Our counter attack begins in defense, obviously in defense — we have to shoot to save ourselves, you see? In the process, there may be some...innocents (hit), but that is provided for by the law. In a situation where someone is trying to shoot me and I shoot back, but hit the wrong man, that is self-defense, provided for by the law. This law is not our law; it is faithfully reproduced from the British law.

Scott Anderson: But we’re not talking about people killed in cross fires. There are dozens of women wandering around Batticaloa looking for their sons, their fathers, and they can’t find them.

Silva: Can’t find them? You know, I think that’s an exaggeration. What happens is this — I’ve talked about this over and over again but — in 1981, they started their training camps in India. The little youths in Jaffna were brainwashed, were regimented, and they left their homes on their own free will without their parents’ consent. Parents didn’t know where they were. They’ve all gone across the Palk Straits to the training camps. Today, I think ninety-five percent of the so-called disappearances are in training camps.

JLA: But some of these disappearances have happened this morning. We’ve been to places and had the women coming up crying-

Silva: But why do you believe what you see?

JLA: Come on. The women are falling on the ground and crying.

Silva: How do you know what the truth is? That can be arranged, can’t it? The women come here also.

JLA: Are you saying they’re professional grievors?

Silva: (laughs) I’ve been here in instances when they came here and said, ‘So-and-so- died.’ But we have no reason to deny it, you know, if we have shot this boy in action, killed him in action. I won’t hide anything from you. Anonymous Officer: For instance, yesterday, the security forces arrested 110 men after a shootout with the terrorists. Killed three terrorists — LTTE — and then the village was surrounded and we have taken 110 persons into custody. This morning we released 102, 105.

JLA: We were told that the three killed yesterday, one was a boy who was urinating in his garden.

Silva: (laughs) Oh no, no, no.

JLA: - and the other two were crossing the lagoon on a boat.

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

Silva: (laughs) What can I say? I have perfect proof, but I cannot show it to you. Perfect proof, that would be accepted in any court of law anywhere in the world, that they were terrorists. I’m assuring you of that. Only, I can’t show it to you.

JLA: One was a government servant.

Silva: Government servants can also be terrorists.

JLA: It was a shoot-out and they were shooting back at your forces?

Anonymous Officer: (pause) Yes. Across the lagoon. A helicopter was shot (at).

Silva: (opens a ledger book) Here is the incident — we record everything. Here is the history, brief history. Everything is documented. (on the top page of the book are a couple of handwritten sentences; he begins to read them aloud) On sixteenth January, security forces conducted search at Kullamanam. Boat was seen in lagoon. The people in the boat suddenly attacked; the STF returned fire, killing three terrorists. (closes ledger)

Now everyone says they are innocent, but we know they are terrorists. We have it from very top authority. The authority I cannot quote to you, because I would be divulging my source of information. I can’t do that, because I couldn’t go and get information again from these sources. (laughs) We have people who tell us these things. That is because we have perfect rapport with the large majority of the people here.

Anonymous Officer: So far, they (Tamil Tigers) have killed 118 innocent Tamil people tied to lampposts in Batticaloa. One hundred and eighteen. Women and men both, up to last Thursday. Tied to lampposts.

Silva: We don’t do that.

JLA: We don’t dispute the atrocities of the militants, but we’re talking about something different. It wouldn’t seem that you’re exactly welcomed by the populace here, judging by the way your camp is fortified. Your people don’t smile at the local people -

Anonymous Officer: If we smiled at you, you would be against a lamppost tomorrow morning. Women, children, it doesn’t matter.

Silva: Look, the terrorists’ very existence is against the law. Their presence here is obviously for the purpose of dividing Sri Lanka, which is against the constitution, which is treason, punishable by death in Sri Lanka.

JLA: What about torture? Everyone says you use it widely.

Silva: Sometimes, if they resist arrest, force must be used to restrain them, but once they are brought to the camps they are not tortured.

JLA: How can that be? Literally everyone you’ve picked up has either been tortured himself or seen someone else undergo it. There are very specific details on how the torture is carried out. There is the ‘helicopter training’, the beating, the chili powder -

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Silva: (laughs) Those are just figments of imagination.

JLA: Really?

Silva: Well, there may be cases here and there, but a microminority.

JLA: But surely your forces must feel frustrated here, among a people whose language they don’t speak, fighting an invisible enemy -

Silva: There’s no frustration amongst the forces, but there may be a few instances where they may be guilty of excesses. But such actions are very few, and such instances, when they do occur, we view very, very sternly.

JLA: How sternly?

Silva: Such as dismissal, for example.

JLA: What kinds of crimes merit dismissal from the forces?

Silva: Unwarranted torture, rape of women, unwarranted use of force... They’ll be dismissed forthwith?

JLA: What about unwarranted murder?

Silva: As yet we’ve had no cases of officers, of any ranks, accused of murder, because there have been no cases proved. In the three months I’ve been here in Batticaloa there has been no allegations of murder made with justification. I can’t speak about before.

JLA: Do you, personally, have any problems with the way the war is being waged?

Silva: Killing is inevitable, as far as the terrorists are concerned, so we are totally within our rights to fire back. If a murderer is hiding somewhere, I’m duty-bound to go and arrest him. Murder is an offense punishable by death. And when I go there, if he opens fire at me, I’m perfectly justified in defending myself. You know, this isn’t a conventional war yet; they are still of this country, so whatever they do is illegal and punishable by the laws of the country. The STF never opens fire first. I can truthfully say that!

Anonymous Officer: A Tamil terrorist — there are none from Batticaloa to begin with; they all come from Jaffna — they have not been welcomed by the population. The people are sick of them. About three months ago, they abducted eight Tamils — Tamils! — and they raised twelve million rupees, just to raise money!

Silva: They are ruthless, ruthless murderers who are brainwashed and can’t see a democratic solution to anything.

SA: Is it true you have a place here in the camp where you burn the bodies of those killed by your troops?

Silva: No, no, no. Who told you that?

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

SA: Well, we’ve talked to many people, including the mothers of men who have been killed in the last few days, and they say you don’t give the bodies back to them for burial but burn them in the camp. Is it true you don’t give the families their bodies?

Silva: (long pause, looks out window) Sometimes... we don’t give the bodies back, because it’s ... they’re... because, sometimes, they’ll use it for propaganda purposes, the terrorists. For security concerns the law allows us to not give them to their owners. But we don’t burn them. We have a place, a cemetery adjoining the camp. They are, however, perfectly able to come to do the last rites —

JLA: Oh, so each has a grave. You have a graveyard?

Silva: (stares) No. There is a common grave.

SA: But the families are allowed to come and perform last rites?

Silva: Well, not in large numbers, of course. But yes, we allow them.

A few days later, an official of the National Security Ministry in Colombo ridiculed the suggestion that bodies were being buried in the Batticaloa STF base. ‘Whoever told you that must be a terrorist or a terrorist sympathizer.’

In October 1987, Sumith Silva was travelling with the Batticaloa Government Agent Anthonimuthu when their vehicle was destroyed by a Tiger land mine. Silva was killed instantly.’

(4) INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTOPHER ROMESH, A TAMIL VICTIM OF SPECIAL TASK FORCE COMMANDOS IN BATTICALOA^{7 †}

‘Christopher Romesh, 30, is a thin, frail Tamil with haunted eyes and a severe stutter. A Christian, his left arm bears burn scars in the shape of a cross, made by torturer’s cigarettes. From Batticaloa in the Eastern Province, Christopher now lives in Madras, India, but hopes to be sent to a hospital in Europe to obtain physical and psychological therapy.

Batticaloa police caught me under suspicion of railway robbery. They caught me on February 6, 1982. I was in prison for one year and three months. When I was in the police station, they tortured me very badly. After that, I was suffering from asthma. They used to say me, ‘Lie on the bench’, and they gave me leg belt. They used to hammer with a big, big pole everywhere. After, they put on me chili powder. This was in the police station; then they took me to Batticaloa Prison. They released me in May ’83.

Then, February ’85, I was caught in Batticaloa by police commandos. They used to take boys (as informants), and they would go by the roads. So they ask the boy who is who, like that. If they do like this (nods head), the police take us. This way they caught me. And I was wearing a T-shirt and trousers.

[†] the three-dots indicating omission whenever they appear, are as in the original text.

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So they took my T-shirt and tied my eyes and they put the handcuff like this and they put me inside the van and I was lying down. So they took me to police commandos camp.

So five days, my eyes were tied. Sixth day, they took me and they said, ‘Will you tell anything?’ I said I don’t know anything. So they said, ‘We are going to give you helicopter training’. Helicopter training means to tie your hands like that (behind back), and they used to hang you like that. . . . So I was ha-ha-hanging — like. . . for nearly five hours. I was in the, uh. . . while — and they were ha-ha-hammering also. They were hammering with the poles and the strong pipe with cement inside.

They asked me whether I was in the movement, or ‘Do you know anyone who is in the movement.’ I say I don’t know anything. And they were putting chilis — this was the worst — they put in the eyes, nose, mouth, everywhere, all over our body. Then after five hours, they put me down. My hands were paralyzed. I couldn’t move my hands or anything. I was inside a very small cell; there were about ten boys. So I couldn’t go to the toilet or anything. I couldn’t eat. I couldn’t move my hand at all. So boys used to help me. They used to feed me, take me to toilet and everything. But they didn’t do the helicopter again.

When I was in the camp, about fifty boys were dying. Sometimes they hammered, struck on head. Sometimes they used to bury and sometimes they used to burn. After killing them, they would say (to the families), ‘We didn’t have him.’ Once we saw two bodies in the hall, and another one, he escaped and ran, so this one they shot. And they came in and showed me: ‘If anybody escapes, we will do like this.’

I know Sinhalese also. I can talk Sinhalese. I used to talk with the police commandos. They used to come and talk with me, but they say, ‘We can’t help this. It’s a hard time for you, but we can’t help you.’ They kept me two months, and my mother went to the MP for (the town of) Galle in order to pursue my thing. After that, they moved me to Colombo hospital. They gave me physical therapy. In hospital, I was in for fifty days. After forty days, little by little I got my feeling in hands back. Then I came home. For two months after I didn’t speak anything. I was shocked. I thought I’m going to die like that (mute).

I was staying at home, but I not go out because I knew I would have problems. I was staying for a while, and then, in November ’85, there was a case, some militants put a landmine and police jeep went over it and some police were injured. So police commandos came and they took about fifty boys and they shot thirteen boys on the incident. So, because of that, my parents were scared to keep me, so I came here on November twenty fifth ’85. My friends are helping, so I stay here. But it’s very hard to pass the time; I just read books. Because I have suffered enough. I just want to go somewhere. Actually I like Sinhalese. I know it is just for politics that they do things like this. It is unnatural. Just like us, they are human beings. So we Tamils must fight

Pirabhakaran Phenomenon

and we must kill persons, no? But I have no guts for that thing. I am very soft hearted.’

(5) INTERVIEW WITH TIM, A BRITISH MERCENARY^{8†}

‘Tim, a deeply tanned Briton with predatory eyes, is a mercenary pilot fighting with the Sri Lankan Army in the southern reaches of the Jaffna Peninsula.

I just don’t think the Sinhalese have it in them. The Tamils are a more. . . vigorous people — I guess that’s the right word. You know, the Sinhalese have this whole Buddhism and karma thing. . . They fight a gentleman’s war. They’ve carried over all the worst characteristics from the old British Army. They’ll go out, fire a few bullets, and be home in time for tea. They have a . . . lack of enthusiasm.

We were out on a patrol and drew fire from some coconut (trees) near this village. They wouldn’t return fire: ‘Too close to the village, might hit some civilians!’ I mean, they practically won’t let you shoot unless you actually see the bloke standing there with the gun in his hand. All the boys over from South Africa and Rhodesia, this was a joke to them. They got totally fucked off with it; most of ’em packed up and left. Went to Nicaragua.

I just think these boys don’t know how to fight. And don’t want to fight. They just want to hold back and wait for a settlement. I tell you, it’s bloody frustrating. Can’t tell you how many times I’ve gone to the colonel and cussed out the whole lot of ’em.’

PRIIT VESILIND COVERING THE EASTERN FRONT IN 1997

In early 1997, Pirabhakaran received a passing mention in Priit Vesilind’s essay in the *National Geographic* magazine. To quote,

“In the late 1970s and ’80 radical Tamils renewed calls for a separate state, to be called Eelam. The Tigers were one of several antigovernment groups, but their leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, consolidated power with a string of political assassinations, including, it is alleged, the killing of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

The war has come to a critical juncture. Prabhakaran, hidden somewhere in the jungles of the north, controls an insurgent army of 10,000, including a potent naval unit. He and the Tigers responded to the Jaffna offensive by attacking five villages of Sinhalese peasants on the border of Tiger territory, killing more than 120 innocent people.”⁹

That Pirabhakaran is presented with a negative image to the readership of *National Geographic* is not surprising, if one continues to read the subsequent

[†] the three-dots indicating omission whenever they appear, are as in the original text.

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sentences. Vesilind was unable to meet Pirabhakaran in person. Rather one could conveniently infer that he probably had regurgitated the opinion of a then Foreign Ministry Poo-Bah in Colombo, whom he had to meet. Vesilind wrote,

“The press has been kept from the war, and the government openly censors local newspapers. The spokesman for the Foreign Ministry in Colombo, Ravinatha Aryasinha, politely denies my request to visit Jaffna, but assures me, ‘This is a clean process, a clean war. There is no one going berserk. There will be some civilian casualties, of course’ . . .”¹⁰

While denying permission to visit the Jaffna region, it appears Mr. Aryasinha had granted permission for Vesilind to visit the Eastern Front. Vesilind had somehow tracked Karikalan, the LTTE political leader in the East. Here is what Vesilind saw there:

“The war has divided Sri Lanka into zones. At the time of my visit the government controls the south-central core, the Tigers the northern and eastern coasts, where Tamils, Malays and Muslim descendants of Arab cinnamon traders have traditionally lived. The government maintains only a tenuous grip on Trincomalee and Batticaloa, the main towns on the east coast, which have been reduced to army-held bastions surrounded by a hostile Tamil population.

I hitch a ride to Batticaloa with a Tamil who works with a nongovernmental developmental agency. We drive as if parting the waters, scattering goats, bicycles, coconut-water vendors, cattle and monks carrying black umbrellas against the wilting sun. The land turns dry and scrubby and blazes with rampant bougainvillea as we pass through coastal villages, some Tamil, some Muslim. Gaunt men balancing piles of firewood on the backs of their bicycles teeter beside us.

‘Rotary Club — Batticaloa — Drive Carefully’ a sign says, and we cross a bridge into the quiet Tamil town once famous for its legendary singing fish. They say if you dip your head in the water by Kalladi Bridge, you can hear them, a sort of harmonious noise in a disquieting place. Few of the government troops who occupy Batticaloa speak Tamil, and their fear is palpable. Spencer Morawilla, a professor at the university here, tells me, ‘We understand the soldiers. They think that all Tamils have tails. No one trusts anyone.’

There is no official way to reach the Tigers. We simply negotiate past the final army checkpoint into one of the most destitute areas of Sri Lanka and on to the village of Vakarai, 35 miles north of Batticaloa. Here, from a side road surrounded by thick vegetation, three Black Tigers emerge, wearing flip-flops and strolling with cautious bravado. They are suicide cadres, sworn to take their own lives if captured. Around their necks are vials of cyanide.

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‘Why do you fight?’ I challenge them. ‘The army is much stronger than you.’ ‘When we fight, they run’, says 22-year-old Ramesh Kanth, not quite smiling. ‘Mentally they are not very strong.’ His own toughness comes down to the matter of cyanide, and my heart churns as Kanth pulls the two-inch-long plastic vial from beneath his shirt. He puts it between his teeth, to demonstrate; ‘You have to keep it in your mouth and bite down’.

A waiting list exists to join the suicide squads. On the wall of a deserted hospital a recruiting poster depicts three Black Tigers, two boys and one girl, about 15. In 1995 they blew up a Sri Lankan naval vessel, and themselves, in Trincomalee harbor. The photographs show them just before the mission, with the explosives strapped to their backs, looking scared and fiercely angelic.

On the following morning we track down the elusive Sivagnanam Karikalan, the Tigers’ political officer, at a camp west of Batticaloa. I ask him why the Tigers will not consider the president’s proposal to form autonomous districts. ‘We have entered into this war to achieve a separate state’, he says, ‘Nothing much will happen through negotiations with the Sri Lankan government’. But Karikalan denies that Tigers are responsible for the massacre of Sinhalese villagers: ‘If we wanted to kill innocent people, it would be easy for us; we could do it all the time. But we are not terrorists. We are a liberating force.’ And the recruitment of children?

‘When a young person makes a decision to become a Black Tiger — to destroy himself — he goes through several training courses. It is his final act, his only act, and here is where the dedication of our young people is built. There is no liberation without sacrifice.’ I am the father of teenagers, and that evening I can do no more than sit on the hotel roof and absorb the healing beauty of the sunset over Batticaloa lagoon...’¹¹

One can assume that this piece by Vesilind, typical of a *National Geographic*’s scenario-capture format, is neither condemning nor laudatory of the LTTE warriors. But, Vesilind omitted answer to the vital question ‘Why’ the emergence of suicide cadre among the young generation of Tamils. May be, he is not a sociologist or has not read Emile Durkheim’s classic work on suicide, where the French sociologist has classified one category of suicide as ‘altruistic suicide’. Even if Vesilind would have bothered to include this interpretation into his Sri Lankan feature on the Eastern Front, for reasons of political correctness, the editorial scissors at the *National Geographic* desk would have pruned it.

The *National Geographic* magazine, though having a stellar reputation and credibility, has also its bias of not overtly antagonizing the government in power, for reasons of access to its feature writers and photographers. This bias prevented them from reporting objectively the excesses of Nazi regime in Europe and the Stalin-era torture camps of the Soviet Union. Having noted

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this, I wish to include another short paragraph from Vesilind’s essay which is of interest. Wrote Vesilind,

“I read daily in Colombo newspapers about suicides over seemingly trivial things like a bad grade or an insult. ‘Sri Lanka has one of the highest suicide rates in the world,’ a U.S. official in Colombo told me. ‘Why should we be surprised that a Tiger would commit suicide for his nation, when a wife will do it because her husband didn’t like dinner?’”¹²

This penetrating remark by an unidentified ‘U.S. official’ stationed in Colombo places in perspective, that the suicides of Tiger cadres belong to the ‘altruistic type’ of suicide identified by Durkheim which are *carried out for a specific objective* to save his or her ethnic members. May be one should not be harsh on Vesilind afterall. He brought out the difference between the routine suicides in Sri Lanka and that of a Tamil Tiger through the quote of this unidentified ‘U.S. official’, without including Durkheim’s name.

45

Nuda Veritas on the Muslim Factor

NUDA VERITAS is the Latin expression for ‘naked truth’ [*nudus* = naked; *veritas* = truth]. Three inter-twined ingredients which contributed noticeably to Pirabhakaran’s agenda in confronting the Sinhalese government in the Eastern Front, since mid-1980s, were the land (state-aided colonization which increased the Sinhalese population significantly), the Special Task Force (STF) operatives (who were established as the Sri Lankan version of the Gestapo-gang in the early 1980s), and the resident Muslim population. In the previous two chapters, I had introduced two of these three ingredients, namely the land issue and the STF operatives. In this chapter, *Nuda Veritas* of Muslim factor and their circumstantial link to the STF operations is analyzed. This is undoubtedly an explosive issue and some may view it as politically incorrect. But, I adhere to the spirit that historical facts need to be discussed and cannot be glossed over for reasons of political correctness.

THE POLITICS OF ‘EATING THE CAKE AND HAVING IT’ GAME

In a commentary I wrote in 1983, before Pirabhakaran’s ascendancy, I had made the following observations on the Tamil-speaking Muslims of Sri Lanka, incorporating an open secret which Michael Roberts (then at the University of Peradeniya) was brave enough to write. Excerpts: ¹

“... The pattern adopted by the Muslim leaders in the post-Independent era of Sri Lanka had been succinctly described by academic Michael Roberts, as follows:

‘The Moor elites initially leaned towards an alliance with the Tamils and other minorities so as to extract political concessions from the British, but from the 1940s they have tended to ally with the Sinhalese against the Tamils; with wings in both the SLFP and UNP, they have revealed the buoyancy of a cork and a Talleyrand — an ability to stay vigorously afloat at every political overturn; and they are entrenched in the commercial sector.’ [*Modern Asian Studies*, 1978, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 353–376]

Chapter 45. *Nuda Veritas on the Muslim Factor*

... It is my opinion that the reasons for the political alliance of Muslims with Sinhalese rather than Tamils can be listed as follows:

1. *Minority within the minority complex*: Muslims, being the second largest minority group, feel that there is nothing to gain by standing with the Tamils politically, since they fear that this would result in their community ending up as minority within a minority, in especially the Tamil speaking areas.
2. *Urban-based political leadership*: Although the Muslims form approximately 35% of the population in the Batticaloa district and more than 25% in the districts of Mannar, Trincomalee and Puttalam, there political leadership had emerged mainly from those residing in the Sinhalese areas. For example, the political leaders of yester generation, T. B. Jayah, Razik Fareed, A. C. M. Kaleel were Colombo-based; and Badiuddin Mahmud also belonged to this category, though he was a native of rural Sinhalese area. Even the present political leadership of Muslims exhibit this trend. Hence, these leaders do not identify themselves with the ideals and emotions of the Muslim peasants who reside in the traditional Tamil areas.
3. *Economic rivalry*: Generally Muslims engage themselves in minor commercial pursuits, though a significant proportion of those living in the East coast are cultivators, herdsmen and fishermen. Hence there had developed a measure of economic rivalry between the Muslims and the Ceylon Tamils, who also possess ‘business brain’. This rivalry is somewhat inevitable.”

BADIUDDIN MAHMUD — THE SERVILE BUCKET CARRIER TO THE
BANDARANAIKES

In the anti-LTTE tract *The Broken Palmyra* (1990), Rajan Hoole *et al.*² announced their mission in the Author’s Preface as, “We felt strongly that the community must revive, and to do so we must face the truth in all its nakedness, both about ourselves and about all those who purported to be our saviours. In this sentence, it is nominally understood that the word ‘ourselves’ stood for Tamils, and ‘our saviours’ referred to the LTTE.

However, quite a number of unmentionables relating to the recent Eelam Tamil history have been glossed over by Rajan Hoole and his collaborators. These include the first cyanide-based suicide of Ponnuthurai Sivakumaran in June 5, 1974 and the abduction of Ohio newly-wed couple Allens (Stanley and Mary) in Jaffna by the EPRLF cadres in May 10, 1984, which almost created an international furor involving USA, India and Sri Lanka, and sullied the image of Eelam Tamils as hostage-takers.

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Another glaring omission in *The Broken Palmyra* book is the name of Badiuddin Mahmud, the prominent Muslim politician for decades. His political antics alienated young Eelam Tamils who faced admission to Sri Lanka’s universities in the post-1970 period, from the Sri Lankan mainstream. Among all the Muslim politicians, as a servile bucket carrier to the Bandaranaiques, Badiuddin Mahmud played with fire and lived to see its after-effects. Thus it is not irrelevant to profile the career of this bucket carrier to the Bandaranaiques from four angles, in chronological order; viewed by a Sinhalese political rival (N. M. Perera), a Tamil youth who suffered in the early 1970s from the adopted policy of Badiuddin Mahmud (none other than myself, belonging to Pirabhakaran’s age cohort) and two Muslims.

(1) N. M. PERERA’S VIEW, AS TOLD IN 1975:

I have previously recorded the political pécadilloes of padre Senanayake and padre Bandaranaike in pandering the Buddhist Aryan sentiments in colonial and post-colonial Ceylon. [see, Chapter 42] Here I add a primary source of evidence on the functioning of the Sinhala Maha Sabha and on the manipulations of D. S. Senanayake and padre Bandaranaike recorded by Badiuddin Mahmud, and *retold by Trotskyist Party leader N. M. Perera, in 1975, in the parliament*. This I consider is a vital piece of document originating from a leading Sinhalese political figure, excerpts of which deserves inclusion. In N. M. Perera’s words,

“...It is in connection with the pre-Hartal [Note by Sri Kantha: i.e., pre-1953] political movement that Mr. Bandaranaike’s name comes in. I referred to the fact that the history of the country could have been different had Mr. Bandaranaike accepted the offer made by the Opposition after the Yamuna meeting. Yamuna was the name of the house where Mr. Sri Nissanka lived. All those in the Opposition to Mr. D. S. Senanayake met at Yamuna. We had prolonged discussions at that place and we decided to offer the Premiership in 1947 to Mr. Bandaranaike because we realised that he could with our help command a majority in the Parliament. I believe Mr. Sri Nissanka was our spokesman. I never said that I offered the Premiership. It was an offer made by those who were in opposition to Mr. D. S. Senanayake.

Mr. Bandaranaike refused the offer for very good reasons from his point of view. I set out the two reasons that were commonly talked about at that time. If anybody cares to read the newspapers of that period, he or she will find that what I said was the common prevailing thought at the time.

What are the two reasons. First of all, his expectation that he will be the next Prime Minister after Mr. D. S. Senanayake, and, secondly, since he was not in political alignment with the Left parties, he was not prepared to take a plunge into the political unknown associated with the Marxists. This is a historical fact. He never accepted the Socialist ideology as we Marxists

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accepted it then and even later. He preferred to accept a Ministerial post in Mr. D. S. Senanayake’s Cabinet. If he was a convinced and confirmed Socialist, he would never have joined the UNP Cabinet. Is this historically wrong? I have been faithful to history. I am sorry if history hurts people. But I regret I cannot be guilty of distorting the history of this country to suit any family prestige.

Now let me quote somebody who was very close to Mr. Bandaranaike. He was the Secretary of the SLFP at its inception and for a number of years thereafter. I have here the booklet that was published. It was printed and widely distributed. I quote from page 8: [*Note by Sri Kantha*: Here, N. M. Perera introduces the description by Badiuddin Mahmud.]

‘Those days I [*i.e.*, Mahmud] asked him [*i.e.*, Bandaranaike] why the Lake House Press is continuing a campaign against him. Thereupon, he spoke to me and said ‘alright if you want to know the secret about that I will tell you’ and he gave me the details of that matter. In 1947, there was no party called the UNP. In the 1947 elections, the strongest party that went before the people was not the UNP but the Sinhala Maha Sabha. Dudley Senanayake, Sir John Kotelawela, E. A. Nugawela, A. Ratnayake, C. W. W. Kannangara and such others were all members of the Sinhala Maha Sabha. On that occasion, this party obtained about 40 seats. Mr. Bandaranaike could then have become the Prime Minister. In 1947, most people requested him to accept the prime ministership, but displaying his good qualities and expressing his sense of justice, he rejected the request. ‘Let the old gentleman Mr. D. S. Senanayake be the Prime Minister. I have still time. I can consider it afterwards’; were the explanations that he then trotted out. Mr. D. S. Senanayake met Mr. Bandaranaike and told him, ‘Banda this time give me the opportunity to become the prime minister.

After me, you will have that opportunity. Ask me for any ministerial office, I will give that to you.’ That is the promise that Mr. Senanayake gave on that occasion to Mr. Bandaranaike. In this way, Mr. Bandaranaike deprived himself of the opportunity he had to become the prime minister of this country. Nevertheless, as Mr. Bandaranaike himself expressed to me, what did Mr. D. S. Senanayake do? He summoned the Proprietor of the Lake House institution and told him, ‘from now on work towards the destruction of Mr. Bandaranaike.’ I must mention that this is the biggest political crime in the history of Lanka’s politics. In some ways, the occurrence of a crime in this way may be treated as the good fortune for this country. When you contemplate, this, we cannot help feeling this because, if not for that crime, perhaps Mr. Bandaranaike might not have gone along the socialist path as he did.” [*Note by Sri Kantha*: Thus ends, N. M. Perera reproducing Badiuddin Mahmud’s recollections on his talks with padre Bandaranaike.]

Then, N. M. Perera continued further as follows:

“This is a Government publication published in September 1973 on the occasion of the Bandaranaike Commemoration Day. This was culled out of a

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speech made by Mr. Badiuddin Mahmud before the Buddhist Society of the Education Ministry. What is the difference between what I stated and the statement of Mr. Mahmud, who was so close to Mr. Bandaranaike? He has said precisely what I said in different language. Is it a crime when I say this? Is it quite acceptable when a member of the SLFP says it? Is there one law for the SLFP members and another law for the LSSP members? This is like the laws of the famous King Kekille...”³

(2) SACHI SRI KANTHA’S VIEWS, AS WRITTEN IN 1977 AND 1983:

“[In the 1977 General Election, contesting in Batticaloa constituency], Ex-Education Minister, Dr. Badiuddin Mahmud, the self-claimed, undisputed leader of the Muslims, who contested a seat for the first time in his so-called 50-year span of political career, was pushed to 4th place and suffered a humiliating defeat.”⁴

“...It is also noteworthy to cite at this juncture, one folly of the so-called ‘undisputed leader of the Muslim community’ (who had never been elected to parliament), Badiuddin Mahmud, who was the Minister of Education between 1960–64 and 1970–77. Though he was successful moderately in uplifting Muslim interests, he could not succeed completely. The master tactician Badiuddin was, he requested the Muslim youth to study in the Sinhala medium, raising hopes that by switching to the language of the majority community they would be better positioned to have their share of government teaching posts. However, the effort of Badiuddin backfired in the 1970s, when the Muslims, educated in Sinhala medium entered the schools in Sinhala districts. They were greeted by the racist slogan, *Thambila apita eppa*. Then only, Badiuddin wisely learnt the folly of courting the Sinhala language...”⁵

(3 AND 4) VIEWS OF TWO SRI LANKAN MUSLIMS IN 2001–2002:

“... It was the Muslim leaders like Sir Razik Fareed and Badiuddin Mahmud who fervently campaigned for the ‘Sinhala Only’ policy which sought to make Sinhala the sole official language of the country, replacing English.”⁶

“...The provisions provided for in the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government and the LTTE have taken absolutely no account of them [*i.e.*, Muslims] although they account for a third of the Eastern Province, and, together with the Sinhalese constitute two thirds of the population. It has to be understood and recognized that the era commencing from the 1978 Constitution had been a distinct disadvantageous one to the Muslims. During this period President J. R. Jayewardene chose to wash his hands off the problems that had been created for the Muslims. The beleaguered Muslim were asked then to negotiate their future with the LTTE and seek the solution themselves; for the Muslims it was a position in many ways similar to the position they are in today. The situation then resulted in a cross-party Muslim conglomerate led by Dr. Badiuddin Mahmud to travel to Madras, run from pillar to post, and conduct talks with the LTTE and others to extract

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some accomodation. But today unfortunately neither is there an overwhelming personality like Dr. Mahmud nor an Eastern leader with the commitment and capacity of M. H. M. Ashraff. . . .”⁷

AN ANALYSIS

Analyzing the above-quoted passages from four observers, spanning almost three decades from 1973 to 2002, the following are apparent:

1. Badiuddin Mahmud was a Muslim politician who aligned himself with the SLFP since its inception and he fervently campaigned for the ‘Sinhala Only’ policy.
2. Immense political power he wielded, especially between 1970 and 1977, benefited the Muslim community at the expense of the younger generation of Eelam Tamils.
3. Though he was an unabashed pro-Sinhalese politician for decades, when it came to the 1977 general election, rather than contesting from Sinhala-dominated constituencies like Beruwela or Gampola, he came ‘carpet-bagging’ to Batticaloa to contest the election, and he lost in that too.
4. When LTTE gained ascendancy by extra-parliamentary means and came to dictate terms, Badiuddin had to ‘travel to Madras, run from pillar to post, and conduct talks with the LTTE and others to extract some accommodation’, in the words of Mauroof. Whether LTTE had to accede to Mahmud’s political requests, in terms of inter-ethnic harmony, is a moot point. But, contemporary Muslim analysts never bother to question the morality of what their political leaders like Badiuddin Mahmud did for four decades (between 1947 and 1987) in suffocating the human rights of Tamils, through the power they gained in the parliament as fence-sitters and moolah worshippers.

As M. A. Nuhman, a recognized Tamil language poet and Muslim academic, noted perspectively,

“During the post-independence period Eastern province Muslims seriously engaged in political battles for seats in parliament. Political opportunism, coupled with the scarcity of land, and economic competition created a mood of suspicion and hostility between Muslims and Tamils in the region and led even to some violent clashes in the 1950s and 60s. Later developments resulted in ethnic segregation of these communities to a certain extent.”⁸

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It is a given that opportunism is a key element in the professional politician of any land. But the Muslim politicians of Sri Lanka belong to a breed apart and deserve the tag ‘Cunningly Enterprising Opportunists’ (CEOs). I qualify my tag with the following observation, which I recorded in 1977. Relating to what Nuhman mentioned in passing as per ‘political battles for seats in parliament’ in the Eastern province, I had observed:

“Regarding the Tamil speaking Muslims of the EP [i.e., Eastern Province], in the past it had been a sad spectacle, that the Muslim MPs elected on the FP [i.e, Federal Party ticket], for example, (Mr. M. S. Kariapper — Kalmunai; Mr. M. M. Mustapha — Pottuvil; Mr. M. C. Ahamed — Kalmunai; and Mr. M. E. H. Mohamed Ali — Muttur) jumped on to the bandwagon of UNP or SLFP, after they entered the portals of parliament. It is my humble opinion that this ‘jumping over the fence’ attitude practised by the EP Tamil-speaking Muslim politicoes might have had a considerable impact on the Muslim voters this time. They would have thought, (with due apologies to the TULF-Muslim candidates) ‘Why vote for a TULF Muslim candidate, who most probably will jump to UNP/SLFP later? It is better to cast the vote for the Muslim candidate who is wearing the green label earlier itself?’”⁹

I do not disagree with the assessment of M. A. Nuhman on Badiuddin Mahmud, that indeed Mahmud was the “... widely accepted Muslim political leader who contributed much to the development of Muslim education in this country (*i.e.*, Sri Lanka), introduced the concept of Islamic music and dance and appointed Muslim women to teach these aesthetic subjects in Muslim schools.”¹⁰ But the vital question is, ‘at whose expense’? — the answer is: at the expense of Eelam Tamils. Nuhman has recorded as follows:

“In 1974 the Sri Lankan government introduced a system of standardisation for the university entrance examination (that is G. C. E. A/L) *and a special quota for the backward districts by which the Eastern province youths, both Tamils and Muslims, were greatly benefited while the Jaffna Tamil youths were badly affected.* [Italics added by Sri Kantha for emphasis.] The introduction of this new system paved the way for better opportunities in higher education for Muslims and created a new professional class and an educated elite among them. They are the more ethnically sensitive and opinion making social groups. These groups were the base for the new Muslim political leadership in the East and they formed a Muslim political party, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) in 1980.”¹¹

The first sentence needs clarification. The then newly elected SLFP-dominated government, for which Badiuddin Mahmud served as the Minister of Education, introduced the *ethnically profiled, crude standardisation scheme from 1971*. I speak with authority, since I entered the University of Colombo

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from the Colombo district in January 1972, after sitting for the G. C. E. Advanced Level exam in Dec. 1970, as the second batch which passed this ethnically profiled, crude standardisation scheme. Even Tamil ethnic students who studied and sat the university entrance exam from Colombo were badly bruised by this racist discriminatory treatment. I should also add that the university entrance exam held in Dec. 1970 was the last one, in which students sitting for the natural science subjects (Chemistry, Physics, Botany and Zoology) were examined with both the theory and practical components. Following an uproar by the Tamil Student Federation (*Tamil Maanavar Peravai*) largely emanating from the Jaffna peninsula, Mrs. Bandaranaike’s Cabinet led by Badiuddin Mahmud tampered and ‘refined’ (if that is the appropriate word!) the then executed university admission criteria to what Nuhman mentions as *a special quota for the backward districts by which the Eastern province youths, both Tamils and Muslims, were greatly benefited*. The Tamil Student Federation was the incubator for the Tamil militant movement which eventually led to the birth of LTTE.

In sum, Badiuddin Mahmud contributed immensely to the Muslim community first and foremost, and by his bucket-carrying servility contributed markedly to the Sinhalese leadership as well. If in 1988, his conciliatory approach to the LTTE was rebuffed indirectly, the reasons are self-explanatory.

THE LOYALTY DILEMMA OF MUSLIMS

Pirabhakaran’s LTTE has had the distinction of engaging Sri Lankan armed forces and India’s army. But an overlooked fact is that LTTE also has to wage a covert war against the plans of Pakistan’s Generals and Intelligence operatives, who were major backers of the Sri Lankan establishment in arsenal and technical help. This is a 20 year-old history, beginning from 1982, even before the active Indian interest on the Eelam Tamil issue. Given the ever-volatile nature of the Indo-Pakistan political brinkmanship, it may not be even wrong to infer that Indira Gandhi, the then prime minister of India, became strongly interested in the political issue of Eelam, only because Zia ul Haq, the then dictator of Pakistan, had already planted his boots into the Colombo camp.

It takes years for truth to show its appearance. But, it eventually appears in bits and pieces — after the departure of the leading actors of that period, namely Indira Gandhi, Zia ul Haq and J. R. Jayewardene. To quote Meril Gunaratne, the ex-Director General of Intelligence & Security,

“... The Special Task Force comprising of policemen, and versed in paramilitary skills, should be the ideal organisation to release a body of troops to

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the umbrella organisation. I recall General Tissa Weeratunga, former Army Commander, narrating a discussion he had with late President Zia ul Haq in Pakistan in 1982.

After listening to General Weeratunge concerning the situation in Jaffna, the President of Pakistan had said, ‘General, your problem is that you do not have anything between the Army and the Police.’ The President of Pakistan was trying to drive home the point that a paramilitary Police, rather than the Army, should be mobilised in the early stages of terrorism. The STF was yet to be born at the time General Zia ul Haq made this comment.

It may be possible that the STF is deployed excessively in the north and east today...’¹²

It is pertinent to think about what has been the stand of the Muslim leaders in Sri Lanka since 1983? Though linked by the common language of Tamil, while Eelam Tamils have an emotional identity with India for cultural reasons, Muslim politicians in Sri Lanka have shown a strong emotional bond with Pakistan in preference to India, on the basis of religion. How many Muslims in Sri Lanka can speak the languages of Pakistan (Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtu, Siraki, Urdu and Balochi)? Did any one of the Muslim leaders (M. H. Mohamed, A. C. S. Hameed, Badiuddin Mahmud, Alavi Moulana, M. H. M. Ashraff) make a moral representation to Pakistan’s Generals and Intelligence operatives — on behalf of Tamils — to refrain from supplying military hardware and software to the Sri Lankan government because the actions of STF are hurting the Tamils badly in the Eastern Front? From the political platforms, the Muslim leaders in Sri Lanka had praised the deeds of M. A. Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, in separating from India. But why they have not bothered to support the same demand, when it was made by Chelvanayakam or Amirthalingam or Pirabhakaran, is not a mystery.

The perfidy of the Muslim political leaders belonging to the Sinhalese ruling parties in arranging military support from Pakistan for the Sri Lankan armed forces has remained an unmentionable theme in the anti-LTTE tracts of the cluster of quasi human rights activists, who fault the LTTE for its anti-Muslim activities. The J. R. Jayewardene regime did implement the 1982 suggestions on dictator Zia ul Haq and established the dreaded Special Task Force section in 1983. Here is a self-laudatory passage from the website of Sri Lankan Police, which appears under the sub-heading ‘The Birth of the Special Task Force’. To quote,

“The nucleus of the Special Task Force (STF) was formed in 1983, drawing on policemen already in service and having them trained by the Army in the handling of Infantry weapons and given basic training in jungle operations.

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The first few Platoons formed were deployed mainly to provide support for police station in the North of Sri Lanka.

The level of the STF was considerably enhanced in 1983 with the introduction of crack former Special Air Service (SAS) teams to provide specialized training in all aspects of counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations. By the year 1987, the STF had taken over the control of the Batticaloa division from Kiran, right down to Potuvil in the South and were deployed in Company formation in no less than 15 camps. When the Indian Peace Keeping Force was introduced into Sri Lanka, the STF was dominating the ground in the Batticaloa division, having scored several successes against the terrorist groups. Normalcy was restored with the life of the citizen proceeding without interruption, trains and buses running as usual and having the proud record of not having a single STF camp come under attack from the LTTE from 1983 right up to the time that the IPKF moved into the Batticaloa division.”¹³

TALE OF TWO AMERICAN JESUIT PRIESTS IN BATTICALOA

Despite the unspecified ‘several successes’ recorded in the above blurb until 1987, Anderson brothers in their book, *War Zones* (1988) had described the trauma caused by the STF operations to the Tamils in the Eastern Front. [*see*, Chapter 44] The ‘several successes’ of STF caused the loss and disappearance of thousands of Tamil civilians.

One particular disappearance was that of Eugene J. Hebert, an American Jesuit priest stationed in Batticaloa. It became internationally known via the *Insight* magazine (Washington DC), only because his brother-in-law J. Hubert Dumesnil of Lafayette, Louisiana, contributed a letter to this magazine, incorporating the last letter written by this disappeared priest Hebert to one of his friends. To quote,

“Your cover story of Oct. 22 on Sri Lanka, describing the vicious conflict between the Sinhalese and the rebel Tamil Tigers, is excellent.

The American Jesuit, the Rev. Eugene J. Hebert, reported missing in the Eastern Province, is my brother-in-law. Father Hebert has been in Sri Lanka 42 years. He is well regarded and respected by Tamils and Sinhalese alike. He is nonpolitical and possibly best known for his talents as a basketball coach.

Father Hebert is originally from Jennings, LA., and is the first American Jesuit missing in the Sri Lankan conflict. It is now over 3 and a half months since he was reported missing, and we have received no factual explanation. The police force in Batticaloa has initiated a special investigation. I appeal to the governments of the United States and Sri Lanka to insist that this crime not go unsolved. His last letter, to a fellow Jesuit in New Orleans, Tom Clancey, is below.

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J. Hubert Dumesnil,
Lafayette, LA.”

Though Fr. Hebert’s brother-in-law had wished that ‘this crime not go unsolved’ — it still remains unsolved. The last agony-filled letter of disappeared Fr. Hebert, as printed in the *Insight* magazine, with his photo, read as follows [Brief descriptions within parentheses, are as in the originally published version]:

“Batticaloa, Sri Lanka
August 4, 1990

Dear Tom,

It was good to hear from you. In fact this was the first letter I received in over two months. As you must know we are in the middle of a civil war. During the past seven years we have been taken over by the special police, the Indian Army, some of the Tamil militant groups, the Tamil Tigers and now the Sri Lanka Army. Every one of our conquerors have made the population of Batticaloa suffer. We are cut off from the rest of the island and the world. We listen to the radio distortions of what is really happening to us. The only transport out is a convoy of buses that take a select few every week or sometimes two weeks. Electricity is sporadic. We have been without it for the last three days. Water is gotten from wells with a bucket and rope.

When the army first came in on June 25 no shot was fired as the Tamil Tigers had withdrawn to fight first in Jaffna. But then began arrests of innocent citizens, looting, killings and burning on public roads to terrorize the people, etc. I had to supervise the burial of two, a man and a woman, who had been killed, put into a sack and thrown off the bridge into the lagoon just in front of St. Sebastian’s Church. They had been in the water three days before we were able to get the army to let us bury them.

There has been some improvement lately. The Peace committee, a group of citizens of which Harry Miller [a fellow Jesuit in Batticaloa] is a very active member, has made many representations to the Army authorities. Their efforts have stopped the burning of bodies on the public roads and there has not been any persons thrown off the bridge for two weeks now. But the arrests of boys, mostly innocent, continue.

Two past presidents of the Citizens for Peace Committee have been shot and killed, including the parish priest of the Cathedral. But Harry Miller, using his American citizenship as a partial protection, does what he can to alleviate the sufferings of the poor people. Father Selvaraj, a young diocesan priest, was killed a month ago because he was a Tamil. Another young priest, Father Ambrose, was stoned by the Muslims as he passed through their village taking a boy to the hospital. He is in intensive care in Colombo. He was flown there by air force helicopter. He is just beginning to recognize people and can now take food through the mouth.

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Enough of our trials. The Lord continues to take care of us. Batticaloa is better off than the other sections of the Eastern and Northern provinces. To get to the information you requested, the fiscal year of the ETI [the Eastern Technical Institute, a trade school that was then run by Father Hebert] ends on March 31. I had really planned to write to U.S. AID [the Agency for International Development] for another grant. We are running rehabilitation courses for ex-militants and other youth. Every four months we train 20 boys in welding, 20 in refrigeration repairs and 25 in house wiring. Every six months we train 15 in radio and TV repair. These courses are being funded by Norad and a Canadian group. This is in addition to our regular three-year course in general mechanical trades. So we are short on space and I had hoped to get U.S. AID to fund the extension of our buildings. But it is impossible to get estimates or do anything now. There is very little activity in the town now. Only in the last few days have a few of the shops opened. Even the ETI, which was able to function in the worst days, is hardly working now. We open part of the morning only. Only the staff comes. None of the boys dare to come on the streets until conditions improve.

Pray for us. God willing, things will be changed by the time I write again. We are used to vast fluctuations in fortune.

Sincerely in Christ,
Eugene J. Hebert, S. J.

[*Handwritten*] Don’t know when you will receive this letter.”¹⁴

Father Eugene Hebert was 63, when he disappeared in 1990. He was the first and only American to suffer this fate in Eelam territory, and now after 14 years, it can be reasonably assumed that he had been killed — *but not by the LTTE*. Who killed Father Hebert? In his last letter, Fr. Hebert had noted the killing of Father Selvaraj around July 1990 ‘because he was a Tamil’ and that Father Ambrose was ‘stoned’ by the Muslims. Father Hebert also mentioned about fellow Jesuit Rev. Harry Miller in his letter. Fr. Miller is still living, and he was met by Edward Gargan, the *New York Times* correspondent a year later, whose report appeared in 1991. This report, containing reference to Fr. Hebert’s disappearance, is reproduced below:

“Batticaloa, Sri Lanka-

The other day, the Reverend Harry Miller walked into the parched scrub land outside this war-weary town. He walked until a couple of young men with automatic rifles materialized from the landscape to escort him to their camp. It was the local headquarters of the guerrilla army of ethnic Tamils — the so-called Tamil Tigers — who are fighting to establish a separate state on this island.

‘They had kidnapped this guy,’ said Father Miller, 65, his native Louisiana lilt skewed by a South Asian cadence nurtured over the last 43 years here.

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‘They wanted him to provide them with 75,000 rupees’, about \$1,875. ‘He’s a pensioner working on our Peace Committee’. I told them, ‘You’re not going to get any money from him even if you kill him’. Finally, ‘I gave them 10,000 rupees and he’s back’. For Father Miller, it was a routine day, perhaps a bit better than routine because for the first time in a while he had saved a life. More often in the last year, though, it has been chronicling the deaths and disappearances of thousands of local people that has consumed the New Orleans Jesuit.

In a corner turret of the high school he once ran, Father Miller records each death, each disappearance, each buried body, each pile of ashes, all the final product, he says, of arrests and roundups of Tamils by the Sri Lankan Army and police. He tells the tale of what happened to Kockkadicholai village in July. ‘There was this army tractor going along hauling some things and the Tigers blew it up and killed the soldiers,’ he said. ‘The army came back and massacred the people of this village, 123 dead and 40 in the hospital. They burned 350 kadjan houses, coconut-leaf houses. They just shot the people. Fifty-six of the bodies were burned, 67 were buried. It was the army. No doubt about it. ‘They feel free to burn bodies at the roadside because nobody will testify against them. They feel free to throw boys in wells because nobody will testify against them. They feel free to kick boys in the head because nobody will testify against them. They feel free to dispose of 2,700 citizens of Batticaloa’.

Behind his battered wooden desk, Father Miller flips through page after page listing the names of people who are no longer found in Batticaloa, names that the Peace Committee has compiled and sent to the local army and police commanders seeking information. The committee, a group of local people put together by Father Miller, badger the authorities for explanations. Rarely do they get any; more often than not, it is subtle threats of violence that filter their way. ‘Already, two presidents of the Peace Committee have resigned,’ Father Miller said. ‘They were afraid for their families’.

For nearly a decade the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan armed forces have battled for control of the eastern part of this island. The Tigers say they fight for the rights of the Tamil ethnic minority, for years discriminated against by the majority Sinhalese; the Sri Lankan forces battle to preserve national unity. In daylight hours, the army controls the single 80-kilometer (50-mile) stretch of road between Batticaloa and government-controlled areas to the west. But when the sun settles into the mountains, the countryside and the road return to the Tigers.

When Father Miller came here in 1948 as a fresh-faced missionary, Sri Lanka was a drowsy place of farmers and fishermen. ‘It was like 1890s America, like the Louisiana my grandfather grew up in,’ he said. ‘It’s changed a bit and changed for the worse. In those days, there was never any violence, except on the football field.’ Last year, a fellow Jesuit from Louisiana, Eugene J. Hebert, disappeared while riding his scooter back to Batticaloa from an

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outlying convent. ‘I went to the army and the police,’ Father Miller said, ‘and no investigation was ever done’.

Last year, he said, the killing reached a climax and the work of the Peace Committee began in earnest. ‘Last July, we started to keep a record of the people taken into custody by the army. As of this month, we have 2,700 disappeared people. Some came back. Most of those who didn’t come back are probably dead. In the early days last year, we saw piles of burning bodies. People continue to disappear’.

So gruesome has the situation become that the local police chief talks of his police camp as Belsen, a reference to the Nazi death camp. ‘That’s where they take young boys to question them,’ Father Miller said. ‘They tie them up, drop them in a well. ‘Are you a Tiger’? ‘No.’ Drop them again. ‘Are you a Tiger?’ ‘No’. Eventually they get a confession.’ Father Miller shook his head. ‘There’s no resolution. Neither side has lost. Neither side can win’.”¹⁵

The 1990–1991 scenario in the Eastern Front, as presented by Jesuit Fathers from Louisiana, Eugene Hebert and Harry Miller, was revealing for the torture received by young Tamils. One notable feature in both documents (the last letter of Fr. Hebert and the interview of Fr. Miller with correspondent Edward Gargan) is that the sufferings of Muslims *at the hands of Tamil Tigers* have not been even passingly indicated. Could it be inferred that these two American Jesuit priests were partial to the LTTE and were oblivious about the alleged torture of Muslims by the Tamil Tigers? Not by objective reasoning, since Fr. Miller had informed correspondent Gargan about the kidnapping of a member of the Citizen’s Committee by the Tamil Tigers. Evidence of torture as presented by Fr. Hebert and Fr. Miller was tilted against the Sri Lankan army and police (inclusive of the STF operatives). It should be noted that the STF operatives were recruited *exclusively from the Sinhalese and Muslim ethnic groups*.

One statement which appears in Fr. Hebert’s last letter that “Batticaloa is better off than the other sections of the Eastern and Northern provinces received independent confirmation from correspondents Tony Emerson and Steve Le Vine in March 1991, reporting from Trincomalee. Excerpts:

“In the beautiful harbor of Trincomalee, capital of Sri Lanka’s northeastern province, ethnic Tamils whisper of security men who come at night, wearing black shirts and pants, and announce that ‘you are wanted for questioning’. No one knows how many Tamils have disappeared from Trincomalee, apparent casualties of a new phase in Sri Lanka’s eight-year-old civil war. The Sri Lankan Army is pressing a campaign to purge civilian areas of rebels from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who are fighting for an independent state in the northern and eastern regions. From Batticaloa, south of Trincomalee, human rights observers report that in the last nine months,

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2,000 Tamil youths have been arrested on unknown charges — and have not been seen since.

It will be difficult to count the missing in Trincomalee, an increasingly silent and empty city. Last June the Liberation Tigers broke a 13-month truce by massacring scores of police officers. The Colombo government responded by dropping ‘barrel bombs’, oil drums filled with burning liquid, in civilian neighborhoods to smoke out the rebels. Nationwide, more than 4,000 people have died in rebel ambushes and Army reprisals since that time; in Trincomalee, an estimated one fourth of the 350,000 residents have fled the fighting and Army manhunts — not always to safety.

Soldiers have searched for rebel suspects in some of the 30 refugee camps that now ring Trincomalee. A leader of one camp, near the village of Nilaveli north of Trincomalee, said that 84 men were detained in a series of Army sweeps last year. One refugee who returned said he was locked in a prison that held about 350 men. ‘They tied my hands behind my back and kept a blindfold around my eyes. I hardly ate for two weeks,’ he said. ‘I was finally released with 15 (men). We don’t know what happened to the others.’ The camp leader, who requested anonymity, said only 45 of the 84 detainees are accounted for. The others ‘disappeared or have been killed. We don’t know’.

The apparent Army crackdown on civilians has not improved its position on the battlefield. The rebels still hold sway over much of the northern and eastern provinces, except in big cities where government forces guard road-blocks by day and usually retreat to barracks by night. Diplomats in Colombo say President Ranasinghe Premadasa, considered pragmatic but occasionally ruthless, has given Army hard-liners until June to gain the upper hand, or he may attempt to reopen peace talks. An Army surge seems unlikely, but so is a Tiger victory. In the Trincomalee district, the army estimates that the rebels are outnumbered by at least 10,000 to 800.

Most Tamils in Trincomalee won’t discuss the disappearances, even under the cloak of anonymity. ‘I’ve stopped working in human rights because it’s not wise anymore,’ says a formerly outspoken advocate. A local relief official said he seeks an escort from international organizations just to deliver medicine to the refugee camps. Another adds, ‘We don’t get involved with human-rights issues. Our lives literally depend on it.’ A citizens committee set up by the military to represent refugees directs inquiries about missing persons back to the Army. Brig. Siri Pieris, Army commander in the Trincomalee district, said he had received no official complaints of disappearances, but was investigating the reports nonetheless...”¹⁶

One can guess that Brig. Siri Pieris should have a perverted sense of humor. Also of note is the date of this report’s publication — March 25, 1991. This was nearly two months before Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination in Sri Perumbudur. The passing remark by Emerson and Le Vine regarding President Premadasa giving the “Army hard-liners until June to gain the upper hand,

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or he may attempt to reopen peace talks”, when linked with the torture and killing of Tamils in the Eastern Province by the STF operatives (as recorded by Father Hebert, Father Miller and correspondents Emerson and Le Vine) might have been of some significance which has gone un-noticed, after Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination on May 21, 1991.

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‘Learn to ‘play the piano’. In playing the piano all ten fingers are in motion; it won’t do to move some fingers only and not others. But if all ten fingers press down all at once, there is no melody.’

— MAO TSE TUNG, on Leadership¹

THE CURSE OF the Eelam Tamils, especially during the post-independence period, was that, all ‘ten fingers’ which Mao admonished should not ‘press down all at once’ were in play in the political field. In the pre-militant period from 1950s to the beginning of 1970s, one could literally count these ten ‘fingers’: Ponnambalam’s band, Chelvanayakam’s band, Trotsky admirers’ band, Stalin apologists’ band, Mao Leftist’s vocal-only band, Suntheralingam’s high caste solo, UNP loyalists’ band, local Independents’ (likes of Duraiappah, P. R. Selvanayakam) band, fence-sitting Muslim band and Thondaman’s separate solo. One could gloat in paper about this situation as democracy at best, but pragmatically it was the coffin nail for Tamil rights in the island. At every election from 1947 to 1970, all these groups produced a cacophony of discordant noise on Tamil rights. Some semblance of political unity was achieved in 1972. But it was of no avail.

The same history was repeated when the next generation of Tamils came of age and turned towards militancy. Mao’s ‘ten fingers’ maxim was again demonstrated in the mid-1980s and Indian Intelligence operatives exploited the Eelam scene to sow discord among the Tamil militants. What was sadly missing was the melody of freedom struggle. It was to the credit of Pirabhakaran that he decimated the cacophonous screamers (especially the TELO and EPRLF) to fine-tune the military arm of Tamil power. It was a heart-rending operation. Nevertheless, the outcome was the need of the times. ‘The sole representatives’ claim of LTTE is currently discussed in pejorative sense by analysts and editorialists from Colombo and Chennai. But, those who fault Pirabhakaran for his high-handedness (including Mr. Ashley Wills, the former US ambassador in Sri Lanka) seem oblivious to the facts relating to the American Independence War, where the Patriots more or less behaved like the LTTE cadres. If one has to be fair, though there exists a time gap of nearly

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two centuries, one cannot approve one set of morals for George Washington’s army and demand another set of morals from Pirabhakaran’s liberation army.

In 1983, Pirabhakaran embarked on a dauntless mission of projecting the Tamil military power. If he could count on an outside ally in his mission, it was only the former Tamil Nadu chief minister M. G. Ramachandran. And MGR also passed from the scene in December 1987. Since then, LTTE has stood all alone. Now, the performance of LTTE in the Eastern Front can be reviewed in selected yearly frames — 1990, 1993, 1997 and 2002.

PROOF OF THE PUDDING

The proof of the pudding is in the eating, says the old adage. I provide below few analyses, between 1990 and 2002, to assess the level of success Pirabhakaran’s LTTE had achieved in eroding the legitimacy of Sri Lanka’s unitary state.

(1) JOURNALIST JOHN COLMEY AND ROHAN GUNARATNA ON THE EVENTS OF JUNE–JULY 1990

Following the final departure of India’s army from Eelam in March 1990, President Premadasa’s government, soft-pedalled and even double-crossed on the understood ‘positions’ taken during the year-long negotiations held between LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. This led to the beginning of Eelam War II in June 1990. LTTE’s views were presented by its chief spokesman Anton Balasingham in his interview with John Colmey, the *Asiaweek*’s correspondent. To quote,

“Q: Why did fighting break out again?”

Balasingham: We had been talking for one year and two months. During that time, there was a political void in the north and east. The provincial council administration had collapsed. We were preparing ourselves for a provincial election and were preparing ourselves to take over the provincial council. But we suddenly realised there was a stalemate — delay on the part of the government to take concrete actions even though they were saying they were going to do this and that. Mr. Premadasa would say something positive while Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne would give negative answers. For example, on the question of arms Ranjan insisted that the LTTE not be allowed to participate in an election without laying down arms, which was not agreeable to us. There were contradictions.

Then there were elements within the armed forces which were opposed to a negotiated settlement. Because of that there was a build-up of the army in the north and east and that worried us. There were quite a lot of incidents between soldiers and LTTE guerillas. The Sinhalese police in the east were creating a lot of problems, coming out of the police stations, beating up Tamil

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people. There were elements within the armed forces that wanted to create a confrontational situation.

Q: Are you saying the government was never sincere?

Balasingham: They could say ‘we are negotiating with the LTTE and everything will be rosy’ and thereby get foreign aid. All the while they were building up their forces. . . . We thought they were sincere early on. Later, when the Indians left, the situation changed. They held talks with the EPRLF (a rival Tamil group). That disillusioned us because the EPRLF backed Indian occupation. We were talking with [Justice Minister Shahul] Hameed and the president, while Ranjan Wijeratne was talking with other groups.

Q: But the Tigers also contributed to the tensions.

Balasingham: That is how the government is trying to portray it, the LTTE was doing this and that and from a small incident started everything. But for a long time the army was not very happy to be confined to barracks — they always wanted free mobility, wanted to come out from their camps.

Q: Is there a chance for a ceasefire, new talks?

Balasingham: It depends on the government. The government has declared that there cannot be negotiations unless we lay down arms. This was said by Ranjan Wijeratne. This is totally unacceptable to us. If the government insists on that condition, there will be no negotiations. There will be a protracted war.

Q: The government says the conflict is between the army and the Tigers and not with the Tamil people.

Balasingham: This is an ethnic war. The government is mobilising the Sinhalese population. The aerial bombardment of the north, the calculated economic embargo on the north, where they are not allowing food supplies, medical supplies or fuel to come in — it’s a collective punishment against our people.”²

John Colmey also recorded: “The army’s strategy is to gain control of the east, where fighting first broke out, by surrounding guerillas in the jungles and cutting off their supply lines, and then push north and repeat the process.” He also quoted the original source of this strategy, the gung-ho spirited Ranjan Wijeratne who was overseeing the operations. To quote, ‘Once they’re cornered in the jungles and their supply lines are cut off, it’s only a matter of time’, says Wijeratne. ‘We’ll finish them off’.³

Anton Balasingham’s answers to the first two questions had been corroborated by Rohan Gunaratna subsequently.⁴ Minister Wijeratne was in a hurry, even in 1990, to establish his credentials for the Presidential sweepstakes, in competition with other two UNPers — Lalith Athulathmudali and Gamini Disسانayake. And he wanted to do that by claiming Pirabhakaran’s scalp, figuratively if not literally. According to Rohan Gunaratna, “Wijeratne’s intention was to crush the LTTE in the same manner that he had dealt with the

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JVP. This would have assured him honour and even the subsequent presidency of Sri Lanka.”⁵ Gunaratna has stated in a foot-note that this was revealed to him by minister Wijeratne two days before his assassination in an interview, the validity of which has to be assumed in good faith.

Following is a chronological synopsis of ten-day events in June 1990 which opened the Eelam War II.⁶

June 10, 1990: a Muslim youth found with a Sinhala woman inside a refugee camp in Batticaloa town, assaulted by the husband of the woman. This youth was a tailor in the services of LTTE. They were taken to the police station at Batticaloa.

June 11, 1990: 250 LTTE cadres surrounded the police station at Batticaloa town, and took control of the station. . . . LTTE captured 9 police stations in the Eastern province, abducted 650 policemen and initially shot and killed 135 of them.

June 13, 1990: A ceasefire between LTTE and the Sri Lankan forces was arranged over the phone at mid day. An LTTE press release issued from London claimed that the government did not maintain the ceasefire.

June 14, 1990: LTTE captured Odduchudan and Mankulam police stations.

June 15, 1990: Justice Minister Hameed flew to Jaffna and met with LTTE leaders led by Anton Balasingham in Nallur.

June 16, 1990: Justice Minister Hameed returned to Palaly to confer with LTTE, but was unable to meet them on that day or thereafter.

June 19, 1990: an LTTE assassination squad on the orders of Pottu Amman, the LTTE Chief of Intelligence, murdered EPRLF leader Padmanabha, parliamentarian Yogasangari, North-East Provincial Council Minister Kirubakaran and 12 others in Madras.

Gunaratna failed to suggest the motive behind LTTE’s attack on the EPRLF. It was left to Dayan Jayatilleka, another anti-LTTE commentator and an insider in the Premadasa administration, to let the cat out of the bag, ten years later, in his eulogy to K. Padmanabha.[*see*, Chapter 38]. This was one instance where LTTE, due to prevailing circumstances, employed the classic ‘fast draw’ of Clint Eastwood’s movie genre to protect its organization. Many Tamils, no doubt, had qualms about the decimation of EPRLF’s lead members. In hindsight, this ‘fast draw’ can be reconciled as a survival, military strategy which worked at that instance. Few months later, this deed was set in perspective by Anton Balasingham to Deanna Hodgins as follows:

‘Of course, in Colombo, they will say that these fellows are wiping out all the opposition’ says Tamil Tiger spokesman Balasingham. ‘But this is a life-and-death struggle for us, for our people. We are facing genocide. We can’t tolerate traitors, informants; otherwise we will perish.’⁷

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(2) JOURNALIST AND COMMENTATOR MERVYN DE SILVA IN 1990

Mervyn de Silva captured superbly the then Eastern Front scene, incorporating the multiple elements who had planted their feet to tangle with the LTTE. Though relatively objective in analysis, even an erudite de Silva had to cater for his Sinhalese readership. Thus, some of his assertions are tinged with subtle anti-LTTE bias:

“... There is no logical basis for a North-East merger today than the linguistic link between the Tamils and the Muslims — the Muslims being Tamil speakers. (Many Muslims also speak Sinhala but it is NOT their main mode of communication. Sinhala, indisputably is for the Muslim in the seven Sinhala-dominated provinces.”⁸

Then, Mervyn de Silva presented accurately the Muslim thinking as follows:

“Simple arithmetic (a third of the province) has already made the Muslim, the smallest group nationwide, conscious of its strength AND weakness. The strength lay in the numbers game of parliamentary or provincial polls. Or the simplest numbers game of all, after the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord, a referendum in the East after one year to decide the fate of the temporarily merged North-East. Does the Muslim use his unique position as the decisive, balancing factor to extract political concessions (i.e. sharing of power and perks) and, if so, from whom — the Tamils or the Sinhalese? Who will give the better deal? Perhaps the Sinhalese, the smallest of the three communities and thus likely to offer more, with the additional advantage of exercising power at the Centre, Colombo.”⁹

Following this, Mervyn de Silva also semi-cryptically identified the multiple players who sowed discord in the Eastern Front in mid 1990. To quote,

“The East, the main battlefield, gets redder. The East is militarised, with all the counter-insurgency ‘expertise’ concentrated in the East — new State militia such as the STF assisted by international expertise. In the run-up to the Accord and the IPKF (1983–87) the following trends become increasingly evident and assertive: the re-shaping of the Muslim identity with Islam as the instrument, the advent of new political and politico-military formations, the JIHAD, the Muslim Congress, more East-based than national, the spread of weapons, and intensified militarisation, and a more complex, confusing pattern of alignments, more shadowy than recognisable.

Enter the IPKF. Its sheer weight begins to tell in the North, and the Tigers flee into the jungles, with the IPKF transforming itself from peace-keeper to army of occupation. In a more complex East however, the IPKF itself has to adjust itself to a different political-military challenge. The Indians quickly spot the relative autonomy of the Muslim factor — a Muslim Brigadier becomes the IPKF’s operational head in the East.”¹⁰

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Pirabhakaran’s LTTE had to adjust to all these continuously changing variables. Some of the ‘massacres’ attributed to LTTE in the Eastern front has to be understood from this perspective. What has been under-stated by LTTE’s critics (Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims) was the nefarious deeds planned and executed by the India’s policy operatives in fomenting friction between the Tamils and the Muslims in the Eastern front. Covert evidence for this is present in a document entitled ‘Afghanistan and Sri Lanka: A Comparison of Operational Styles’, which appeared in the *Annual Report of the Indian Defence Review*¹¹. This document was authored by ‘IDR Research Team’, with IDR obviously standing for Indian Defence Review. From the cited pegs to political events, it is evident that this Annual Report was for the year 1989, when LTTE was engaged in confrontation with the Indian army. Presented opinion is revealing for its bile (filled with sickening cliches), cocksureness on the Indian military power and what the Indian panjandrams had predicted for Pirabhakaran. Excerpts:

“The LTTE had become a brutal and fascist organization. Lamp post killings, tyre treatment and cyanide capsules had come to symbolize a killers’ cult of surprising viciousness. The key question was that since the LTTE had emerged (by natural selection) as the strongest Tamil group should India (as the patron of the Tamils) have come to terms with it? Had the LTTE turned completely renegade and unresponsive to Indian interests?... The Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ mission of keeping international public opinion favourable has been achieved but at considerable military and economic cost. Time alone will tell if the domestic cost of placating world opinion were justified...”

Then, the Indian pundits had pontificated why Pirabhakaran was not eliminated at the early stages of the Indian army’s confrontation with the LTTE by comparing Pirabhakaran with Hafizulla Amin (1929–1979) of Afghanistan during Soviet invasion in 1979. To quote,

“If we had come to the clear and unambiguous conclusion that Prabhakaran had become a Hafizulla Amin, our response should have been as ruthless and straightforward as the Soviets. They carefully bided their time, completed methodical preparations and then stunned the world with a swift and decisive blow. One air assault and five motor rifle divisions were thrown in. Result: Hafizulla Amin’s presidential palace was attacked, Amin himself was killed and Barbrak Karmal of the rival Parcham faction came riding in on Soviet tanks. All of Afghanistan lay prostrate in five days.”¹²

Hafizullah Amin was the nominal leader of Afghanistan for two months, between September and December 1979. He was perceived by the Soviets as

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an American ‘implant’, though he is now labeled as one who displayed independent nationalism who refused to take Soviet advice. Hafizullah Amin lived in USA during the 1950s and received a Masters degree from the Columbia University in 1957 and he returned to Afghanistan in 1965. Thus, comparing Pirabhakaran to Hafizulla Amin is like comparing cheese and chalk, though Pirabhakaran is an Eelam nationalist. Nevertheless the Indian pundits had wished for Pirabhakaran’s elimination by the Indian army and the anointment of Eelam leadership with a Babrak Karmal, who turned out to be Varadarajah Perumal of EPRLF. The Indian pundits also lamented on the lack of quality intelligence on the LTTE:

“One is not aware of the quality of intelligence input regarding the strength, armament pattern and motivation of the LTTE but surely external intelligence-gathering agencies such as RAW should have been able to give us this information? Indian military leaders freely admitted in the media that there had been a major intelligence assessment failure.”¹³

Thus, it can be inferred that the Indian panjandrums wished for a scenario of repeating the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the Eelam in 1987. But everything misfired, probably due to the nimble mind of Pirabhakaran and his advisors. How much of Clint Eastwood’s movie cassettes helped Pirabhakaran in developing his nimble mind is difficult to assess. But it is self-evident that Pirabhakaran did absorb the spirit and significance of ‘fast draw of a gun-fighter’ from the Eastwood *manthra* and used it for his survival skillfully. Not only that, what distinguished him from his other Tamil militant contemporaries, was the persisting ‘fire in the belly’ to project the Tamil power.

(3) ANALYST JAYANATH RAJEPAKSE IN 1993

By late 1993, Premadasa as well as Ranjan Wijeratne had lost their lives. In the following passage, Rajepakse (a Sinhalese Foreign Ministry official, in charge of the South Asia desk) had correctly deciphered the ground-reality of the situation, as it stood in 1993 under D. B. Wijetunge’s leadership. To quote,

‘If the LTTE’s challenge is to be withstood successfully, their military capability has to be blunted to the point where they themselves stand denied a military option. But, for such an endeavour to make any sense, let alone be realised, it has to go hand-in-hand with negotiation of a settlement that can command Tamil support across the board. For, it is only to the extent if any that the Tamils in the state’s (that means Government and Opposition) sincerity of purpose about a fair settlement, that they could be persuaded to move out from under the LTTE’s shadow. And, unless and until that happens, any talk of a Government military option is pie in the sky.

Even at the level of military action per se to blunt the LTTE’s capability, two conditions need to be met, of which there has been no evidence yet; first, our

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forces have to be provided with the resources in men and requisite types of weaponry which would enable them to wrest and hold the military initiative long enough; and second, they need to have this available simultaneously in the north and east. For the Government’s strategy of first clearing and securing the east is doubly flawed; at the theoretical level, it is a non sequitur given the LTTE’s aim to establish a contiguous Tamil domain in north and east; so, at the very least, the state’s forces need to be able to wrest and hold the military initiative simultaneously in north and east. But even granted that they are given these resources, one still needs the back-up of para-military forces to defend, and civilian cadres to administer cleared areas, to enable the forces to extend the frontier of clearance. . . .”¹⁴

(4) AMERICAN JOURNALIST JOHN CRAMER IN 1997

Journalist John D. Cramer visited Batticaloa, while Chandrika Kumaratunga, the President, and her kin Anuruddha Ratwatte were waging their ‘War for Peace’ against the LTTE. The nominal prime minister then was the figuratively comatose mother of Mrs. Kumaratunga. Excerpts from Cramer’s on-the spot report to the *Washington Post* are as follows: [Note: Words within the parentheses are as in the original.]

“... But the government still does not control vast areas of the country and has been forced twice to extend amnesty to tens of thousands of deserters who fled after being thrust into combat with scant training against a hardened guerrilla force.

For their part, the Tigers also claim the upper hand, but they have lost their northern stronghold on the Jaffna Peninsula, increasingly are sending adolescent boys and girls to fight and are attacking foreign ships carrying food and other supplies in Sri Lankan waters. . . . Most Tamils, who make up about 20 percent of the island’s population and are predominantly Hindu, call the Tigers freedom fighters. Some Tamils, however, ‘oppose the LTTE, but do not say so openly,’ a Batticaloa man says, using the separatist group’s initials. ‘The Tigers come and extort money, and if you refuse, you are in trouble.’ The Tamils, he says, ‘are caught in the middle. They are detained, tortured, killed by both sides because each thinks they support the other’ . . .

In Batticaloa district, a rural area dominated by Tamils and rice paddies, life revolves around the rice planting and harvest seasons as it has for centuries. The army controls the town itself, a battered, dusty and impoverished place along a lagoon, as well as the crumbling roads connecting it with outside areas, but it is a fragile control. At night, the soldiers hunker down behind sandbags as the Tigers sporadically attack outlying areas with rifle fire, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades before returning to the jungle at dawn.

In nearby villages, many Tamil civilians — who live in dirt-floor shacks without electricity or running water, wear threadbare clothing and ride dilapidated

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bicycles and ox carts — say they give money, food and other supplies willingly to support the rebels, who are neatly dressed, disciplined and well-fed, and ride expensive motorcycles up and down the dirt roads. ‘They ask politely, lovingly, for what we can give,’ an old woman says. ‘The rich Tamils do not support the LTTE, but the poor do, and these (Tiger) boys and girls are only trying to get us what is rightfully ours’.

One Tamil man says the war has biblical overtones. ‘The Sinhalese are like the Egyptians and the Tamils like the Israelites, and our people believe (Tiger leader Velupillai) Prabhakaran is like Moses leading his people from slavery to a promised land,’ he says. ‘The only difference is we already know where our promised land is — it is right here’.

But some Tamils, even in the heart of Tiger territory, privately say they oppose or are neutral to the rebel force, and many able-bodied men in their twenties and thirties are content to leave the fighting to Tamil teenagers...¹⁵

This feature appeared few weeks before the American government designated the LTTE as one of the foreign terrorist organizations.

(5) THE SINHALESE EDITORIALIST OF *Sunday Leader* (COLOMBO) IN NOV. 2002

Five years later, still Chandrika Kumaratunga remained as the lame duck President of a rump Sri Lankan state. Ranil Wickremasinghe of the UNP occupied the Prime Minister’s slot. The Sinhalese editorialist presented a back-handed compliment to Pirabhakaran’s tenacity.

“... The situation in the north and east is far from acceptable, by any yardstick. The LTTE continues to do most things it used to do even before the MoU and ceasefire came into place. It extorts money, levies taxes, operates a police force and has even established courts of law. None of these things are new; they represent a *status quo* that evolved over two decades. They reflect the fact that there was indeed a *de facto* Eelam at the time hostilities ceased. It is not entirely intelligent to insist that all this should be dismantled forthwith, and that the writ of the government must run equally everywhere in Sri Lanka. Even as Ranil Wickremesinghe speaks of ‘regaining Sri Lanka’, the challenge before him is not so much to regain the nation but the north and east, and by peaceful means, to boot.

There is no questioning that the situation today is heaps better than it was a year ago. That this tends to vex the likes of the Venerable Maduluwawe Sobitha Thero of this world is simply tough luck. They had two whole decades in which to put their courage where their mouths are: volunteer for the army, take a gun and go to Jaffna to fight for their cause. They didn’t, and Sri Lanka was left with an un-winnable war. For the warmongers to pontificate today, from the security they enjoy thanks to the peace process, is easy. But it still begs the question, where were they all these years? Certainly not on the front lines!

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The LTTE are not saints; they are in large measure a band of blood-thirsty terrorists. But what other choice do we have than to negotiate a settlement in the hope, the LTTE will eventually embrace democracy in the long run. So deep is the abyss into which our nation had sunk. . . .”¹⁶

By the end of 2002, even the LTTE un-friendly Sinhalese journalists like the editor of *Sunday Leader* had come to state the reality that a ‘de facto Eelam’ had been established by the LTTE. That Pirabhakaran’s army achieved this *without a vital air-power* is an achievement of gigantic proportions.

ALWAYS ‘CORNERED’ AND STILL STANDING IN THE RING

Among the more than one hundred profiles, sketches, ‘inside-stories’ which I have read on Pirabhakaran since 1984, one penned by K. P. Sunil, for the *Illustrated Weekly of India* magazine stands out for its timeless sheen. Captioned, ‘In the News: Cornered’, it appeared in mid 1987 at the height of the Vadamarachchi Operation by the Sri Lankan army. Now that, Pirabhakaran reached 50 in November 2004, this profile is worthy of a revisit. Sunil’s one-page profile highlighted incidents of Pirabhakaran’s early life and carried some worn-out cliches like ‘whose strategic brilliance is matched only by his ruthlessness’. He wrote:

“While the LTTE was consolidating its position [in the early 1980s], several other militant groups like the Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS), the Tamil Eelam Liberation Army (TELA), the Tamil Eelam Army (TEA) and several other minor groups with similar goals and objectives, but with marginal differences in ideology, had sprung up. With the proliferation in the number of militant groups, the Eelam movement started losing its identity and Pirabhakaran probably encouraged by his superior military strength and strike power, decided to assimilate lesser groups through military action rather than through a process of dialogue.”¹⁷

Sunil was indeed correct in mentioning that by 1986, ‘with the proliferation in the number of militant groups the Eelam movement started losing its identity’ and recording the course of action Pirabhakaran took to deal with the TELO and EPRLF. But being an Indian journalist, he tactfully omitted mentioning Indian names and pointing fingers at the RAW operatives who were responsible for this. Also it should be noted that, by 1990, Pirabhakaran was successful in incorporating the EROS group into his fold by non-military means. Subsequently Sunil ended his profile with the following five sentences, consisting of three questions:

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“It remains to be seen what will happen to Pirabhakaran. Will he survive the present crisis? Will he retreat to friendly Tamil Nadu to direct further campaigns in the future? Or will he buckle down under the sustained Sri Lankan assault and take recourse to the cyanide vial? Whatever happens, his fate could well decide the future of Eelam.”¹⁸

Now, 17 years later, all know that Pirabhakaran survived the Vadamarachchi ‘crisis’. He did not retreat to ‘friendly Tamil Nadu’ for his future campaigns. Rather he stayed put in the Eelam territory. Also, he never buckled down under the ‘sustained Sri Lankan assault and took recourse to the cyanide vial.’ But Pirabhakaran had been continuously ‘cornered’. He was cornered by the Indian army from late 1987 to early 1990. He was cornered by the Indian government in 1992 with the ban on LTTE and a court summons for the Rajiv Gandhi assassination. He was cornered by the Sri Lankan army in 1995 for the ‘Battle of Jaffna’. He was cornered by the Americans with a dubious label of leading a ‘foreign terrorist organization’ in 1997.

The applied definition of such a ‘foreign terrorist organization’ itself was vague, with one criterion being ‘It should be foreign in origin’. If that is so, what is the status of an American organization like the CIA, which has its headquarters in Langley, Virginia, but perform field operations — not indistinguishable from terrorism — in boundaries beyond America? Pirabhakaran was also cornered by the Sri Lankan army (assisted by the mercenary Western consultants, Israeli operatives, Pakistan operatives and other arms suppliers) from 1997 to 1999. So, Pirabhakaran has been always ‘Cornered’ (with the large case C), but he is still standing in the ring with his conviction of projecting the Tamil power.

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Tamil Victims of LTTE’s Power

“... Today we regret that we must begin our column with this: TERRORIST THREAT WARNING. We have received some alarming information from very high sources in the federal government.

Q: How high were they?

A: They were wearing their underpants on their heads.

According to these sources, terrorists may be planning an attack on America’s linguistic infrastructure. The targets will be critical strategic phrases without which this nation cannot function. ...”

— DAVE BARRY¹

THE ABOVE-REPRODUCED passage is a spoof of humorist Dave Barry on conservative columnist and language maven William Safire. Dave Barry will be delighted to know, how many simple English words have been twisted and roasted beyond the dictionary meaning by the editorialists and analysts (*aka* linguistic terrorists) in Colombo and Chennai. For example, opportunists who don’t have a following are pronounced as ‘leaders’. Defeats were embellished as a ‘victories’. Retreat was referred to as ‘Adjusting the Forward Defence Line’. Pakistan’s dictator and Osama bin Laden’s back-alley pal is gloatingly addressed with the phrase ‘a friend in need’. Thugs who had never seen a real battle field are tagged as ‘ex-militants’. Sense-challenged peeping toms are anointed with the accolade ‘human rights warriors’. Similarly, the word ‘victim’ is a gut wrenching blanket word for an individual if he or she had an unnatural death at the hands of LTTE, irrespective of his or her nefarious deeds of vain glory. But hapless Tamil citizens who lost their lives to indiscriminate bombing and torture by the Sri Lankan army were called as ‘terrorists’.

CATEGORIES OF LTTE’S MAIN VICTIMS

That LTTE’s growth, in terms of power, since 1986 produced quite a few categories of victims of different shades is undeniable. This is expected, since the power balance equation shows that one party has to lose power simultaneously for the other party to gain power. The parties that lost power totally or

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partially came to be identified as victims. Segments which lost power due to LTTE’s assertion of military clout include the following:

1. Post-Independent Sri Lanka’s unitary state, controlled by the power wielding Buddhist Aryan elements.
2. Sri Lanka’s Buddhist-dominated military establishment
3. India’s military establishment
4. Tamil-speaking Muslims
5. Political and societal power wielders among Tamils

That the first four categories were lording it over the Eelam Tamils for the past four decades is a given. Since I have analyzed the first four categories in the previous chapters, I will discuss the fifth category in this chapter.

LTTE VICTIMS AMONG THE TAMIL POLITICAL AND SOCIETAL POWER
WIELDERS

According to a list assembled by G. H. Peiris, a professor of geography at the University of Peradeniya, in 2000, LTTE was responsible for the death of 47 “Tamil leaders and important political activists.”² To protect his dubious credibility, Peiris has used the clause “believed to have been killed by the LTTE”. This is the one of the comprehensive list on the LTTE victims, until January 2000. Thus, it deserves analysis, since this list (in various permutations and combinations) has been prominently displayed in the internet by the racist Sri Lankan Buddhist websites and even in the South Asian Terrorism Portal (SATP) maintained by India’s stinking skunks of underground diplomacy. Another list, prepared by Walter Liyanarachchi, have added few more names of LTTE victims.³

I have previously discussed the circumstances surrounding the killings of some Tamils included in the two lists provided by Peiris and Liyanarachchi; for example, Duraiappah, Amirthalingam, Yogeswaran, Dharmalingam, Alalasundaram, Rajani Thiranagama, Sri Sabaratnam and Padmanabha who held political and societal positions. First, for record, the complete list of victims (names, positions and date of killing) prepared by the Sinhalese academic Peiris is given below. Secondly, I assess the relevance of the attributed ‘leadership criterion’ by which the victims’ names gained attention. I have also (a) corrected the idiosyncratic spelling and errors in spelling of some names, from the original list; (b) noted the factual fabrications within parentheses.

Chapter 47. Tamil Victims of LTTE’s Power

1. A. T. Duraiappah: Mayor, Jaffna; 27 July 1975
2. A. Thiagarajah: UNP organiser, Vaddukoddai; 24 April 1981 [*This killing has been identified with PLOTE by other observers.*]
3. K. T. Pulendran: UNP organiser, Vavuniya; 19 January 1983
4. Mala Ramachandran: MMC, Batticaloa; 1 Sept. 1983
5. R. J. Rajasooriar: UNP organiser, Jaffna; 12 August 1983
6. S. Gnanachandran: Govt. Agent, Mullaitivu; 24 February 1985
7. C. E. Anandarajah: School principal; 26 June 1985
8. B. K. Thambipillai: Chairman, Citizen’s Committee; 22 August 1985
9. M. Alalasundaram: TULF MP (Kopay); 3 Sept. 1985 [*This killing has been identified with TELO by other observers.*]
10. K. Rajalingam: TULF MP (Udupiddy); 3 Sept. 1985 [*Mr. Rajalingam had a natural death.*]
11. V. Dharmalingam: TULF MP (Manipay); Sept. 1985 [*This killing has been identified with TELO by other observers.*]
12. K. Thurairatnam: TULF MP (Point Pedro); Sept. 1985 [*Mr. Thurairatnam had a natural death.*]
13. P. K. Kirubakaran: Judge, Primary Court; 11 March 1986
14. Sri Sabaratnam: TELO leader; April/May 1986
15. K. Padmanabha: EPRLF General Secretary; mid 1986 [*The listed date of death is erroneous.*]
16. S. Kathiramalai: NGO social worker; 26 Sept. 1986
17. P. Vignarajah: Assistant Government Agent, Sammanthurai; 15 September 1987
18. P. Anthonimuttu: Government Agent, Batticaloa; 8 October 1987
19. S. S. Jeganathan: Assistant Government Agent, Batticaloa; 8 October 1987
20. P. Sinnadurai: Assistant Government Agent, Trincomalee; 26 November 1987

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21. M. E. Kandasamy: School principal; 14 December 1987
22. S. Sithamparanathan: School principal; 31 January 1988
23. S. Wijayanandan: District secretary, Communist Party; 8 March 1988
24. M. Velmurugu: TULF organiser; 20 March 1988
25. S. Rajshanker: President, Citizen’s Committee; 27 October 1988
26. S. Sambandamoorthy: TULF, District Development Council Chairman; 7 March 1989
27. V. M. Panchalingam: Government Agent, Jaffna; 1 May 1989
28. K. Pulendran: Assistant Government Agent, Kopay; 28 June 1989
29. A. Amirthalingam: Leader of the TULF; 13 July 1989
30. V. Yogeswaran: TULF MP [Jaffna]; 13 July 1989
31. Rajani Thiranagama: University teacher — political activist; 25 Sept. 1989
32. P. Ganeshalingam: EPRLF provincial minister; 28 January 1990
33. S. Thambimuthu: EPRLF MP; 7 May 1990
34. Mrs. Thambimuthu: Social worker; 7 May 1990
35. K. Padmanabha: Leader of the EPRLF; 19 June 1990 [*This is the same individual listed as no. 15. Thus, a redundant addition.*]
36. V. Yogasangari: EPRLF MP; 19 June 1990
37. K. Kanagaratnam: MP, Eastern Province; 15 July 1990
38. K. Kandasamy: Vice President, DPLF; January 1995
39. A. Thangathurai: TULF MP; 7 July 1997
40. S. Nadarajah: Chairman, Jaffna Development Council; 1997
41. M. Sambandamoorthy: Chairman, Batticaloa Development Council; 1997 [*Again, this is the same individual listed as no. 26*]
42. S. P. Tharmalingam: SLFP organiser, Jaffna; 3 October 1997

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43. Sarojini Yogeswaran: Mayor, Jaffna; 17 May 1998
44. P. Sivapalan: Mayor, Jaffna; 11 Sept. 1998
45. P. Mathimugarajah: MMC, Jaffna; 24 December 1998
46. Neelan Tiruchelvam: TULF MP; 29 July 1999
47. Vadivelu Wijeratnam: Chairman, Point Pedro Urban Council; 14 January 2000.

[Note: This list include a few noticeable fabrications, since Peiris in turn has relied on Rohan Gunaratna, a partisan analyst, for the assembled list.]

MY GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE LIST OF LTTE VICTIMS

It is evident that, when it comes to anti-LTTE propaganda, the task of fact-checking receives abysmally a low priority. Among the 47 listed above, two names [that of K. Padmanabha and S. Sambandamoorthy] had appeared twice in the list. Two recognizable names, that of K. Thurairatnam MP and K. Rajalingam MP, also do not belong in this list, since both died of natural causes. In addition, by consensus, the assassinations of three more former Tamil MPs (A. Thiyagarajah, V. Dharmalingam and M. Alalasundaram) have been strongly attributed to the cadres of PLOTE and TELO. Thus, seven listings have to be deleted from the above list. This reduces the number of LTTE victims between July 1975 and January 2000 to 40. For analytical purposes, one need to assume in good faith that all 40 were in fact killed by the LTTE cadres, despite the fact that there were other armed mercenary gangs who could have done the killing at the instigation of the armies and intelligence operatives of Sri Lanka and India, to tarnish LTTE’s reputation.

All the 40 Tamil victims, were not equal in ranks other than one criterion that they were ‘believed to have been killed by the LTTE’. The key-word as stated by Prof. Peiris is ‘believed’. Among these 40 individuals, apart from a few like A. Amirthalingam, V. Yogeswaran and A. Thangathurai, the identification of all and sundry as ‘Tamil leaders and important political activists’ by Peiris is also erroneous. Majority of them were simply power wielders or power brokers or power peddlers and clearly not leaders. Also, not all of them were innocent wall flowers. As in any society, some were selfish turn-coats who looked only for their personal interests in political intrigues. Quite a few were undoubtedly hostages of the ‘situation’ — unfortunate victims, positioned in the wrong place and at the wrong time — willingly or unwillingly in consultation with the military adversaries of the LTTE.

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When studying the above list, one pattern is markedly visible. Significant majority (33 Tamils, from A. Thiagarajah’s killing in April 1981 to K. Kanagaratnam’s assassination in July 1990 — in the above list) lost their lives during the period when J. R. Jayewardene and Premadasa were the heads of government. Two related (and probably contributing) factors should be highlighted. It was the decade, when the then prevailing democratic norms in the island was tossed out by the Jayewardene-Premadasa cabal which controlled the island. Also, it was also the decade that the Eelam society was physically and mentally abused by the Indian army between 1987 and 1990.

While LTTE’s opponents had cavalierly tagged the words fascism and dictatorship to Pirabhakaran, the real demonstration of fascism, dictatorship and anarchy prevailed in the 1980s decade. None other than Bertrand Russell had provided a spitting image of Jayewardene and Premadasa, in his classic book *Power*, four decades earlier. Only the words ‘dead’ or ‘death’ need to be altered with ‘replaced’ or ‘replacement’ in the following passages. To quote Russell,

“The most successful of democratic politicians are those who succeed in abolishing democracy and becoming dictators. This, of course, is only possible in certain circumstances; no one could have achieved it in nineteenth-century England. But when it is possible, it requires only a high degree of the same qualities as are required by democratic politicians in general, at any rate in excited times. Lenin, Mussolini and Hitler owed their rise to democracy.

When once a dictatorship has been established, the qualities by which a man succeeds a dead dictator are totally different from those by which the dictatorship was originally created. Wire-pulling, intrigue and Court favour are the most important methods when heredity is discarded. For this reason, a dictatorship is sure to change its character very considerably after the death of its founder. And since the qualities by which a man succeeds to a dictatorship are less generally impressive than those by which the regime was created, there is a likelihood of instability, palace revolutions, and ultimate reversion to some different system.”⁴

Russell’s descriptions of the techniques such as ‘wire-pulling, intrigue and Court favour’ by which petty political turn-coats and middle level administration employees curry favor with the ruling dictatorship is relevant to the understanding of the fate of the 40 Tamil victims of LTTE. Also, what Russell had anticipated in 1938 did occur in Sri Lankan South following Premadasa’s ascension of power, between 1990 and 1994; “instability, palace revolutions and ultimate reversion to some different system”. Among the LTTE’s political victims, the fates of Sam Tambimuttu (nominally identified with EPRLF) and Neelan Tiruchelvam (nominally identified TULF) deserve further analysis.

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I do not wish to create an impression that I condone the killings of the Tamils by the LTTE. Rather, I provide a personal point of view ‘why’ they suffered their fates. Here, I use the term ‘fate’ as implied in the Hinduism’s world view, attributed to the Law of Karma [Action with Inevitable Consequences], which in brief states, *‘Good is rewarded with good; evil is rewarded with evil; and the rewarding of good and evil is only a matter of time’*. This is a delicate proposition and pliable to twist and abuse by those who are semi-literate on the karmic belief, but I subscribe to it.

PIRABHAKARAN; A LEADER AND POWER WIELDER

A distinction between the ‘leader’ and ‘power wielder’ is needed first to sort the LTTE victims, many of whom have been mis-labeled as ‘leaders’ in the Indian and Sri Lankan press. For this I refer to James MacGregor Burns. In his Presidential address to the American Political Science Association in 1976, he had defined the meaning of ‘power’, and demarcated the difference between the ‘leader’ and ‘power wielder’. I provide relevant paragraphs:

“Power over human beings is exercised when potential power wielders, motivated to achieve certain goals of their own, marshal capabilities in their power base, such as economic, institutional and skill resources, that enable them to influence the behavior of respondents by activating their motives — wants and needs, expectations and values — relevant to those capabilities. This is done in order to realize the goals of the power wielders, whether or not these are also the goals of the respondents. Power wielders also exercise influence over respondents by mobilizing their own power base in such a way as to establish direct physical control over the respondents’ behavior, as in a war of conquest, or through direct psychological control, as in hypnosis, but these are relatively restricted exercises of power, dependent on certain times, cultures and personalities. . . .”⁵

Then, Burns explains much misunderstood concept of what is leadership?

“Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, their own institutional, political, psychological and other resources in such a manner as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers. This is done in order to satisfy similar needs and values held by both leaders and followers. In brief, leaders with motive and power bases tap followers’ motive bases in order to realize the purposes of both leaders and followers. Leadership is exercised especially in a condition of conflict or competition in which other leaders compete or competition in which other leaders compete in appealing to the motive-bases of potential followers.”⁶

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In the subsequent paragraph, Burns distinguishes the difference between the leader and the power wielder.

“Thus, leaders constitute a particular kind of power wielder. Like power, leadership is relational, purposeful and collective. Leadership shares with power the central function of achieving purpose. But the reach and domain of leadership is, in the short range at least, more limited than that of power. Leaders do not obliterate followers’ motives even if they wish to do so. They lead only other creatures, not things (and lead animals only to the degree that they recognize animal motives — i.e., leading cattle to shelter rather than to slaughter). To control *things* — tools, mineral resources, money, energy — is an act of power, not leadership, for things have no motives; power wielders, but not leaders, may treat people as things. And unlike the power holder, who may operate in a closed system, leaders act in a context of conflict and competition. All leaders are actual or potential power wielders, but not all power wielders are leaders. Conceptually, leadership is a subset of power.”⁷

THE FATE OF EPRLF POWER WIELDERS

The distinction provided by Burns between the leader and the power wielder provides relevance to the list of LTTE’s ‘believed to be’ victims. In aligning the date of killing in relation to which party controlled the axle of political power in the island [the SLFP, the UNP or the India’s mandarins], the designations of quite a few individuals functioning as ‘UNP organiser’, ‘SLFP organiser’, EPRLF MP or EPRLF provincial minister reveal that who fell victims of LTTE were power wielders and power peddlers of a certain rank.

Some additional quotes from the 1989 policy paper published in the *Annual Report of the Indian Defence Review*, cited in the previous chapter, reveals the circumstances clearly on why quite a few leading members of the EPRLF became the victims of LTTE in 1990. India’s policy mandarins had the nerve to pontificate the following:

“...In purely military terms, India had ensured the emergence of a Tamil leadership more amenable to her interests. This alarmed both the Sri Lanka and the LTTE. In yet another volte-face the Sinhala and the LTTE joined hands to demand an ouster of the IPKF in July 1989. In very stark terms the matrix of Indian options was as follows:

- (a) *Nativize the conflict.* India had succeeded in installing a pro-Indian Tamil group in power. This now had to be strengthened militarily so that the conflict could be nativized. This implied raising an EPRLF/ENDLF armed force that would progressively take over the burden of fighting the LTTE. The pertinent point was that this could not be achieved overnight. The Soviets had taken almost nine years to bring the Afghan

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Army to full fighting potential, so that it could hold its own against the Mujahideen. This implied that India would have to maintain her present level of force commitment for at least two to three years more while the EPRLF force found its military legs and completed its period of probation fighting.

- (b) *Come to Terms with the LTTE.* The pertinent military difference between the Afghan-Sri Lankan scenarios was that by a brutal process of ‘natural selection’ the LTTE had emerged as the most powerful Tamil resistance group. To that extent an Indian decision to come to final terms with it by giving its due share in the democratic set-up in the North-east would be a most logical one. The Sri Lankan conflict had seen too many mind-boggling about-faces, U-turns and changes of alignments that one more would make little difference. If the Sri Lankans and the LTTE could sink their differences, why couldn’t the Indian leadership also alter course? Nations have no permanent friends, only permanent interests. This was ideal. But was this still possible? Much blood had been split on both sides and resumption of such a dialogue would need a major political initiative from the very top. With the change in political leadership after the elections [*Note by Sri Kantha:* This was in reference to the 1989 elections, in which Rajiv Gandhi lost the prime ministership to V. P. Singh] this has become a very viable and attractive option. It would be relatively much easier for the new Indian administration to come to terms with the LTTE.
- (c) *The third, somewhat extreme option, was for the Indians to come to a clear-cut decision that the LTTE had turned renegade and had to be destroyed militarily whatever the costs.* This would have called for the induction of minimum of say two more divisions and the unrestricted employment of offensive air support to act as a force multiplier to offset the lack of adequate ground troops.

Both options (a) and (c) would involve India in a long politico-military haemorrhage. However, beyond a particular point it becomes a question of ‘loss of face’ and such a loss may not be palatable to a regional superpower. . . .”⁸

It is apparent now that though India’s policy mandarins opined that both options (a) and (c) would result in ‘a long politico-military hemorrhage’ in this 1989 policy paper, they eventually opted for these two options. Option (a) was pursued as described above by their purported ‘nativization of the conflict’ through propping up the EPRLF and establishing the Tamil National Army, both turning out to be flops. And when the Indian army was forced to leave by the end of March 1990, the Option (c) was modified to a ‘mole operation’ to destroy the LTTE leadership.

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THE TRAGEDY OF SAM TAMBIMUTTU — AN EASTERN FRONT TAMIL
ACTIVIST

Among the many LTTE victims, the fate of Sam Tambimuttu (a noted politician and ‘a reputable contact source for information’ on the Eastern Front, according to journalist Mervyn de Silva’s eulogy) had puzzled me a lot. Thus, I provide two descriptions featuring Tambimuttu’s activities in late 1980s. These were penned by Anderson brothers⁹ and William McGowan¹⁰. Authors are Americans and one can accept a reasonable degree of neutrality in the recorded activities of Tambimuttu. One distinction between the two books may provide some clues to the fate of Tambimuttu. To Anderson brothers who interviewed him in 1987, he presented the face of a notable human rights activist. He became a member of parliament representing EPRLF (then functioning as India’s puppets) in early 1989. McGowan also presents him as a shrewd businessman engaged in shady deals. In May 1990, Tambimuttu was killed.

TAMBIMUTTU, AS INTERVIEWED BY ANDERSON BROTHERS IN 1987

I present Tambimuttu’s story, as interviewed by Anderson brothers, **in entirety [two and a half pages in the book]**, since he describes the mind-boggling notorious activities of Sri Lankan government’s antiterrorist Special Task Force (STF) in torturing and ethnic cleansing of Tamils of all ages in the Eastern Front. It was an important published document, condemning the Nazi-style torture meted to Eelam Tamils by Jayewardene-Premadasa cabal who ruled in the 1980s. Please note that the numbers of Tamil victims Tambimuttu quoted in his interview are in not tens or hundreds but thousands.

Andersons also identified Tambimuttu as ‘a bearish Tamil lawyer turned shrimp farmer’. McGowan provides information in his book that this shrimp farming activity caused the downfall of Tambimuttu. First I reproduce Tambimuttu’s recorded interview to Andersons. Words within parentheses, and elliptical dots (for omission) are as in the original.

“You must first understand the attitude of the STF. They are all young chaps in their teens. If you watch them going out on their vehicles, they go like you would expect a person going on a safari to go. When you go on a safari, big-game hunting, you get on top of the hood with guns pointed out. Here, this has become a safari for the young fellows, but the game are human beings. They go around the streets; if they see somebody running, they fire at him! The only provocation is that a man is running!

Now, there was a land-mine incident just down the road. Following that, the STF indiscriminately opened fire everywhere. Thirteen persons were

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officially reported killed. About twenty-eight persons were missing subsequently; we don’t know what happened to them, but we know, we have evidence, that some of them were killed and their bodies taken away. Here, once the Force shoots a person the body is taken away, old tires are heaped, and the body burned. Thereafter, there is absolutely no evidence that the person ever existed! It’s very easy for the state to turn around and say, ‘X, who is missing from his home, has become a terrorist. He is hiding in England or he is hiding in Germany’.

They must have learnt the lesson after the last [world] war. Germany made the mistake of leaving skeletons behind (smiles); in concentration camps, you found millions of skeletons. So these people are not going to leave any evidence behind. That’s why they burn all the bodies. Here, they are legally entitled to burn the bodies in their camp. They are allowed to; it’s not written into a law, but, under the emergency regulations, the Coordinating Officer is permitted to dispose of the body however he thinks fit. What we do is, when a person comes to us and tells us that so-and-so has been arrested by the forces, we do not take any step immediately; we wait for three days, because a large number of persons who have been arrested are released subsequently. But after three days, if he is not released, we immediately write to the Coordinating Officer.

We have a system with the CO... You see, when a person is arrested and taken to these camps, the state does not provide him with any clothes whatsoever. So, even if he is kept there for one or two years, he has only the clothes that he has been wearing, nothing else. So we request that the next of kin be permitted to give them clothes. So, after about three days, the next of kin take a change of clothes to the camp and they hand over the clothes, and if they accept the clothes, we know that the person is alive and in the camp. But if somebody comes back and tells us, ‘I went to the camp; they refused to accept his clothes,’ then we know that something is wrong and immediately we write to the CO asking for his whereabouts. Invariably, the reply comes in that he has not been arrested.

(Thambimuttu opens a loose-leaf binder.) In all these cases, we have affidavits by persons who saw the person being taken away by the STF. We prepared this list in May of ’86, of persons arrested by the STF forces whose whereabouts are not known. This list gives the name of the person, his address, age, place where he was arrested, and by whom he was arrested. We sent this list to the Coordinating Officer. I sent 359 names and asked him for the whereabouts of these persons. I received a letter from him in September 1986; I have it here. It says there is only one person who had been sent to Boose [detention camp]. The reply to everybody else was, ‘not arrested’. That means they have killed them. Now, the number of people who have disappeared in this district is roughly about seven hundred. According to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, any person can be taken into custody on suspicion of being a terrorist; it says, ‘any person’. But it is not merely a person who is being taken into custody; they are taking entire villages! Which cer-

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tainly is not the intention of the law, but there is nothing we can do about it.

Say in one of their cordon-and-search operations, they round up a thousand people. They are kept there, and people like government servants and old people are released, and so maybe five hundred will be taken to the camp. There, they pass before a hooded informant. If he nods his head, it means that person stays in the camp and goes through the full range of torture. The others are released. This takes a period of three, four days. Along the way, a few chaps may get bumped off. Or there at the camp, in the ‘helicopter training’ [torture], one or two may die. These are the cases that become ‘missing’.

This maltreatment is virtually throwing the local people into the militants’ camps, because if they join the militants they are safe. If they remain at home, they are invariably caught and taken and killed or sent to Boosa. So, the only way to escape is to join the militants, and once you do, you know how to avoid these chaps!

Now the biggest problem we have here is that about thirty-five hundred bread-winners of families have been either arrested, are in detention camps, or in Boosa, or missing, or are dead. These thirty-five hundred families are destitute, with absolutely no means of sustenance. We are also worried whenever an advanced-level or university student is picked up; invariably, they never come back.

You know, this area is essentially an agricultural and fishing area, but because of constant raids and constant harassing, these people now refuse to go into the fields. So much so that [rice] paddy cultivation in this area has decreased by as much as forty percent. This has been going on for the past three years. Batticaloa was a surplus rice-producing area, but now we have to get our rice down from elsewhere. This affects others, too; you see, the entire community exists on the income of paddy. You have the paddy miller, you have the paddy trader, you have the man who pounds the paddy and sells the rice. So the throwback, as far as employment is concerned, is vast. In Batticaloa, we live for the evening, not even the next day. Life has become so uncertain. Everything is so uncertain that in the morning you only think of the evening and nothing beyond that. All our actions are based on the immediate necessities, rather than on thinking of the morrow. We don’t go out after six. You see, in Batticaloa, by six o’clock, life is over. There’s absolutely no social contact between people. This is also affecting children. You see, if you hear a noise, you immediately think that there is a blast somewhere. If you’re on the streets and you hear a sound, you think there’s a blast and you’re running for shelter somewhere. Now, every parent who can afford to, sends his child out of the country. . . . You know, one fear that we have is, if this goes on, we may lose the flower of our youth! That may be the end of the community. I suppose that is what the government wants also.”¹¹

It is puzzling to understand that the same Sam Tambimuttu who con-

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demned the activities of Sri Lanka’s Gestapo-gang in 1987 to Anderson brothers, became an informant to the same Gestapo-gang, one or two years later. This is revealed in William McGowan’s book, which appeared two years following Tambimuttu’s killing.

COMPLEX PERSONA OF TAMBIMUTTU, AS PRESENTED BY WILLIAM
MCGOWAN IN 1992

Like the Anderson brothers, McGowan also had visited Batticaloa in late 1980s and met Tambimuttu. He presented the story about Tambimuttu, as follows:

“I spent a little time following up on the rumors of the prawn farm massacre. Sam Tambimuttu, the very man who had briefed us the year before on the details of the massacre, had, according to reports, played a role in that incident.

According to the American who was managing the farm at the time, the farm’s directors, of whom Sam was one, had been divided about continuing operations amid the prevailing political chaos. The Tigers had also set up camp right next door, which made it appear as though the farm had close ties to the rebels. Sam, it was said, saw an opportunity to profit from the predicament. If the farm ceased operations, he could buy it from the current owners at a very cheap price and could let it lie fallow for a few years until the conflict was over, at which point he would be the sole owner of a very profitable enterprise. To induce the owners to quit, he had allegedly informed the Special Task Force that the farm was a nest of Tigers, thinking they would close it down. Instead, they had wiped out the entire staff in a frenzy of retribution for the soldiers killed in the nearby landmine blast.

Sam had dismissed the whole story as Tiger propaganda. According to Rajah [*Note by Sri Kantha*: whom McGowan has identified in a previous page as retired accountant S. R. Rajah], with whom I had a tea later that day, Sam had all along used his position to enrich himself. ‘How did he get the money to build his two houses?’ Rajah wanted to know. ‘These haven’t exactly been boom times for lawyers, you know’. And wasn’t it suspicious that the man who had replaced Sam doing the human rights work in Batticaloa had been imprisoned by the Indians?

Father Hebert [*Note by Sri Kantha*: the same Louisiana-born Father Hebert, whose disappearance I had described in chapter 45], who ran the technical institute from which several of the massacred workers had graduated, made the most convincing case. Hebert believed Sam was still angling to assume ownership of the potentially lucrative prawn farm. ‘He gave information to the Special Task Force to better his position, but it wound up boomeranging on him. It backfired much bigger than anyone could have imagined, and made him a hunted man.’

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I didn’t know what to believe. Most of the rumors I dismissed as disinformation. But if Sam had ‘collaborated’ with the forces in the prawn farm incident, he wouldn’t be the first to put self-interest ahead of Tamil solidarity. Many of the informants were members of other militant groups who were offering their services to the Indians in return for protection and advantage at a later date. Others were lone operators. . . .”¹²

Towards the end of his book, in the Epilogue, McGowan also recorded the disappearance of Fr. Eugene Hebert with the words, “It was strongly suspected that the army and the police had a hand in Hebert’s death. He had made insistent protests over unjust detentions and other human rights abuses in Batticaloa.”¹³

The prawn farm massacre, which McGowan refers to in the first sentence of the quoted passage refers to the first Kokkaddichchola Massacre [which happened at the adjacent Mahilattivu village of January 27, 1987] in Eelam history. In 1999, anthropologist Margaret Trawick shed more light on the shady deal of Sam Tambimuttu, by interviewing one of the Tamil victim’s sibling and incorporating the facts into her paper. I quote the segment relating to Tambimuttu’s deal, from Prof. Trawick’s paper, since the minor details were missing from McGowan’s description.

“The Prawn Project was an American scheme. Earlier, an EPRLF MP, whose name was Sam Tambimuttu, had a business partnership with an American. While Sam Tambimuttu was working in this partnership, the partners bought some paddy fields for ‘ready cash’, cleared the bush, and put a prawn pond there. They bought those fields from poor people. They paid Rs. 2,500 per acre. Out of each 2,500, the poor people got 500, and Tambimuttu secretly took 2,000. At that time, the people did not know. They were poor people — they took the 500. A couple of months later, the people somehow found out, and went and told the American partner. Then, that American asked (Tambimuttu). When he asked, Sam Tambimuttu denied it. Sam Tambimuttu was ousted from the partnership. Then Sam Tambimuttu got angry. Out of anger, he had two laborers plant a bomb in the pump that was used to fill the prawn pond with water.

After that, from the American scheme, the LTTE bought kerosene, diesel oil, petroleum. Sam Tambimuttu told the police headquarters in Colombo that there was a connection between the prawn project and the LTTE. Sam Tambimuttu drew a map of the project for them. After that, the STF came here on November 2, 1986. . . .”¹⁴

In sum, when aligning the killing of Sam Tambimuttu in May 1990, Fr. Hebert’s view of Tambimuttu’s role as an informant to STF and subsequent disappearance and death of Fr. Hebert in late 1990, one can reasonably infer

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that Tambimuttu’s fate was sealed when, in the words of McGowan, he ‘put self-interest ahead of Tamil solidarity’.

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Thwarting the Closet Tamil Operatives

LTTE HAS BEEN condemned strongly for the assassinations of Sam Tambimuttu and Neelan Tiruchelvam, as well as the execution of its one-time deputy leader Mahendrarajah (*aka* Mahattaya). As expected, condemnations came from those circles (in Colombo, Chennai, New Delhi and Washington DC) who had close links to these three Tamils. Expressed eulogies to these three Tamils deserve dissection to reveal the cant implied in them.

MERVYN DE SILVA’S EULOGY TO TAMBIMUTTU

The dictionary defines eulogy as, (1) a spoken or written piece of high praise, esp. when delivered publicly. (2) great praise. The word ‘eulogy’ is derived from, two Greek words; *eu* [= good, well, easy, agreeable] and [*legein* = to speak]. I quote excerpts from Mervyn de Silva’s eulogy to Sam Tambimuttu, written within the black-border lines — symbolizing sorrow:

“...Right through the ‘war’ in the east, before and after the arrival of the IPKF, Sam Thambimuttu was the reporter’s first choice for what in the professional patois is called a ‘check’ and a ‘double check’.... There was the more exacting professional demand rooted in the very character of a highly competitive profession. Beat your rival. Get the story out first.

‘For the foreign correspondent’ (the foreign-foreign, or the local stringer) the source is vital. So is the ready access to the source. But most of all, reliability. And credibility. Since this is not a personal, but a professional’s tribute to Sam Thambimuttu, I have had to break an old established rule not to reveal the source. In this case, however, Sam’s assistance to the International press, particularly to the BBC, was hardly a secret. His name has been mentioned a hundred times.

Nothing reveals the man better than his role as a regular news source. And since there are no real secrets in this little island, Batticaloa or Colombo, certainly the English-educated Sinhala-Tamil-Muslim community, knew all about Sam’s work as chairman of the Citizens Committee. In fact, Everyman’s Mouthpiece, Lawyer, the Community’s PR man, Batticaloa’s link to the world.

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And why Sam, not somebody else? He was independent... though he sported a party label. He was outspoken, perhaps too outspoken. He respected the press, and understood its role, recognised its role, recognised its needs and its importance. He realised that the best service to his ‘own people’ was to let the world know what was going on.”¹

Hardly any Sri Lankan will doubt that Mervyn de Silva is an excellent writer. What he projects and what he omits have profound meanings. In his brief, but touching eulogy, Mervyn de Silva while mentioning the many caps worn by Tambimuttu, had willingly omitted one role of his valuable ‘source’ — that of a wily shrimp farmer. And Mervyn de Silva did not deviate from the spirit of eulogy — i.e, speak only the ‘good, well, easy and agreeable’. One should note that the meaning of eulogy does *not* have any roots linking to ‘truth’.

Even when American correspondent William McGowan published his brief expose on Tambimuttu’s shady deals with shrimp farming subsequently, as presented in the previous chapter, Mervyn de Silva failed to amend his eulogy on his once vital ‘news source’ from the East.

EULOGIES TO NEELAN TIRUCHELVAM

If the eulogies offered for Sam Tambimuttu’s killing in 1990 amounted to pound equivalents, the killing of Neelakandan Tiruchelvam (hereafter abbreviated as Neelan) on July 29, 1999, elicited eulogies at ton equivalents from diverse quarters, who benefited from Neelan’s expertise as an informant. At the time of his death, Neelan held the nominal position as one of the Vice Presidents of Tamil United Liberation Front, and was a nominated member of Sri Lankan parliament. Despite this relatively low-profile ranking, the then American President Bill Clinton offered an eulogy. The US State Department mourned the loss of one of its ranking ‘sources’ [in positive as well as negative contexts] on Sri Lanka. Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of UN, condemned the LTTE in not so uncertain terms. Quite a number of Self indulgent Obscurantist Rights Evangelists (SOREs), in Sri Lanka and India sobbed with words uncontrollably in the news media. It is of relevance to note that Neelan’s professional career has a precedence in the American War of Independence — that of despicable social climber and scientist Benjamin Thompson (better known for scientists as Count Rumford). Thompson, was a colonial American who spied on the American colonies for the British, and was later knighted by King George III.

The unusual high-octane eulogy offered for any Sri Lankan was received from the US State Department on July 29, 1999. For record, I provide this somber text couched in diplomatic lingo and euphemism — in full:

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“US Department of State Office of the Spokesman July 29, 1999.

Statement by Philip T. Decker, Acting Spokesman

Sri Lanka: Assassination of Dr. Tiruchelvam

It is with profound regret that we learned of the murder today of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam on the streets of Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka. Dr. Tiruchelvam was a respected academic and constitutional law expert, the Director of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies and a member of parliament representing the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), a moderate Tamil political party. He was killed by a suicide bomber on his way to work. Several bystanders were also injured.

The attack appears to be the work of the terrorist LTTE, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who have been waging a separatist war in Sri Lanka’s north and east for more than 16 years. The United States has long urged the LTTE to cease its terrorist activities, to stop immediately the killing of non-combatants and civilians and to seek peaceful means of pursuing its political ends. We designated the LTTE as a foreign terrorist organization in 1997.

The United States has always supported, and continues to support, a peaceful resolution to the conflict through negotiations among all parties. We believe the Government of Sri Lanka has put forward realistic and sincere proposals for constitutional reform that could help toward this end.

The United States extends its sincere condolences to Dr. Tiruchelvam’s family, friends and associates, and to the other victims of this bombing and condemns in the strongest possible terms this outrage.

Dr. Tiruchelvam had many friends and colleagues in the United States. He freely shared his knowledge and conviction of the possibility for a peaceful resolution to Sri Lanka’s ethnic conflict. He had taught at Harvard and was scheduled to teach there again this autumn. So, we in the United States also share the terrible sense of loss of his family and country.”

It is my assessment that the last *four sentences, couched in euphemism, reveal to some extent Neelan’s closet links to American officials and Intelligence operatives and expose the motive of such a high-octane eulogy offered by the US Department of State.*

On July 30, 1999, the day following Neelan’s killing, President Bill Clinton extended his “deepest condolences” from Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina — where he was visiting. The full text, as released by the US State Department is as follows:

“THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary (Sarajevo-Bosnia-Herzegovina)

July 30, 1999

Statement by the President

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Hillary and I were shocked and saddened by the tragic death of Neelan Tiruchelvam at the hands of terrorists in Sri Lanka today. We extend our deepest condolences to his wife and family.

Neelan Tiruchelvam was a constitutional lawyer and human rights advocate who was well-known and well-respected far beyond his country. He devoted himself to seeking a peaceful and just solution to the tragic conflict that has caused so much bloodshed in Sri Lanka.

Hillary was deeply moved by her meeting with Mr. Tiruchelvam during her 1995 visit to Sri Lanka. With his death, a powerful voice for reconciliation in Sri Lanka has been silenced. I hope that this tragedy will spur efforts to find an end to the fighting and to build a lasting peace in Sri Lanka.”

At the end of Clinton presidency, Americans as well as non-Americans learnt that President Clinton’s errors of judgement — both personal and professional — are monumental. Monica Lewinsky scandal and the presidential pardons of Clinton are two best examples. Thus, Clinton’s special condolence on the killing of Neelan, issued from Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina could also be attributed as none other than another minor error of judgement. Or could it be, that President Clinton was sincere in offering the condolence, as the US State officials and Intelligence operatives lost a loyal informant, who worked for them under cover? And LTTE’s assassination of Neelan eliminated one vital Colombo source, who had close links to the dictators of power in Sri Lanka.

EVALUATING THE EULOGIES DELIVERED FOR NEELAN TIRUCHELVAM

It is of relevance to dissect the essence of eulogies delivered for Neelan, from the side of Eelam Tamils. The openly expressed views of three contemporary Eelam Tamils, of which one is mine, are presented below.

(1) BY S. SIVANAYAGAM, THE JOURNALIST:

“... This man who held no office, wielded no ostensible power, not a man of the people by any means, and what is worse, a Tamil by birth in a country where Tamils as a people have long been reduced to second class citizenship, has now emerged in death, (if not in life), as a seemingly more deserving figure than the rest of them for public lionizing. How does one account for this paradox?

Even President Clinton and his good First Lady Hillary thought it fit to come down from superpower perch and brush aside all norms of protocol to say how ‘saddened and shocked’ they were to learn the death of a man whom hardly any American citizen would have heard of, or even of the little country that he came from. UN chief Kofi Annan, not to be left behind, showed proof

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that the world was indeed a global village with hardly any distance separating Manhattan from Rosmead Place in Colombo 7.

Condolences and condemnatory messages came from the Foreign Ministers of Canada and Australia. *The Times* (London), *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The New York Times*, Toronto’s *Globe & Mail* (who usually run long obituaries of people whom most readers are not even sure whether such people were alive) — gave more space for this man’s death than to report the death of 60,000 civilian killings in Sri Lanka...

There is no questioning the many personal virtues ascribed to Neelan as a man, as a scholar, as a jurist and as an academic and constitutional pundit. But all that do not add up to the motivations behind the adulatory postures struck by many of his obituary writers. The reason is not far to seek. Every man who enters public life chooses his own favourable constituency and builds on it, which is a fact of life; and some obituary writers have their own private agendas.

One can assert with certainty that had poor Neelan died of natural causes, half those obituaries would not have been written and whatever written would not have had the ‘fire’ that characterised those eulogies. To put it in plain language, many of them exploited the assassination at the hands of a suspected Tiger suicide bomber to use the opportunity to indulge in Tiger-bashing. What a pity, even in death, he had played into the hands of those whose only motive was to discredit the LTTE.

Copious references were made to Neelan being a ‘moderate’, a ‘democrat’, and so on, but surely he was not killed for being any of this? The one writer who came closest to finding the right word to describe the victim in the eyes of the assassin — AND INDEED IN THE EYES OF THE WIDER TAMIL COMMUNITY, was Lakshman Gunasekera (*Sunday Observer*, August 1). That word was COLLABORATOR.

Collaborators, as anyone who knows the history of peoples fighting for justice and freedom know, end up by being executed by their own people, status notwithstanding. In war-time phraseology the word ‘collaborator’ (with the enemy) invokes in people a sense of shame and anger. If what is happening in Sri Lanka is not war, what else is it?...²

(2) BY G. G. (KUMAR) PONNAMBALAM JR., A FELLOW LAWYER AND POLITICIAN:

Kumar Ponnambalam’s lengthy assessment on the assassination of Neelan appeared in the *Sunday Times* (Colombo).³ But in this published version, as one would expect from the servile Colombo press, almost half of the feature containing quite a number of unflattering paragraphs were deleted. I provide only excerpts of Kumar Ponnambalam’s assessment, and the deleted paragraphs from the *Sunday Times* are shown in italics.

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“...I wish to place on record the feelings of a preponderant section of the Tamils on the matter of Dr. Tiruchelvam’ death. Eulogies have come in from abroad and locally. From foreigners and from Sinhalese. Indeed, at this time, it is the done thing to say all the good things about a dead person. But there has been hardly a good word for him from some of the Tamils, whether from abroad or locally. Why this glaring dichotomy?....

In 1997 October when President Kumaratunga, at a weekly meeting of financial officials on Fridays, blurted she would get onto the streets and attack Tamils if the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked Buddhist places of worship and this leaked out and there was a hue and cry from the Tamil quarter, Tiruchelvam feigned another’s signature in an irrelevant and disgraceful letter to the President which sought, dishonestly, to bale the President out of a very difficult position. To say that Tiruchelvam is a paragon of virtue, even after this notorious act, is nothing but midsummer madness. The Tamils have not forgotten this.

Tiruchelvam is described as a ‘crusader for peace’ and ‘a tireless worker towards resolution of conflicts.’ After Tiruchelvam’s death, it has surfaced that he was abandoning Parliament and the ‘Peace Package’ for pastures new and that he was going to take up a teaching assignment in America on 1st September 1999. Some interested parties want the people to accept the ‘Peace Package’ as this would be the last that they could do in the memory of Tiruchelvam. But if D. B. S. Jeyaraj’s eulogy at page 10 of The Hindu of 7-8-99 [Note by Sri Kantha: Aug.7, 1999] is anything to go by, Tiruchelvam obviously did not tell Jayaraj, even as late as 35 minutes before his death, that he was leaving the shores in a matter of days. On the contrary, Tiruchelvam had even minutes before this death ‘wanted a little more time in Parliament to accomplish his goal of achieving a political settlement’. It will not be easy unravelling this strange situation more so if we take into consideration what the President has said about presenting the ‘Peace Package’ to Parliament by the end of August 1999. This, too, has raised Tamil eyebrows and all sorts of questions are being asked in Tamil circles. Was Tiruchelvam decamping after ensuring his pension? Where is his commitment to the Peace Cause, leave alone the Tamils? The Tamils have not forgotten this.

Tiruchelvam is described as an ‘international figure’. Of particular interest to Tamils was the fact that he was Chairman of the Minority Rights Group International. This organization did a study of Sri Lanka after the present Government came into power and brought out a report in February 1996 with special reference to the Tamils. It was an indictment against his friend — the Sinhalese Government. The Report had many recommendations. Some Tamil organizations had written to Tiruchelvam during his stewardship requesting him to use his good offices with the Government to which he was so close (as has been now made out by representatives of this Government) and alleviate the distress of the Tamils. He just would not move in the matter. The Tamils have not forgotten this.

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In July 1998 when President Kumaratunga went to distant South Africa and came out with the bloomer that the Tamils are not the original people of this island and there was a mass protest from Tamils, here and abroad; there was not a whimper from the international personality that Tiruchelvam was. He could have used his good offices as an international figure that he was held out to be, to neutralize this statement, more so, when he had the opportunity to do so as he was in South Africa soon after the President’s characteristically ill-conceived outburst. He did nothing. The Tamils have not forgotten this.

To make matters worse, Foreign Minister Lucky Kadirigama who, incidentally, was suddenly catapulted into the political arena from nowhere, due largely to a typical Tiruchelvam machination, completely let down his friend by calling a press conference on 2-8-99 [Note by Sri Kantha: Aug. 2, 1999] and announcing, with pompous finality, that Tiruchelvam was a virtual consultant to the Foreign Ministry. *This has opened the eyes of the Tamils who now charge that Tiruchelvam, with his ‘international connections’ as was evidenced by the outpourings that came from abroad and specifically from America, had a hand in the designation of the LTTE [as a terrorist organization] and that Tiruchelvam was indeed a CIA agent. A greater dis-service Kadirigama could not have done to Tiruchelvam.*

In spite of the fact that the President had done nothing about Tiruchelvam’s ‘Peace Package’ for three years, that he should have thought that she was still the best bet for the Tamils when the whole Tamil Nation was arraigned against the President for years showed not only Tiruchelvam’s political acumen but also the distance he occupied from the Tamil Nation.

Friends of Tiruchelvam have said that the Tamils have kept their distance from Tiruchelvam because of fear of the LTTE and as the *Indian Express* has said ‘mortgaged its soul to the LTTE’. I do not think the LTTE would ever think of videoing those who attended the Tiruchelvam funeral in order to take it out of those Tamils. *Such modus operandi are only carried out by a despotic Sinhala Government to intimidate and harass Tamils who attend Tamil political meetings in the vastly predominant Sinhala Colombo...*⁴

(3) BY SACHI SRI KANTHA, AN ACADEMIC:

I focused on one particular point G. G. Ponnambalam Jr. had expressed in his assessment — that of Neelan being a CIA agent — in my letter to the *Hot Spring* magazine. Excerpts:

“The allegation of being a CIA agent in Sri Lanka is a serious one to tag to any individual. Thus, one sentence in G.G.Ponnambalam (Jr.)’s excellent commentary on the political career of late Neelan Tiruchelvam deserves further analysis. (*Hot Spring*, Aug–Sept.’99). This particular sentence states, ‘... Tamils who now charge that Tiruchelvam, with his ‘international connections’ as was evidenced by the outpourings that came from abroad and specifically from America, had a hand in the designation of the LTTE [as a

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‘terrorist organization’] and that Tiruchelvam was indeed a CIA agent.’ Is there any proverbial ‘smoking gun’ for the charge that Neelan could have been a CIA agent?

Before I read G. G. Ponnambalam Jr.’s commentary in the *Hot Spring*, I was intrigued by a couple of tid-bits which appeared in the eulogy of Celia Dugger to Neelan, published in the *New York Times* of Aug. 24. In it she had written as follows:

‘Tiruchelvam’s elder son, Nirgunan, 26, an investment banker in Singapore, became almost obsessed with his father’s security. He begged his father to stay inside their house, or to wear a bullet proof vest and travel in a bomb-proof car. The son tracked down an aging bomb-proof Jaguar that had carried the Queen of England when she visited Sri Lanka in the early of 1980s. But when his father used the car, it broke down. The one garage that could fix it always seemed to be busy’.

I feel that some vital information is missing in the above passage. How Nirgunan was able to locate the bomb-proof Jaguar which carried the Queen of England for his dad? Did he receive any extraordinary help from ‘foreign hands’ to purchase this car? Why ‘only one garage’ could fix this bullet-proof car? Why this ‘one garage’ was always ‘busy’? How many months (or years) did Neelan use this car?...

Unless evidence to the contrary is revealed publicly, messages of condolences offered by Kofi Annan as well as President Bill Clinton on Neelan’s untimely death have to be taken as a circumstantial evidence of a link between Neelan Tiruchelvam and CIA.”⁵

When this letter of mine appeared in print, neither me nor G. G. Ponnambalam Jr. would know that the ‘circumstantial evidence’ of a kind which I was alluding to would present itself within three months. On January 5, 2000, G. G. Ponnambalam Jr. was assassinated in Colombo – now believed to be — by the Gestapo-gang affiliated to the current Sri Lankan President’s Security Guard. In the eyes of Eelam Tamils, by birth pedigree, by age, by professional merits and even strangely by death, both Neelan and G. G. Ponnambalam Jr. formed identical mirror images. The only difference was that, while G.G.Ponnambalam Jr. had turned into an open LTTE sympathizer in the 1990s, Neelan was content to be the closet Tamil operative in the corridors of power. For the eulogy offered to Neelan in July 1999, to be counted as comforting the Eelam Tamils, a similar eulogy from the American as well as Indian Pooh-Bahs would have been forthcoming six months later as well. But G.G.Ponnambalam Jr.’s killing did not elicit any eulogies from President Clinton and the US Department of State — proving that Neelan was indeed a valuable closet operative in the services of American interests.

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MAHATTAYA — THE BENEDICT ARNOLD OF LTTE

If Neelan Tiruchelvam was the Count Rumford for Eelam Tamils, Mahattaya — the ex-deputy leader of LTTE — became the Benedict Arnold of LTTE. On the perfidy and pathos of LTTE’s ex-deputy leader, some light has been thrown by Anton Balasingham’s wife Adele, who is also privy to the inner details on the LTTE. She had stated:

“...[Around April 1993], Mathaya and some of his close associates were arrested by the LTTE’s intelligence wing for conspiring to assassinate Mr. Pirabhakaran. In a massive cordon and search of his camp in Manipay — supervised by senior commanders of the LTTE — Mathaya was taken into custody along with his friends. We were shocked and surprised by this sudden turn of events. Mr. Pirabakarn, who visited our residence that day, told us briefly of a plot hatched by the Indian external intelligence agency — the RAW — involving Mathaya as the chief conspirator to assassinate him and to take-over the leadership of the LTTE. He also said that further investigations were needed to unravel the full scope of the conspiracy.

The investigation took several months to complete. Mathaya, his close associates involved in the conspiracy, and several other cadres who functioned directly under him, were thoroughly investigated. Finally, the complete story of a plot emerged. Confessions by all the main actors were tape-recorded and video filmed. The leadership also arranged a series of meetings for all the LTTE cadres to explain the aims and objectives behind the plot. Apart from Mathaya, other senior cadres who were involved in the conspiracy were allowed to make public confessions during those meetings confirming their involvement. It was a complicated and bizarre story of the Indian intelligence agency establishing secret contacts with Mathaya through his close associates, with the promise of huge funds and political backing from India if the plot succeeded and the LTTE leadership was eliminated. A former body-guard of Mr. Pirabhakaran was secretly released from an Indian jail in Tamil Nadu and trained as the main assassin. He was sent to Jaffna with an intriguing story of a successful jail break as cover. His assignment was to plant a time bomb in Pirabhakaran’s bed room as a part of an overall plot planned by Mathaya. This young man, as soon as he landed in Jaffna, was once again included amongst Mr. Pirabhakaran’s bodyguards. Surprisingly, just a few days before his arrest, he visited our residence to tell us fabulous stories about his jail break. The investigation established, without doubt, that Mathaya was the chief conspirator. The plot was to assassinate Mr. Pirabhakaran and some senior commanders loyal to him and assume the leadership of the organisation. On 28th December 1994, Mathaya and a few of his fellow conspirators were executed on charges of conspiracy to eliminate the leadership.”⁶

Naturally, Pirabhakaran’s opponents as well as those who were close to Mahattaya and those who stood to benefit from Mahattaya’s ascendancy would

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not accept the insider-account presented by Adele Balasingham. But, Adele Balasingham has a special standing. She is a peculiar mix of ‘insider-outsider’. She is privy to Pirabhakaran’s confidence, and at the same time the only non-Tamil who had seen Pirabhakaran’s rise as a Tamil military leader in close circuit. Her link is similar to that of Edgar G. Snow had with Mao Ze Dong.

The demerit of Pirabhakaran’s critics in Sri Lanka, India and elsewhere is that, unlike Adele Balasingham, none had an opportunity of watching in close circuit the growth of a guerrilla movement, which transformed into a military force. Discipline is to military, as what rhythm is to music. Thus, as a military leader, it is within Pirabhakaran’s parish to execute those who betray his confidence. And Pirabhakaran was following the military traditions of Washington, Mao and Castro. Critics of Pirabhakaran, including the Pooh-Bahs from the US diplomat corps, ignore the historical facts how Washington reinforced discipline. To quote Allan Nevins,

“One element of Washington’s strength was his sternness as a disciplinarian. The [Patriots’] army was continually dwindling and refilling; politics largely governed the selection of officers by Congress and the states; and the ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-paid forces were often half-prostrated by sickness and ripe for mutiny. Troops from each of the three sections, New England, the middle states, and the South, showed a deplorable jealousy of the others. Washington was rigorous in breaking cowardly, inefficient, and dishonest men and boasted in front of Boston that he had ‘made a pretty good sort of slam among such kind of officers’. Deserters and plunderers were flogged, and Washington once erected a gallows 40 feet high, writing that ‘I am determined if I can be justified in the proceeding, to hang two or three on it, as an example to others’. At the same time, the commander in chief won the devotion of many of his men by his earnestness in demanding better treatment for them from Congress. . . .”⁷

It is debatable whether Pirabhakaran and LTTE has the moral right to short-circuit the careers of a handful of closet Tamil operatives who, for reasons known only to them, willingly became consultants to external forces with their own agenda in Sri Lanka. In spirit and execution, LTTE’s assassinations do not differ from both the currently employed American policy of ‘bring to justice’ those who have extinguished the American lives.

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Is Pirabhakaran a merchant of death?

IS PIRABHAKARAN A deviant and a merchant of death, as projected by his adversaries? My conjecture in this chapter is most important, as I demolish the widely circulated opinions presented by Pirabhakaran’s adversaries by making use of historical, criminological, anthropological studies on assassinations and deaths of power elites in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. I make use of (a) two cross-sectional surveys on political assassinations in the 20th century at the international level and (b) a longitudinal survey of political assassinations in pre-colonial and post-colonial Sri Lanka.

Based on these uninterpreted (as of now!) historical data, I assert that the *karmic theory of death for power holders* should gain credence. To put it simply, my take on the karmic theory of death for power holders is as follows: *Excessive abuse of power by power holders leads to homicide attempts on them which largely succeed, irrespective of higher level of surrounding security.* It is based on the degree of abuse of power. I’m sure that millions of pious Hindus and Buddhists subscribe to this karmic theory. But for reasons of political correctness and expediency not many are willing to articulate it publicly and thus it is not given adequate academic scrutiny.

Suppose a zoologist walks along a jungle tract, and comes across two toe nails of a tiger. She then tries to present her finding and its implications to biology to her colleagues in a professional meeting. She provides her analysis relating to the age of the tiger (based on the size of two toe nails found), and the prey of the tiger (based on the remnants of flesh entangled in the toe nails). To this extent, her interpretations would be gladly accepted by her colleagues. Suppose, *based from her finding of two toe nails*, if this zoologist exaggerates her inferences beyond reasonable limits, to quantify the heart beat of the tiger or the blood proteins of the tiger or the number of progeny of the tiger which lost its two toe nails, then she would be laughed off the podium. This is how new findings are scrutinized in my professional parish. But, in the world of Tamil Tiger observers, scrutiny of facts *in context* has been a missing element relating to the political assassinations. Thus, much muck is mixed with kernels of truth. In this chapter, I present an analysis of LTTE’s political

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assassinations as viewed in a world-wide frame.

In the above-cited example, I chose the gender of the zoologist with a reason, since two of the ranking culprits of such exaggeration on LTTE activities were women, namely Rajani Thiranagama (a medical doctor by training) and Radhika Coomarasamy (a legal scholar by training). Both were human rights activists of a certain caliber, but it is evident from their published pronouncements that their blanket denunciation on LTTE activism was flawed with gullibility in topics which were beyond their understanding. Their flawed literature had served as easy copies for ‘foreign’ area specialists (who do not bother to check the original sources in Tamil language) from USA and elsewhere. For instance, according to one Rex Hudson,

“The LTTE is widely regarded as the world’s deadliest and fiercest guerilla/terrorist group and the most ferocious guerrilla organization in South Asia. It is the only terrorist group to have assassinated three (sic) heads of government — Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993, and former Prime Minister (sic) Dissanayake in 1994. It has also assassinated several prominent political and military figures. The LTTE’s ill-conceived Gandhi assassination, however, resulted in the LTTE’s loss of a substantial logistical infrastructure, and also the loss of popular support for the LTTE among mainstream Indian Tamils. In 1999 the LTTE made two threats on the life of Sonia Gandhi who has nevertheless continued to campaign for a seat in parliament.”¹

This passage is riddled with errors in facts and prejudiced opinions. Any convincing evidence in support of the blatant lie in the last sentence is not divulged. But Hudson had the temerity to mention not one but two threats!

AN ACT WITH TWO LEAD PLAYERS AND TWO FRAMES

An assassination is a violent act with two lead players (the assassin and the victim) and two frames. Immediately after the assassination act, in the shorter frame, it appears to the onlookers and listeners of the news that the assassin was the powerful among the two, while the victim was the powerless individual — to either suffer and succumb or miraculously escape. This is the scenario which is presented to the society by the media. However, the hidden longer frame which incorporates vital facts (which in turn led to the assassination event) where the victim is the powerful bully while the assassin and his or her cohorts were the powerless sufferers is conveniently obscured and neglected in non-critical appraisals of the assassination event. This scenario remains true since the most famous political assassination of Julius Caesar on March 15, 44 B.C. at the hands of Brutus and Cassius.

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Presenting LTTE assassinations, beginning from Pirabhakaran’s confessional on the killing of Jaffna Mayor Alfred Duraipappah in 1975, as acts of societal deviants gained currency from the much-hyped book *The Broken Palmyra* (1990). Though this book has gained an iconic status, none so far has bothered to scrutinize the professional credentials of the four authors — Hoole, Sritharan, Somasundaram and Thiranagama — to pose as anthropologists of Tamil culture. In their preface to the book, the four authors modestly claimed ignorance of history. Simple ignorance is excusable. But ignorance garbed with academic arrogance is inexcusable.

In this respect, an interesting research paper authored by Joseph Westermeyer of University of Minnesota in 1973 is of relevance. Westermeyer’s thoughts in this paper is vital to the understanding of the fact how, flawed analyses by human rights activists can distort the established societal norms. In addition, his anthropological study is pertinent to the Sri Lankan scene in more than one context. This study was conducted in Laos (an Asian country, not different from Sri Lanka in cultural norms, with a majority practising Buddhism.). Also, Pirabhakaran’s acknowledged first assassination (that of Jaffna Mayor Alfred Duraipappah) occurred in July 1975. The abstract of Westermeyer’s study stated:

“Ten cases of political homicide in Laos were intensively studied, with particular attention to the assassin, the victim, the homicidal event, the provocation, and the social context. Each assassination provided a resolution for a social dilemma which had proven refractory to other means of social problem solving. Certain demographic characteristics and psycho-social correlates of political homicide in Laos resemble those of other cultures.”²

For thoughtful digestion, excerpts from this nine-page anthropological research paper are presented — under the subheadings identified in the abstract.

(A) THE ASSASSIN

“These men were viewed as responsible citizens in their various communities. None was known to be particularly troublesome to his village, nor had they shown the erratic behavior or bizarre mentation of *phi baa* (insane) people. In no case were any of the men incarcerated for their deed, nor was any indemnity paid to the family of the victim. . . .

(B) THE VICTIM

“None of these people had ever been psychotic; however, the primary victims in cases one through six all had demonstrated deviant social behavior. Victim one had robbed and murdered on multiple occasions to obtain material goods; social sanctions in his village had failed to rehabilitate him. . . .

In their role as leaders, however, each had exercised poor judgment in discharging his responsibilities to his followership. . . .

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(C) THE PROVOCATION

“Assassination was preceded by months or years of dyssocial behavior by the victim. In the three cases involving criminal recidivism, the threat to the group consisted of direct violation against person or property. Social pressure and traditional village law (a private law) had not ameliorated their antisocial habits. . . .

(D) THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

. . . Victims in each case held authority over the group to which the assassin belonged. Furthermore, the positions occupied by all four victims were appointed rather than elected ones. Thus, popular vote was not an available means for exerting pressure against the victim, and political means have not evolved for the removal of appointed officials who prove to be incompetent.”³

Now, let me offer the interesting section of Westermeyer’s analysis which negates the psychological and psychiatric projections on LTTE, made by the authors of *Broken Palmyra*. It should be reiterated that of the four who authored the *Broken Palmyra* book, two (Thiranagama and Somasunderam) were nominally medical scientists and the other two (Hoole and Sritharan) had degrees in mathematics. Among the two with medical qualifications, Somasunderam identifies himself as a psychiatrist. Excerpts of Westermeyer’s analysis under three sub-categories [Assassin as Deviant, Political homicide as societal deviance, and Victim as Deviant] are given below. For reasons of brevity, reference sources have been omitted here.

ASSASSIN AS DEVIANT

“Much has been made of assassins as deviants in the historical and psychiatric literature, where they are variously described as nefarious, fanatic, lunatic, retarded, sociopathic, unstable, and/or mentally ill. Less of the deviant interpretation appears in the anthropological literature however. . . . Differences between the historical-psychiatric and anthropological viewpoints may in part be accounted for by the reliance of the former studies on incarcerated assassins; the stress of incarceration might accentuate the observed psychopathology. Or assassins in the complex societies studied by historians and psychiatrists may perforce be more deviant with reference to their fellow citizens than in societies studied by anthropologists.”⁴

The subsequent paragraph is vital to Pirabhakaran’s much projected role as an assassin. To quote Westermeyer again,

“On the other hand, informants in societies where assassins remain at large may gloss over their assassins’ deviant behavior, since in most cases they do not view the assassination itself as a criminal or deviant act. Quite the contrary, it is often viewed as a responsible or courageous action. Since

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the assassins continue their lives as before (perhaps with enhanced prestige), psychopathology may not be so likely to emerge or be noted.”⁵

Westermeyer ends his section on ‘Assassin as Deviant’ with a quote from Hyams:

“From a social perspective, Hyams assumes neither the condemning nor absolving stance in describing the assassin. Instead, he emphasizes the social function served by the assassin: ‘So the assassin – the genuine assassin, not the murderous lunatic — is, as it were, that particularly sensitive cell of the social body which reacts first and most quickly to preserve the social body.’”⁶

Rajan Hoole *et al.* in *The Broken Palmyra* presented the image of Eelam Tamil society as having become pathological and undergoing stress due to the emergence of LTTE as a lead player in the 1980s. Westermeyer again negates such a view. To quote him again,

POLITICAL HOMICIDE AS SOCIETAL DEVIANCE

“Some investigators implicate assassination as a sign of a pathological society, a society in transition, or a society undergoing stress. . . . Work by Dole and Friedrich, as well as these Laotian data, suggest that this need not be so: political homicide can be a functional part of a stable society. . . . In sum, the assassination/social disorganization relationship does not appear to be a simplistic one based on the cross-cultural data presently available.”⁷

I consider the third sub-category in the analysis of Westermeyer entitled ‘[Assassination] Victim as Deviant’ is the most revealing to understand’s Pirabhakaran’s projected role as an assassin of Duraiappah. And it is this sub-category which has been completely ignored or hidden for reasons of convenience in the publications of individuals belonging to the Sri Lanka’s human rights industry, who proliferated in the 1990s. Thus, what Westermeyer found in his 1973 study on Laotian assassinations is highly pertinent to the assassinations in Eelam and Sri Lanka of 1980s and 1990s as well.

VICTIM AS DEVIANT

“The evidence here is perhaps not so ambiguous as it is for assassins and for political homicide. . . . Friedrich (1962) posits tyrannical use of power, struggle for power, or kinship revenge as motivating most assassinations among the Tarascans of Acan. . . . Among the Laotian cases, half of these instances of social peer assassination involved criminal recidivism. Where the usual methods for modifying antisocial behavior fail, however, there has traditionally been no recourse to state imposed sanctions. Since traditional law has

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been exclusively a private law, the community would tolerate destructive or dangerous behavior *ad nauseum*, i.e., until some person or persons became motivated enough to do away with the recidivist. For this category of social problem, then, political homicide has served as a final solution to the problem of social deviants whose dangerous behavior has proven refractory to ordinary means of rectification.

... The victims served in a particular kind of leadership role; they were appointed from further up the governmental hierarchy, rather than popularly chosen by a constituency. These four leaders, ordinary men in other respects, had erred in the same way: they had inordinately abused their power *vis-à-vis* their subordinate group. By excessive corruption, seduction, disrespect, or indolence, they failed in their responsibilities toward their followers. Since these men wielded considerable power and occupied authoritative positions important to the welfare of their subordinates, their behavior gradually became intolerable to the subordinate group. Eventually, one of their subordinates executed them, and received the approval (and protection) of the subordinate group in doing so.”⁸

Westermeyer’s conclusion (as well as caveat) of his findings is worth recording, to highlight the context of assassinations of political leaders such as Alfred Duraipappah, Sam Tambimuttu, Neelan Tircelvam and rival militant leaders belonging to TELO and EPRLF by LTTE. He wrote,

“Regarding assassination of political leaders, this small Laotian sample does not lend itself to expansive theorizing. Nonetheless, a common theme prevails: the victim leaders have taken inordinate liberties with the power available to them, or have failed to discharge their leadership obligations. Such leaders appear not to comprehend the traditional responsibilities of their positions: while the elite have always exercised considerable dominion over peasants, such authority is not unlimited. . . the leader must also commit himself to the well-being and the dignity of the governed. Should the leader ignore these responsibilities, the situation is fraught with danger. . . . Slow, indirect politicking may prove effective given sufficient time. If too slow or inept, politicking may give way to assassination as a means for social problem solving.

In sum, problems which may lead to assassination are of such magnitude that they threaten the existence of the community. Other means of social problem solving either have been exhausted without effect or are not available. Under such circumstances political homicide serves as a ‘court of last resort’ in social conflict resolution.”⁹

Since Westermeyer’s study sample was restricted to ‘ten cases of political homicide in Laos’, to analyze in depth the anthropological context of political assassinations by the LTTE, I refer to two additional studies with extensive

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world-wide samples. But, prior to that, I provide some general facts on assassinations.

GENERAL FACTS ON ASSASSINATIONS

Four modes of death exist for humans. These are, natural death, accident, suicide and homicide. For convenience of remembering, they are identified in abbreviation as NASH. One of the subcategories of homicide is assassination. The English word ‘assassin’ (defined as, one who kills, especially one who murders a political figure) is derived from the Arabic word *hashshashin*, relating to users of hashish. Political assassination is a sub-subcategory of homicide.

If one checks the relative percentages of the modes of death in a nation’s population per annum, natural deaths exceeds 90 percent. Other three modes of death contribute at the maximum 8 or 9 percent of total deaths. For illustration, I will provide recent figures for USA and Japan, where statistics on the four modes of death are available. 2 million and 322, 421 individuals died in USA for the year 1996. Among these, 2 million and 177, 447 individuals (93.76 percent) died a natural death; 93, 874 individuals (4.04 percent) died in accidents; 30, 862 individuals (1.33 percent) died by suicide; and, 20, 738 individuals (0.89 percent) were victims of homicide. The pattern is similar in Japan as well. Among the 896, 211 individuals died in 1996, 824, 192 individuals (91.96 percent) died a natural death. Accidental deaths amounted to another 4.3 percent. Suicide victims constituted around 3.5 percent and about 0.15 percent of the total deaths were homicide victims. The notable difference between the suicide and homicide percentages between the American and Japanese populations can be chiefly attributed to cultural tolerance of suicide in Japan and societal acceptance of non-restricted use of hand guns in USA. These figures taken together reveal that deaths due to homicide in an year among the larger public in a population with relative social stability comprises less than one percent of total deaths.

Surprisingly, this pattern *does not hold* for nominal political power holders, power sharers and power peddlers (among which are to be included informants, spies, collaborators). However, villifying Pirabhakaran developed into a cottage industry of the Colombo press since 1985. [For relevance, it should also be noted that in the Colombo press controlled either by the Sinhalese businessmen or by the Sinhalese-dominated government, non-militant Tamil leaders who preceded Pirabhakaran and who were popularly elected to the parliament, such as S. J. V. Chelvanayakam (from 1956 to 1977) and A. Amirthalingam (from 1977 to 1989), have also suffered the similar vilification from Sinhalese editorialists and cartoonists.] Here is a short passage of vitriol

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on Pirabhakaran penned by W. T. Singha in mid 2002. Excerpts:

“...Is this that person who was responsible for savagely murdering of a democratically elected President of Sri Lanka, for the suicide bombing of the much loved Prime Minister of India – the grandson of Nehru, and the *crème de la crème* of Singhalese — Presidential candidates and eminent politicians — for butchering leading Tamil politicians who did not tow the line of Prabhakaran’s racism and for the bomb attacks on internationally recognised Tamil intellectuals who opposed his sanguinary mania? Did Premadasa, Rajiv, Ranjan, Gamini, Amirthalingam, Lalith, Tiruchelvam, Doraiswami and others deserved such brutal extermination? A single assassination of a high ranking politician is in itself vicious but to arrogate to himself the right to kill leading politicians and eminent people in such great number, mostly for flimsy disagreement or political dissension, could be the perpetration of an evil incarnate or megalomania...”¹⁰

While (1) paying due allowance the fact that W. T. Singha appears completely ignorant of the classic analytical study of Westermeyer in Laos (60 percent Buddhist) relating to political assassinations in an Asian society not different from Sri Lanka, (2) asserting that as of now, Pirabhakaran had *not been convicted* in a court of law for the assassinations of all the individuals mentioned in the above passage, (3) strongly doubting that all these named individuals in their ranks as politicians *did not abuse power*, and also (4) recognizing the unmentionable facts that four of the named individuals had been previously targets of assassins (Premadasa — JVP in 1987, Rajiv Gandhi — JVP in 1987 and Shikh militants in 1991, Amirthalingam — Sinhalese mob in 1956, Lalith Athulathmudali — JVP in 1987) other than LTTE, I now refer to the two published studies to refute the views held by correspondents and journalists (not necessarily Sri Lankan) like W. T. Singha and Gamini Weerakoon, the editor of Colombo’s *Island* newspaper.

THE ASSASSINATIONS OF POLITICALLY POWERFUL PERSONS

Two research studies on the theme of political assassinations which deserve attention (but have been conveniently ignored by LTTE’s critics) originate from USA, and are from two institutions with rather impeccable credentials — namely, the *New York Times*¹¹ and the CIA. In 1968, Leiden and colleagues¹² had identified the assassination victims into six ranks. To the rank no.1 was assigned, ‘Head of State, head of government, or dictator; former head of state or head of state-elect, e.g: presidents, kings, premiers.’ Three decades later, Pyenson and colleagues¹³ defined their assassination victims (world leaders) as ‘those who at any time during their careers were a country’s principal decision-maker, exercising final authority for formulation and

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execution of national government policies. The positions they held included monarch, president, prime minister, party secretary or chairman, supreme religious authority or head of junta.’ Thus the data assembled by Leiden’s group and Pyenson’s group are more or less compatible *but not identical*. Subtle differences need notice. First, while Leiden’s group had pooled the heads of state and former heads of state into a single list, Pyenson’s group had separated the heads of state and former heads of state into two separate lists. Secondly, while Leiden’s group had identified each of the assassination victim by name, country, date of assassination and also included unsuccessful assassination attempts, Pyenson’s group belonging to CIA have not provided such complete details. Thus, the summarised information in the paper of Pyenson’s group has to be believed in good faith. Thirdly, Pyenson’s group had indicated that their study population was ‘non-U.S. world leaders’ since ‘CIA regulations prohibit the study of U.S.citizens.’ This partly explains why their study period begins from January 1, 1965 because by this choice they could conveniently exclude the assassination of President John F. Kennedy from the study population.

Since the time frame studied by both groups overlap between January 1965 and October 1968, six heads of state and former heads of state who died during this overlapping period would have been counted in both studies. Taking this into consideration, from the extensive tabulated listing of Leiden’s group, I counted 63 heads of state and former heads of state as assassination victims between November 1918 and December 1964. [Leiden group’s data on heads of state and ex head of state is presented as Appendix 2.] The study presented by Pyenson’s group, informs that between January 1965 and December 1996, 52 heads of state and 16 former heads of state died by violent means.

Thus, between November 1918 and December 1996 (a turbulent 78 year period of the 20th century which saw the ascension and decline of communism, vanishing of overt colonialism, world war and regional wars, genocides, dominance of weapon industry and proliferation of nations), based on the assembled statistics of Leiden’s group and Pyenson’s group, a total of 131 (63 + 52 + 16) heads of state and former heads of state had died violently. This is certainly an under-count, since Pyenson’s group also excluded “countries — essentially a score of island states with populations less than 250, 000.” Furthermore, some reported ‘accidents’ to leaders which resulted in mortality could have really been homicides.

I wish to further identify the significance of the findings Pyenson’s group which focused on the violent deaths of political leaders who died between 1965 and 1996, since two of the attributed victims of Pirabhakaran’s deeds — namely Rajiv Gandhi (in 1991) and R.Premadasa (in 1993) — would have

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been counted in this study. The findings of Pyenson’s group are as follows:

1. 261 world leaders died between 1965 and 1996.
2. Of these 261 world leaders, 118 died while in office; only 66 (56 percent) died by natural causes. Remaining 52 died by violent (unnatural) causes, of which 35 died by assassination. *To reiterate, 30 percent of titular heads of state died by assassination during their terms of office.* R. Premadasa was one of the 35 heads of state to die during this study period.
3. Among the 143 world leaders who died after leaving office, 16 died by violent (unnatural) causes, of which 10 were by assassination. Rajiv Gandhi was one of the 10 ex heads-of state to die during this study period.

What is revealing from this statistic provided by the CIA researchers is that, *percentage wise, there is a marked difference between the assassination deaths among larger public and the assassination deaths of heads of state and ex heads of state.* In the discussion section of their paper, the CIA researchers inferred as follows:

“Our first impressions, nevertheless, do call into question some prevalent beliefs or intuitive assumptions, which, in turn, may have practical planning implications.

1. World leaders are not superhuman. By all accounts, they receive the best medicines, technology and professional services their country can offer or import, and generally they can travel to the best institutions in the world when required. . . .
2. It is not at all unusual for leaders to die violently, especially while in office. Death from assassination or other external means occurs commonly among world leaders, often while they are in office. Almost half of those leaders who died were still in office, and almost half of that group died violently. Overall, violent deaths accounted for a surprisingly large proportion of the totals in both the mortality analysis group (26%) and the 1980 cohort (40% through 1996). By comparison, although it represented only a single year’s experience, in 1993, violent death constituted less than 7% of deaths among the U.S. population.¹⁴

Unfortunately, unlike Leiden’s group, CIA’s Pyenson’s group has not provided the individual details of the deaths of 261 world leaders between 1965 and 1996. A letter sent to Dr. Pyenson’s address in Washington DC. by me, dated Dec. 12, 2002, requesting such individual details for research has gone

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unanswered as of now. Thus, I cannot further comment on the significance of the reported findings. But in their study, Pyenson’s group had stated that their data was gathered “using unclassified information from readily available English-language or translated newspapers, books, periodicals”.

Also to be noted is that, in their first finding reproduced above, Pyenson’s group use an all-encompassing clause “technology and professional services their country can offer or import” which include medical service as well as security service. *Despite all the top-level security they are surrounded with, if such a high number of heads of state or ex heads of state succumb to assassination, I would consider that here is a circumstantial proof for the karma theory in action. As a nominal believer in the karma theory, I have never come across a study like that of Pyenson’s group to provide some statistical support for the karma theory of death for power holders.*

In sum, it is my contention that the statistical data on the assassinations of politicians at international level between 1918 and 1996 convincingly demonstrate that the assassination events of heads of state such as Rajiv Gandhi and Premadasa lie within the probability range of the observed pattern of assassination deaths of power-holding politicians, irrespective of whether LTTE and Pirabhakaran had a direct or indirect hand in them or not. The assassination issue is further muddled with the facts that both Rajiv Gandhi (at the hands of Sinhalese in 1987 and Sikhs in 1991) and Premadasa (at the hand of JVP radicals in 1987) were assassination targets prior to their eventual deaths.

The oft-repeated claim by LTTE watchers like Rohan Gunaratna that “LTTE is the only terrorist group to have assassinated two heads of government” is also tenuous by omission and deception. It is an open secret that Intelligence agencies like CIA, Mossad and RAW which for all practical purposes technically operate as ‘under-cover terrorist groups’ in the soils of adversarial nations and territories have successfully planned and executed the assassinations of numerous heads of state who were counted in the studies of Leyden’s group and Pyenson’s group.

REGICIDES IN PRE-COLONIAL BUDDHIST CEYLON

“The more powerful and prestigious the office, the greater likelihood of assassination” was the first conclusion derived by Kirkham *et al.*¹¹, based on the analysis of 81 of the recorded political assassinations or attempted assassinations between 1835 (beginning from President Andrew Jackson) and 1968 (ending with Presidential aspirant Robert Kennedy) in USA. As I know of, such a statistical analysis covering a span of over 100 years on assassinations and attempted assassinations on politicians is hardly available in either Sri Lanka or India, for the equivalent period of 19th and 20th centuries. In the

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absence of such an exhaustive study, the projection of LTTE’s and Pirabhakaran’s role as assassins or social deviants has a profound bias. However, it should also be exposed that the much-vaunted, pre-colonial Sinhala monarchic traditions of Ceylon accommodated assassinations as a practical tool in the change of regimes.

British colonial authority Sir James Emerson Tennent’s 1859 work on Ceylon still stands as an exhaustive source book on the despotic and wild form of Buddhist monarchic tradition while prevailed in the pre-colonial Lanka for 2,000 years. I reproduce two paragraphs (with two extensive foot-notes providing statistics on regicides and successions) from Tennent’s observations, which appears under the chapter 6 entitled, ‘The Influence of Buddhism on Civilisation’. To quote Tennent,

“The long line of sovereigns is divided into two distinct classes; the kings of *Maha-wanse* or ‘superior dynasty’ of the uncontaminated blood of Wijayo, who occupied the throne from his death, B.C. 505, to that of Maha Sen, A.D. 302; and the *Sulu-wanse* or ‘inferior race’, whose descent was less pure, but who, amidst invasions, revolutions, and decline, continued, with unsteady hand, to hold the government down to the occupation of the island by Europeans in the beginning of the sixteenth century.”

“...Neither the piety of the kings nor their munificence sufficed to conciliate the personal attachment of their subjects, or to strengthen their throne by national attachment such as would have fortified its occupant against the fatalities incident to despotism. Of fifty one sovereigns who formed the pure Wijayan dynasty, two were disposed by their subjects, and nineteen put to death by their successors. [Foot-note by Tennent: There is something very striking in the facility with which aspirants to the throne obtained the instant acquiescence of the people, as soon as assassination had put them in possession of power. And this is the more remarkable, where the usurpers were of the lower grade, as in the instance of Subho, a gate porter, who murdered King Yasa Silo, A.D. 60, and reigned for six years (*Mahawamsa*, ch. xxxv. p. 218). A carpenter, and a carrier of fire-wood, were each accepted in succession of sovereigns, A.D. 47; whilst the *great dynasty* was still in the plenitude of its popularity. The mystery is perhaps referable to the dominant necessity of securing tranquillity at any cost, in the state of society where the means of cultivation were directly dependent on the village organisation...]”¹⁵

Tennent continued further and provides an interesting statistic of Sinhalese regicides as follows:

“Excepting the rare instances in which a reign was marked by some occurrence, such as an invasion and repulse of the Malabars, there is hardly a sovereign of the ‘Solar race’ whose name is associated with a higher achievement than erection of a dagoba or the formation of a tank, nor one whose

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story is enlivened by an event more exciting than the murder through which he mounted the throne or the conspiracy by which he was driven from it. [*Foot-note by Tennent*: In theory the Singhalese monarchy was elective in the descendants of the Solar race; in practice, primogeniture had a preference and the crown was either hereditary or became the prize of those who claimed to be of royal lineage. On viewing the succession of kings from B.C. 307 to A.D. 1815, thirty nine eldest sons (or nearly one fourth), succeeded to their fathers; and twenty nine kings (or more than one fifth) were succeeded by brothers. Fifteen reigned for a period less than one year, and thirty for more than one year and less than four. Of the Singhalese kings who died by violence, twenty two were murdered by their successors; six were killed by other individuals; thirteen fell in feuds and war, and four committed suicide; eleven were dethroned, and their subsequent fate is unknown. Not more than two-thirds of the Singhalese kings retained sovereign authority to their decease, or reached the funeral pile without a violent death. See also, *Mahawanso*, ch. xxiii, p .201.”¹⁶

The statistics presented by Tennent on the Sinhalese monarchs who were homicide victims [a total of 22 sovereigns among 153 — in a period of 2,000 years — murdered by their immediate successors] is astounding and parallels the finding of CIA’s Pyenson’s group on the fate of non-USA heads of state between 1965 and 1996. In a subsequent page, Tennent had provided the following statistic:

“Of the sixty two sovereigns who reigned from the death of Maha Sen, A.D. 301, to the accession of Parakrama Bahu, A.D. 1153, nine met a violent death at the hands of their relatives or subjects, two ended their days in exile, one was slain by the Malabars and four committed suicide.”¹⁷

This means, during a period spanning 852 years, ten of the 62 sovereigns — nearly one in every six — were eliminated by violent deaths. In the post-Parakrama Bahu period, between A.D. 1153 and A.D. 1527, according to Tennent, fates of seven sovereigns were decided by homicides. [see, Appendix 3 for a complete listing of sovereigns who were victims of homicide.] In sum, *a total of 32 of the 153 sovereigns — one in five who ascended to the throne — were homicide victims*, during the 2,000 years of recorded despotic monarchic tradition of the island.

FATES OF POST-COLONIAL SRI LANKAN HEADS OF STATE

The pattern of death seen for the pre-colonial Buddhist monarchs of the island seems to prevail even in the post-colonial Sri Lanka, lasting only 56 years. The labeling of post-colonial Sri Lanka as a democracy by the international press is a misrepresentation of serious proportions committed by reporters and

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analysts who do not bother to do their home work. The pre-colonial monarchic tradition continues to hold, so that the Sri Lankan version of democracy is in reality a *despotic nepocracy* (nepotism laced with democratic bells and whistles) , with five of the heads of state emerging from only two families: Senanayakes (father and son) and Bandaranaiques (husband, wife and daughter). Two other heads of state, namely Kotelawala and Jayewardene, were related to these two families by lineage and marriage.

Of the ten heads of state, two died by assassinations and one died by accident. In addition, there were assassination and devious dethroning attempts on another three heads of state. The data is as follows:

1. Don Stephen Senanayake — died by horse-riding accident in March 1952.
2. Dudley Senanayake [son of #1] — natural death in 1973.
3. John Kotelawala [nephew of #1] — natural death in 1980.
4. Solomon W. R. D. Bandaranaike — died by assassination in Sept. 1959 by a cabal of disgruntled Buddhist monks.
5. W. Dahanayake — natural death in 1996.
6. Sirimavo Bandaranaike [wife of #4; escaped *coup d'état* in 1962 by state's armed forces and unconstitutional dethroning in 1971 by Sinhalese JVP] — natural death in 2000.
7. J. R. Jayewardene [escaped assassination on Aug. 18, 1987 by JVP] — natural death in 1996.
8. R. Premadasa [escaped assassination on Aug. 18, 1987 by JVP while serving as prime minister and before his own ascension as head of state] — died by assassination in May 1993 attributed to LTTE, when the country was under a state of war. Belonging to an inferior caste group, Premadasa also escaped a devious dethroning attempt in 1991 by competitors within his own party who belonged to the higher Govigama caste.
9. D. B. Wijetunge — still living.
10. Chandrika Kumartunga [daughter of #4 and #6] — escaped assassination on Dec. 20, 1999 by LTTE, when the country was under a state of war. Still living.

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Among the ten post-colonial Sri Lankan heads of state, two outsiders [Dahanayake and Wijetunge] were stop-gap ascensions, following successful assassinations. So, they were not subjected to the dethroning ‘stress’, the other eight had to endure. LTTE is implicated with the dethroning attempts of Premadasa (#8) and Chandrika Kumaratunga (#10), of which that of Premadasa was successful. Technically, when LTTE’s dethroning attempts occurred in 1993 and 1999 respectively, LTTE was in war with its adversary — the Sri Lankan government, and the Sri Lankan head-of-state was the nominal Commander in Chief.

The despotic nepotism of post-colonial Sri Lanka reached its zenith, between 1994 and 1999, when the quartet who made vital decisions on behalf of the state consisted of President Chandrika Kumaratunga (a professional neophyte), President’s mother and prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike (then a senile professional invalid), President’s uncle and Deputy Defence Minister Gen. Anuruddha Ratwatte (a professional imbecile) and the Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar (a professional sin-eater). That such a despotic nepotism had reached a level of troubling concern by the end of 1975 was evident by the famous expose by the *Time* magazine.¹⁸

To comprehend LTTE’s viewpoint on its unsuccessful dethroning attempt made on President Chandrika Kumaratunga, the currently prevailing view of American executive (Presidential) wing of power is pertinent. To quote,

“... A presidential order from 1976 bars political assassinations. The president can waive the order, as has been done for Osama bin Laden. But for Mullah Omar [the supreme leader of Taliban] the Bush administration has invoked a old principle of warfare to overcome that restriction. The commander of an enemy army is fair game, and strikes against him are not an assassination but an attack on the adversary’s command and control. Even before the United States unleashed its air strikes, President George W. Bush had made it clear that the mullah was a potential target. . . .”¹⁹

If Bush administration can adhere to the old principle of warfare that ‘*The commander of an enemy army is fair game*’, there is nothing illogical to advance a similar claim that the LTTE’s past attempts on two Sri Lankan heads of state also fall within the boundaries of the old principle of warfare. This has to be taken as an answer to the ‘why’ on the assassination attempts of 1993 and 1999 from LTTE’s point of view, and not as my validation. In the context of war-time strategy, attacks on the adversary’s command and control *is not a deviant measure*, especially if one like Pirabhakaran was facing such a measure from his adversary. In fact, Americans demonstrated this strategy on Gen. Isoroku Yamamoto in 1943 and it was not interpreted then as ‘terrorism’.

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Eelam’s Karma

AMONG THE FOUR authors [Hoole, Sritharan, Somasundaram and Thirananagama] of *The Broken Palmyra* book, two [Hoole and Thirananagama], were born Christians. The other two had self-garlanded themselves as Marxists, in the preface of their book. Apart from other visible deficiencies, the quality of *Broken Palmyra* also suffered due to its cryptic anti-Hindu drivels (including that on karma). Lest I’m thought of as a Hindu partisan, I add that I’m not *criticising Christians at large* since Pirabhakaran and LTTE — as a viable Movement — were beneficiaries of dedicated Christians in Eelam and elsewhere, who see the worthiness in Pirabhakaran’s ideals. But, the closed minded, dogmatic Christian beliefs of Rajani Thirananagama and Rajan Hoole deserve criticism. They failed to grasp how Christianity as a religion originated, survived under trials and tribulations during its first four centuries, and ascended with time. Martyrdom against oppression was a significant contribution of early Christianity to the global culture and those who show contempt for martyrdom in the 21st century cannot be contemplated as true Christians. Among some Christian scholars, there even exists a belief that the death of Jesus Christ by crucifixion was a voluntary suicide.

KARMA IN THE WORDS OF THE *Broken Palmyra* AUTHORS

First, I present a paragraph which appear in *The Broken Palmyra* book, in which the karma theory was added as a tool to support the view of the authors.

“Another incident which influenced the local mind was the landmine attack by the LTTE on an army patrol on 25 March 1987. Subsequently the severed foot of a Sri Lankan soldier with a boot on it was exhibited successively at the Maviddapuram temple and Tellipallai junction. For its part the Sri Lankan army shelled these two places on successive nights. On the first night a temple priest lost his leg. At Tellipallai junction, Mr. Venugopal was killed. On the 31 March [1987], the LTTE’s Jaffna leader Mr. Kittu lost a leg in a grenade attack. Many of the Hindu folk at Maviddapuram, steeped in a belief in karma, formed their own conclusions. Nevertheless, the exhibition of gore had attracted sizeable crowds. This followed the exhibition of the dead bodies of nine Sri Lankan soldiers at Kandasamy Kovil four months before. There was taking place a transformation of sensibilities. Many Hindus were disgusted, but silent.”¹

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In this paragraph, Rajan Hoole et al. made selective use of the karma theory to their arsenal of criticism on LTTE in a circumspective manner (through the ‘Hindu folk at Maviddapuram’) that Kiddu lost his leg a week later, because the ‘severed foot of a Sri Lankan soldier with a boot on it was exhibited successively at the Maviddapuram temple’. If one accepts this logic, then other violent deaths among Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese *attributed to LTTE* (such as that of Duraiappah, Sri Sabaratnam, Padmanabha and TULF leadership) should be also accepted on the same belief in karma. But this would have been not to the liking of the authors of *The Broken Palmyra*. This devious omission and selective use of karma theory by Rajan Hoole and his colleagues in 1990 stimulated my interest on the karma theory.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY KARMA

Unabashedly, the caption ‘*The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*’ is borrowed from Clint Eastwood’s 1966 movie. In my opinion, karma is all encompassing. But, it receives highlight only when something bad occurs in one’s life. Thus, *for sake of convenience only*, I divide the karma types into the Good, the Bad and the Ugly.

(A) UGLY KARMA

Could it be true that the current generation of Tamil are suffering because of some ‘unknown or imaginary sins committed by our forefathers?’ In defense of the karma theory, *I would state that the sins committed by our (Hindu/Tamils) forefathers is neither unknown nor imaginary*. These are well known and real. I will list a few recognized sins of our forefathers.

1. cowardice against oppression by adversaries (going all the way to the 14th century), leading to intrusion by Muslims into the Indian subcontinent
2. tolerating the practise of casteism which led to nasty consequences of Brahmin — Vellala dominance in the Hindu society and concurrent conversion of low caste Hindus into Muslims and Christians in the Indian subcontinent (between the 13th century and 19th century).
3. In the 20th century Tamil Nadu and Eelam, political naivete of parliament-prone vocalists, leading to loss of Tamil rights at the national level in every subsequent decade since 1930s.
4. In the post-Independent era, retaining the slavish mentality reinforced by half-baked scholarship, leading to a flawed sense of superiority to

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Western thoughts (whether it is Karl Marx or moribund Magi of UN) while cavalierly ignoring the views of notables who critiqued the same. I point out that Bernard Shaw, Mahatma Gandhi, Bertrand Russell, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Nelson Mandela are few notables who pricked the ‘Western values’ valiantly. Who can top Gandhi’s classic humorous scorn [‘It’s a good idea’] to the asked question, [‘What do you think of the Western civilization’?]

(B) BAD KARMA

In my view, the bad karma of Eelam campaign are the two losses it faced in the mid 1980s (in a span of 38 months), when Pirabhakaran was emerging as the leader. These were, (1) the assassination of then Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi in Oct.31, 1984 and (2) the natural death of then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. G. Ramachandran in Dec. 24, 1987. Both were inevitable of sorts.

INDIRA GANDHI AND EELAM

If one believes Inder Malhotra (Indira’s biographer, who quotes Cuban leader Fidel Castro), the then Indian prime minister had had a premonition of her assassination even eleven years before her death — when she heard the news of unnatural death of Salvador Allende, the Chilean leader, in 1973. This is how Malhotra states his case:

“... On November 11, 1973 Castro was in New Delhi, on his way to Vietnam. An extremely pleasant banquet Indira gave in his honour was rudely interrupted by the ‘stunning news’ from ‘far-off Chile where it was still morning’ that Salvador Allende had been killed in a coup d’etat.

‘At that dramatic moment’, recorded the Cuban leader twelve years later, ‘Indira Gandhi, in a proof of her intimacy and confidence, said to me: ‘What they have done to Allende they want to do to me also. There are people here, connected with the same foreign forces that acted in Chile, who would like to eliminate me’.

Thereafter, time and again she was to repeat publicly a sanitised version of what she had told Castro privately. As constant as her warnings against the ‘foreign hand’ — which, according to sneerin critics, was ‘home-made’ — was her refrain that ‘they’ wanted to do her in. She took care never specifically to identify who ‘they’ were. But, by innuendo and insinuation, she left little doubt that the accusing finger pointed to the CIA, if not to the government of the United States.”²

One can question whether Indira was paranoid about her intended fate. But in 1973, America was under the regime of Nixon and his Rasputin-like

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impresario Kissinger whose implemented un-democratic policies in Asia, Africa and South America as well as domestic policies of pathological lying and burglary could make Indira reasonably paranoid. About the death of Chilean leader Salvador Allende in 1973, existing literature is confusing; some report that he was killed, and some report that he committed ‘suicide’. Even if the latter version is accepted, it is undeniable that the proximate cause of his suicide was the CIA-aided successful coup d’etat in Chile. [Note: see Appendix 4, providing an *incomplete list* of Heads of State and ex-Heads of State who met violent deaths since 1967.]

Now, a few paragraphs of what Malhotra wrote about Indira’s policy on the Eelam issue deserve a review:

“In dealing with the crisis arising from the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, however, Indira did not waver in the least and firmly took control of a highly explosive situation.

Sri Lanka’s Tamil minority, forming about a tenth of the total population and concentrated in the north and the east of the island, having despaired of getting justice from the Sinhalese majority, had started clamouring for Tamil Eelam (independence). Moderate groups, which might have settled for less, were quickly marginalised and the leadership of the Tamil movement passed to a ferociously separatist organisation called the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which was heavily armed and never reluctant to take on the Sri Lankan Army, often getting the better of the government troops in combat. In sheer frustration, the security forces killed unarmed Tamil civilians.

Unsurprisingly, the LTTE enjoyed wide support in Tamil Nadu, the Southern Indian state whose people had ties of blood, kinship and culture with the Tamils of Sri Lanka. The state’s phenomenally popular chief minister, M. G. Ramachandran (MGR) was the LTTE’s patron saint and gave the ‘Tigers’ sanctuary, arms and cash on a generous scale. This was obviously embarrassing to Indira, then busy denouncing Pakistan for its aid and assistance to Sikh terrorists in Punjab, but she could do nothing about it, for a tidal wave of Tamil opinion was supporting the actions of MGR who was, moreover, Indira’s only political ally in the whole of South India, now ruled by non-Congress (I) parties. In any case, she herself was not averse to using MGR’s support of the LTTE as leverage on the Sri Lankan government.

At the same time she was not prepared to countenance the demand for Tamil Eelam or that for converting Sri Lanka into another Cyprus, partitioning it *de facto* rather than *de jure*. What she wanted was that within the framework of a united Sri Lanka, the Tamil minority should have equal status with the Sinhalese majority as well as adequate autonomy.”³

Given the developing tension in her Southern backyard, whether Indira Gandhi wouldn’t have repeated a ‘Bangladesh operation’ in Sri Lanka in the

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1980s is now only of academic interest. The TULF leadership believed that Indira (if her nerves were pulled irritatingly by the then Sri Lankan leadership Jayewardene-Premadasa duo) was capable of carrying out such an operation. But, with her assassination in 1984 such a belief evaporated into thin air since Indira’s successors (including her son Rajiv Gandhi) lacked the nerve and gumption to even think along those terms. And thus, Indira’s departure was a bad karma for the Eelam hope.

MGR AND EELAM

Since Inder Malhotra has viewed MGR, the then Tamil Nadu chief minister, as the patron of LTTE and Pirabhakaran, my own impressions — written in 1992 — on MGR’s contribution to the Eelam campaign are offered for comparison. To quote,

“Call it a mere coincidence or the destiny of Eelam Tamils, when the liberation struggle began earnestly in 1977, MGR would become the chief minister of the Tamil Nadu. Though his interest on the problems of Eelam Tamils remained passive till 1982, the ethnic holocaust of 1983 kindled his support for the Eelam cause. 1983 also saw the change in guard among the political leaders of the Eelam Tamils. MGR had never felt comfortable with the TULF leadership since he had perceived them as emotionally more close to the DMK leadership.

When the leadership mantle in the struggle for Eelam needed a change and a boost, MGR became the godfather of the LTTE and made sure that the ‘new born baby’ would not suffer a premature death in the hands of wily J. R. Jayewardene, the central government of India and the Intelligence Agency of India.

Even to his allies in politics, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, the links MGR had with the LTTE was too embarrassing. But they simply had to ignore it for their own political survival in the south India. For all this moral support to the Tamil Eelam cause, MGR became the arch enemy of the Sinhalese power brokers from 1983 till his death in December 1987.

Many Eelam Tamils also did not expect much from MGR after his skirmish with the TULF leadership at the 1981 Madurai Tamil International Conference. But, now in hindsight, one can see how much vital was the support of MGR for the Eelam cause from 1983 till his death...”⁴

MGR’s death in December 1987, at a relatively ‘senile’ age almost 71, was the second bad blow for the Eelam, following Indira Gandhi’s assassination. I believe that MGR’s role as a mentor to Pirabhakaran and LTTE has been still under-appreciated by Tamils, partly due to the publications and self-righteous posturing of Tamil academics steeped in the Marxist Leftist tradition (Prof.

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K. Sivathamby and Prof. S. Sivasegaram, to name a few) who poured scorn on MGR’s modus operandi. Being a successful stage and movie actor for decades before he became the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in 1977, MGR had the advantage of using three skills he learnt in his primary profession and used them effectively to counter his foes and friends equally. These are as follows:

1. his impeccable sense of stage presence (*a la* Muhamad Ali and President Ronald Reagan) and intuitional decision-making skill. Only professional artistes — actors, musicians and dancers — of high caliber, but not the arm chair critics, can grasp this sense of stage presence well enough to act and react to the developing events and not following the pre-prepared script like a fool. Since events are always in a state of flux, this intuitional decision making skill is of high relevance for success in politics and all other endeavors.
2. his virtuoso ability to not allow *virtually anyone* from stealing a scene. MGR demonstrated this ability repeatedly against all whom he had to interact with. This included Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Karunanidhi, Jayalalitha, J. R. Jayewardene, Amirthalingam, India’s Intelligence gumshoes and policy pundits, and last but not the least — political upstarts belonging to the RAW-supported Eelam militant groups.
3. his acting background helped him again in the last three years of his life, following his debilitation with stroke in 1984 which resulted in speech impediment. MGR could use mime and hands to express his thoughts to his confidants, while ignoring and deflecting unwanted pleas and noise from distractors within his party as well as those in outer circle.

This last ability has been aptly described by one of MGR’s confidants, K. Mohandas — the Deputy Inspector General of Police — who served as MGR’s ‘ears and hands’. Mohandas had recorded,

“[in the post-1984 period] Since I had been keeping MGR informed about the activities of these [*i.e.*, many Eelam Tamil] militant groups and the training given to them, he expressed at one stage, that he would like to get in touch with all the leaders of various groups — particularly those of LTTE. . . . The discussion was general in nature. . . . MGR listened patiently but it was apparent that an instant rapport was established between MGR and Prabhakaran, the LTTE supremo. MGR, with his uncanny insight could easily make out the difference between the LTTE and the rest of the groups. It was a widely known fact that, as a consequence, MGR used to extend financial assistance at various stages in later years, both from his personal funds and sometimes from government funds.”⁵

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In a subsequent chapter, Mohandas had further noted,

“When I informed MGR that the developing situation was dangerous from the point of view of law and order, he asked me to warn the leaders of all the groups and also to inform the Centre. MGR was, on his part, gradually getting in touch with the militant groups — particularly the LTTE, through sources other than the CID. His idea seemed to be to impress on the Central Government his hold over the militant groups and use it as a card to be used if and when the need arose. This was a dangerous game, but as MGR once told me, life was not worth it without risks.”⁶

That LTTE and Pirabhakaran recovered from the death of MGR is indeed a ‘miracle’. And I consider this is one of the good karmas for Eelam.

(C) GOOD KARMA

The ascension and dominance of Pirabhakaran as the military leader for Eelam Tamils since 1986 was a good karma in my assessment. I present an analogy to a still under-recognized Japanese inventor Hideo Shima in explaining Pirabhakaran’s contribution to Eelam. Shima was the father of the bullet express train (*shinkansen*).⁷ Two unique features about the bullet express train are its speed and safety profiles. When engineer Shima wished to increase the speed of the regular express train, he did it by three steps; (1) by building a separate ‘bullet-train express’ *only* track, (2) by making this track, as *straight* as possible, (3) by closing the windows and doors, like air plane, to *decrease friction*. Then, engineer Shima coupled the safety component, at high speed by two steps; (1) by having an electric motor to pull *each car* of the train. This is quite different from having an engine, in front of all the cars. (2) by the most ingenious step of having the electric motor in each car function *simultaneously as brakes*.

Until 1964, no one in Japan or in Europe or America believed in Shima’s idea. But Shima made his dream come true, against all opposition from politicians, bankers and pseudo-pundits in his profession. And when the opening ceremony for the bullet express train came, Shima was not there. He had resigned from his job for the politicians to strut in front of limelight.

Each of the five simplified steps I had outlined above which resulted in the successful operation of bullet express train can be metaphorically tagged to Pirabhakaran’s success with LTTE and Eelam. First, Pirabhakaran built a separate ‘express’ track from the worn-out parliamentary track. Even in engineer Shima’s conceptualization, this was the most significant contribution to the development of the bullet express train; *i.e.*, to think that the already used path or track has to be given up for a new track. Secondly, Pirabhakaran made this separate track ‘as straight as an arrow’ rather than giving into de-tours

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or bendings. Thirdly, he closed the windows and doors to unwanted friction — without hesitation by coercion and even silencing. Fourthly, he made the LTTE express train function effectively by delegating responsibilities to different regional leaders. Fifthly, he also developed a strategy to ‘put brakes’ on the running express train at appropriate intervals.

51

Being a Tamil Hero

*Andrea: 'Unhappy is the land that breeds no heroes'.
Galileo: 'No Andrea. Unhappy is the land that needs a hero'.*

— BERTOLT BRECHT¹

FOLLOWING THE 1998 extra-marital scandal of President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, Dr. Russell Travis — while delivering the 1999 presidential address to the American Association of Neurological Surgeons — asked,

“After the past year’s worth of political antics, I began to wonder ‘what is a hero?’ Who, other than athletes, like John Elway or Michael Jordan, or country or rock singers, are today’s candidates for the title ‘hero’? Who today would be labeled as the ‘great man?’ Do we still have heroes?”²

Then, he presented six examples of influential heroes: Galileo, Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony and John F. Kennedy. While many would agree with the first five names, thousands of Americans would have difficulty in identifying J. F. Kennedy as their hero. This address of Travis prompted me to turn my attention to the Eelam Tamil heroes.

To place Pirabhakaran’s status as a Tamil hero in context, first one has to define the word ‘hero’. The *Funk & Wagnall’s Standard Dictionary (1980)* - provides the following descriptions for the word ‘hero’.

1. a man distinguished for exceptional courage, fortitude or bold enterprise.
2. one idealized for superior qualities or deeds of any kind
3. the principal male character in a drama, fictional work, etc.
4. In classical mythology and legend, a man of great nobility or physical prowess.

Considering his track record for the past two decades, it is not an exaggeration if one states that Pirabhakaran’s deeds can fit into first three of the above

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descriptions. On the remaining fourth description, while still living, Pirabhakaran’s deeds also has been tagged with the ‘legendary’ appellation and his creation, viz. LTTE, has demonstrated ‘physical prowess’ in figurative sense.

ORRIN KLAPP’S CLASSIFICATION OF HEROES

It is not inappropriate to identify the various types of legitimate heroes who were (and are) Pirabhakaran’s contemporaries in the Tamil society. Pirabhakaran cannot be studied in isolation and thus, the heroic deeds of his Eelam Tamil contemporaries in various arenas are identified first. Orrin Klapp, the professor of sociology at the San Diego State University for two decades (1949–69), who had researched on the social types, developed a taxonomy of heroes in 1962. Klapp’s classification of heroes consists of five types, and within each type there are 3 or 4 sub-categories. Altogether, Klapp recognized 17 types of heroes, as follows: ³

1. Winners: Getting what you wanted, beating everyone and being a champion.
 - (a) Strong man
 - (b) The brain
 - (c) The smart operator
 - (d) The great lover
2. Splendid Performers: Shining before an audience.
 - (a) Showmen
 - (b) Heroes of play
 - (c) Playboy
3. Heroes of Social Acceptability: Being liked, attractive and good.
 - (a) The pin-up model
 - (b) The charmer
 - (c) The good fellow
 - (d) Conforming heroes
4. Independent Spirits: Standing alone, making one’s way by oneself.
 - (a) Bohemian
 - (b) Jester
 - (c) Angry commentator
5. Group Servants: Helping people, cooperation self-sacrifice, group service and solidarity.
 - (a) Defender
 - (b) Martyr
 - (c) Benefactor

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TAMIL HEROES OF EELAM

In the 20th century Eelam, many heroes emerged by popular recognition and public adoration. Among them were artistes, educators, legislators, public defenders, and icons of protest and valor. Some had academic exposure to cultures beyond Ceylon, due to privilege of birth and affluence. Some did not even enter the universities of the island. But, all were intelligent in their own rights. Thus, comparing each one with another is like comparing an apple and orange. But, from my vintage perspective as a keen observer of Tamil society for the past three decades, I provide below examples for each of the above 17 categories of legitimate heroes, who experienced ‘one-of-a kind’ life and contributed to the Eelam society in unparalleled fashion. Majority of these heroes (those born before 1950) have received recognition in the reference work, *A Dictionary of Biography of Ceylon Tamils* (1996), compiled by S. Arumugam, and are seniors to Pirabhakaran in age. The following list may seem biased to some, but it is biased against few names who are pampered by the media personnel in Colombo and Chennai.

1. Winners

- (a) Strong man: S. Thondaman (in the local political arena since 1947 until his death in 1999)
- (b) The brain: Swami Vipulananda, Fr. Xavier Thaninayagam, Prof. Christie J. Eliezer, Prof. A. Jeyaratnam Wilson
- (c) The smart operator: Prof. S. Vithiananthan, Col. Kiddu (both as unconventional organizers of the Jaffna society in the 1970s and 1980s respectively)
- (d) The great lover: James T. Rutnam (eminent bibliophile)

2. Splendid Performers

- (a) Showmen: G. G. Ponnambalam (both in legal and political arenas), musician Thavil Thatchinamoorthy, endurance athlete V. S. Kumar Anandan
- (b) Heroes of play: cricketer Muttiah Muralitharan
- (c) Playboy: cricketer Mahadeva Sathasivam

3. Heroes of Social Acceptability

- (a) The pin-up model: poet Kasi Ananthan (in the first half of 1970s)

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- (b) The charmer: A. Amirthalingam, C. Rajadurai (from 1956 to 1980 as orators)
- (c) The good fellow: M. Sivasithamparam
- (d) Conforming hero: S. J. V. Chelvanayakam (for the Tamil masses from 1956 until his death in 1977)

4. Independent Spirits

- (a) Bohemian: Prof. C. Suntheralingam
- (b) Jester: satirist Sivagnanasuntharam (editor of *Sirithiran* humor magazine and creator of Jaffna’s cynical wise-old man character *Savari Thambar*)
- (c) Angry commentator: journalist S. Sivanayagam, M. K. Eelaventhana (both heroes of non-violence against the high-handedness of Indian Poo Bahs)

5. Group Servants

- (a) Defender: Senator S. Nadesan, Kumar Ponnambalam (both as legal defenders against State oppression of human rights)
- (b) Martyr: Pon. Sivakumaran, physician ‘Gandhiyam’ S. Rajasundaram, Capt. Wasanthan (Miller), Second Lieutenant Malathy, Lieutenant Col. Thileepan
- (c) Benefactor: Dr. Siva Chinnathamby (as pioneer campaigner of women’s health), ‘Milk White Industries entrepreneur K. Kana-garajah

Among the 31 individuals whom I have identified above, with the exception of Swami Vipulananda, all others are Pirabhakaran’s contemporaries. Many, though chronologically older, were Pirabhakaran’s admirers; some, chronologically younger, were his junior associates. Thus, Pirabhakaran’s stature as a Tamil hero is hardly in doubt.

In my view, despite the sneering of his critics who suffer from ‘sour grape syndrome’, Pirabhakaran became a hero to Tamils in the old fashioned way; he earned it for three of his deeds. First, he established *an authentic, vibrant and successful* (I use only these three appropriate adjectives to distinguish LTTE from other fakes) Tamil army — a deed which had not been performed for his ethnic group in the past 400–500 years. In this deed, Pirabhakaran is on par with George Washington who performed a similar feat for the colonial settlers

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in America. Secondly, Pirabhakaran stood up against the imperial intentions of Indian army and administrative Poo Bahs, while his fellow Tamil rivals folded their tents in subservience. Thirdly, his LTTE army stood up and scored against the aggression of the Sri Lankan state’s armed forces and para-military elements for more than 15 years, despite heavy odds.

HEROISM IN THE BATTLE OF POONAGARI (1993)

In 1993, writing under my pen-name C. P. Goliard, I identified Pirabhakaran’s heroism in a commentary using poet Kannadasan’s (1927–1981) lines, following the historic Battle of Poonagari. Excerpts:

‘*Uyir Mel Aasai*’ (Love in Life) is a mediocre Tamil movie which was released in the mid 1960s. It was one of Jai Shankar’s early movies. The only redeeming feature of that movie, as far as I can remember, was the *Paapa* [child] song of poet Kannadasan, which was sung by Karnatic diva K. B. Sundarambal. Kannadasan’s verse and Sundarambal’s voice! — splendid, is the only adjective one can use for that super combination. Kannadasan wrote,

Kelu Paapaa — Kelu Paapaa — Kelvigal aayiram Kelu Paapaa
Ketaal kidaipathu pothu arivu — intha Kelviyal valarvathu pahutharivu.

[Ask child — ask child — Ask thousand questions child
General knowledge you’ll gain — and listening will make one rational.]

In the subsequent lines, the poet laureate wrote,

Kadalukku payanthavan karaiyil ninran —
athai padahinil kadanthavan ulagai kandaan
Payanthavan thanakke pahaiyaavan —
enrum thuninthavan ulagirku oliyaavan.

[The one who feared the sea stood in the shore — the one who roved it in boat discovered the world;
The coward becomes an enemy to himself; the ever courageous will become the beacon to the world.]

The cowards and the courageous — Tamils have played the political game in both these positions in recent times. The recent Battle of Poonagari can be appreciated well when we comprehend that not long ago, Tamils were laughing stock among the Sinhalese for their cowardice. . . .”⁴

I continued:

“On the Battle of Poonagari, the *Economist* magazine of November 13th [1993] had presented the verdict succinctly to the world: ‘A Sri Lankan government official was honest enough to describe the military setback on the Jaffna peninsula on November 11th as a disaster. After an attack by 500-or-so Tamil Tiger separatist guerrillas, the army seems to have withdrawn from

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Poonareen, its last based on the peninsula apart from the airport. This defeat, the worst single loss for years, is doubly worrying for the government that seemed set on shooting its way to a solution to a decade of fighting against Tamil guerrillas’. One should also note that the *Economist* is no friend of the Eelam campaign.

Kannadasan’s lines, *Kadalukku payanthavan karaiyil ninran — athai pada-hinil kadanthavan ulagai kandaan*, is meaningful in two planes. First, scientifically speaking, they praise the determination and courage of explorers like Columbus, Vasco da Gama and Magellan who ‘discovered the New World’ by their bold adventures. Secondly, in historical terms, these lines also chronicle the fall of Tamils from their pedestal as explorers of new land due to inward-looking mentality, which became dominant five centuries ago (at the same time when Europeans were beginning to explore the sea). This bad trait, caused by caste consciousness, relegated the fishermen to the secondary role in a society which came to be dominated by the Brahmin doctrines.

So, one can visualize that Kannadasan challenged the Tamils with the words: *Payanthavan thanakke pahaiyaavaan — enrum thuninthavan ulagirku oliyaavaan*. If he is alive, the poet will be pleased that quite a number of lads and lasses of Eelam do take his verses seriously and put them into action.”⁵

CONTINUOUS SUCCESSES IN THE BATTLEFIELD

That the Battle of Poonagari (1993) was no flash in the pan was demonstrated by Pirabhakaran’s army which kept mauling the Sri Lankan armed forces repeatedly at will. Excerpts from four notable news reports, between 1999 and 2002, would suffice.

(1) ARJUNA RANAWANA TO THE *Asiaweek* MAGAZINE

“It didn’t take long. First a 100-man Tamil Tiger commando unit slipped through the thinly defended government lines. Then three other groups attacked from different directions, putting the defenders to flight. The government’s military base at Oddusudan had fallen. Within a week of the Nov. 2 [1999] assault, up to 10 positions in the northeastern Wanni region had met a similar fate. Thousands of government soldiers were falling back, and 18 months of hard-fought advances were largely undone. . . .

[President] Kumaratunga put a brave face on the military setbacks. While conceding that considerable terrain had been lost, she said media reports of government military losses had been ‘grossly exaggerated’. Nevertheless, *Unceasing Waves* 3, as Tamil Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran has dubbed the offensive, has rattled the government and dented military morale. Kumaratunga ordered a shakeup in the northern command and imposed censorship on local news organizations. The army chief, Gen. Sri Lal Weerasooriya, took personal command of the garrison town of Vavuniya, just south

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of the government forces’ redrawn defensive line. He also ordered an inquiry into the defeats.

The Wanni region is the last significant area of Sri Lanka still in Tamil Tiger hands. For about a year and a half, government forces had been pushing the rebels back, sometimes with unexpected ease. But in the end, say military analysts, the advancing troops had become too thinly spread, even with the injection of naval and air units into the infantry lines. When Prabhakaran’s men punched through a gap between navy and army positions, there was no organized resistance. . . .”⁶

(2) ANTHONY SPAETH IN THE *Time* MAGAZINE

“... On April 22 [2000], the Tigers managed to capture a military garrison at Elephant Pass, an isthmus that connects the northern Jaffna peninsula to the rest of Sri Lanka. . . . Kumaratunga begged for weapons and ammunition from abroad, and arms dealers from China, Israel, Iran, Russia and Ukraine flew into Colombo, the country’s capital, to strike deals.

At mid-week, Sri Lanka also begged neighbor India to provide military aid, including ships to evacuate troops from Jaffna and fighter planes to provide air cover. The last time India got involved in the Sri Lanka war the results proved catastrophic for both sides. . . . Not surprisingly, India this time has flatly refused to help evacuate the Sri Lankan soldiers. . . .

The army seems inept and almost certainly unable to win the war. The LTTE, having overrun so many military bases, is now considered better armed than the government. Thanks to Kumaratunga’s press censorship, the majority of Sri Lankans didn’t even know of the three-week battle at Elephant Pass until the rout was complete. Now they’re scared. ‘I am wondering whether we can ever get over this,’ says a security guard working in Colombo. Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran told his faithful last November that 2000 would be the ‘Year of war’. He has kept his promise.”⁷

(3) ANONYMOUS REPORTER IN THE *Economist* MAGAZINE

“ ‘An attacking force always sustains more casualties’, said a Sri Lankan army commander, seeking to dismiss the army’s large losses in an attack on Tamil Tiger rebels. The army said 157 of its soldiers and 190 rebels had been killed. The Tigers said it had killed 300 soldiers for the loss of 48 of its own fighters. Whatever the true figure, it was a ferocious battle. Worse, the army appeared to have gained nothing from it.

It had apparently aimed to capture the town of Pallai as a prelude to retaking the more important Elephant Pass, a causeway linking the Jaffna peninsula to the southern mainland. Last year the army lost control of the pass in its worst defeat in the 18-year civil war. Without this land route, the government can supply its troops in the Tamil-dominated peninsula only by sea or by air. An offensive, named Rod of Fire, started on April 25th immediately after the Tigers had ended a unilateral truce. The Tigers put up strong resistance,

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forcing the troops, drawn mainly from the majority Sinhalese population, to retreat to their original positions in Nagar Kovil, Eluthumadduval and the Kilaly lagoon. On April 28th, it was all over and both sides were disposing of their dead.

The debacle has panicked the government. The stalling of a major offensive led by the cream of its recently modernised armed forces has exposed the precariousness of its grip on the peninsula, which was wrested from the Tigers only in 1996. The government’s earlier claim that the Tigers had called their ceasefire out of military weakness is looking increasingly hollow...”⁸

(4) STEVE PERCY IN THE *Far Eastern Economic Review* MAGAZINE

“...The [Jaffna] town’s most noticeable residents are 30,000 troops, who man fortified camps and bunkers at every intersection. At the 51st Battalion headquarters, in one of the town’s two big 1960s-style hotels, a high ranking officer concedes the Tigers ‘have won the war’. He cites their unhindered passage to the town under the peace accord and how they move among the people showing videos for political and recruitment purposes, while extracting taxes from shopkeepers and traders. The army won’t stand in their way, he says. They’ll be back in their barracks by the end of the year, he adds.

That’s the demand of the Tigers’ local political officer near Temple Road. Sympathizers come and go. On the wall hangs a portrait of Prabhakaran in jungle fatigues with a suicide capsule looped around his neck. A world map forms a backdrop with a yellow Eelam — the promised Tiger homeland — jutting out of the Indian Ocean like a crab with an enormous claw. It appears to be unattached to Sri Lanka...”⁹

Russell Travis, in his above-cited presidential address, drew attention to two components of heroism: courage and fortitude. References to Pirabhakaran, appearing as sound bites, by Ranawana, Spaeth, Percy and the anonymous *Economist* correspondent in the above-cited passages tell without embellishment the courage component of LTTE leader as the Tamil hero. Travis also stresses the fortitude component; *i.e.*, the willingness of an individual to suffer personal anguish for the sake of the moral good.

A few authentic heroes living amongst us now were blessed with both these components. One can state that Nelson Mandela and champion Muhammad Ali (both bona-fide boxers) showed the traits of courage and fortitude in their campaigns against political arrogance and racism. Among the Tamils, Pirabhakaran’s deeds are on par with that of Mandela and Ali. Since 1983, political decision-making in Sri Lanka and to an extent even in neighboring India had been revolving around Pirabhakaran’s thoughts and deeds. No head of state had influenced the events in South Asia for such a lengthy period in the post 1975 period like Pirabhakaran.

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THE 1993 INTERVIEW TO THE *Economist* MAGAZINE

A rare Pirabhakaran interview to the *Economist* magazine appeared in 1993. Even in current context, it remains significantly (and even eerily!) relevant — if one overlooks the inserted time markers like the years of war, age of Pirabhakaran and the name of the incumbent President of Sri Lanka. There is also a passing reference to him as a ‘hero’, based on his then physical features — but not on his deeds. So, it is reproduced in its entirety.

‘The leader of the Tamil Tigers, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, does not often give an interview to a journalist. So why now? During about three hours of talk with Mr. Prabhakaran, what emerged was a desire to negotiate once again with the government. He rejected any suggestion that this arose out of weakness. Victory, he insisted, was his for the taking.

Yet all is not well within the rebel group. The Tigers are finding it hard to recruit more fighters. Teenagers quickly become veterans. In January ten tigers were reported to have died when a ship said to be carrying arms was interrupted by the Indian navy. Among the dead was Sathasivam Krishnakumar, the Tigers’ number-two and a close friend of the leader. Mr. Prabhakaran says he is too upset to talk about the loss. The Jaffna peninsula, the Tamil area where the Tigers have their stronghold, is a ruined place after ten years of fighting. There is no electricity and not much food. Thousands of people have fled. Those too poor to leave appear exhausted.

But the Tigers have been up against it before. The Indian peacekeepers invited to Sri Lanka in 1987 suppressed them for a time. A new president, Ranasinghe Premadasa, got rid of the Indians in 1990 and, in return, the Tigers talked peace. Nothing came of this talk, and many in the government believed that the Tigers used the pause in the civil war to rearm. They will be suspicious that this is what the Tigers have in mind now.

Even his enemies concede that Mr. Prabhakaran is a formidable leader. Despite the toll of the civil war, he appears to retain the support of the majority of Tamils in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, the area which the Tigers claim as the Tamil homeland. He is 37, on the small side, and a bit overweight. With his black hair and moustache and large eyes, he looks a little like the hero that turns up regularly in Tamil films. He dresses in army fatigues, and carries a gun. Around his neck is a black cord at the end of which is a capsule, presumably containing the cyanide which Tigers are supposed to swallow rather than be taken prisoner.

His house — at least, the house where he gave his interview — is small and modern, and a bit of a drive from the town of Jaffna. There are maps on the walls, but no radio or television or books, although Mr. Prabhakaran appears well informed about affairs outside Sri Lanka, especially wars, in Afghanistan, or in Indochina. Much of the talk was over dinner: noodles and a soft drink. Mr. Prabhakaran’s portliness does not seem to arise from

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over-eating. He appears to speak only Tamil. Interpreting was done by Anton Balasingham, a much-travelled man — he lived for a time in London — who has been the Tigers’ principal negotiator in the past.

Is there anything the Tigers might offer that would encourage the government to open negotiations? The Tigers’ demand has been for an independent Tamil state covering a third of the country and holding much of the coastline, a proposal that the government rejects totally. Some politicians in Colombo believe the way to peace is to turn Sri Lanka into a federal state.

The government is considering the idea, although the majority Sinhalese, who have dominated the government and army since independence in 1948, are believed to be against federalism. It would give the Tamils too much power, some believe. The Tamils would want a high degree of autonomy, particularly over law and order, land and education, all controversial themes. The size of a possible Tamil state within a federation is matter for endless argument. Although Tamils are in the majority in the north, there are sizeable other groups, including Muslims, in the east.

Mr. Prabhakaran talks of the possibility of a ‘reasonable’ compromise, although it is unclear what compromise he would make. He did say, though: *‘If a proposal which gives autonomy and satisfies the expectations of the Tamil people is put forward, we are prepared to consider it.’*

However, he talks of ‘extremists’ in the government. President Premadasa, who has always favoured negotiation, might be willing to try it again, but the army, a growing force in Sri Lankan politics, would probably object. If its view prevails, the Tigers will fight on. Mr. Prabhakaran said: *‘Victory in a war does not depend on manpower or weapons. Firm determination, valour and love of freedom are the factors that decide victory in a war. Our fighters and our people are full of these.’* Sri Lanka’s civil war could continue for a while yet.’¹⁰

The first of the two above-mentioned quotes from Pirabhakaran in his 1993 interview disproves unequivocally the views expressed by Colombo, Chennai, London and New York pundits that he had down-graded his demand for separate state as a result of ‘post September 11’ [2001] developments. The second of the two above-mentioned quotes shows his courageous and uncompromising stand, which has not wavered for the past eleven years.

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Washington and Pirabhakaran

IN NOVEMBER 2004, Pirabhakaran reached 50 years. His adversaries and number-challenged critics had preferred to portray Prabhakaran (dubiously and by straining historical facts) as a South Asian Hitler or Pol Pot. They have valid reasons to bleat. By his mercurial military skills, Prabhakaran had turned the current borders of Sri Lanka into a rump of what it was in 1983. Those who view Prabhakaran through cock-eyed logic and pout ‘democratic values’ to suit their political stance are oblivious to the history of American revolution and its leader. In my eyes, Prabhakaran is a 20th century Asian model of George Washington. My view has appeared in the letters section of *Time* magazine (International edition) in 2000. To cite,

“What Sri Lankan rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and his Tamil Tiger guerrillas are carrying out is nothing new. The fight to the death for an independent homeland was patented by George Washington and his gang 225 years ago. And why the fuss over Prabhakaran’s penchant for guns, when the Second Amendment provides the same security to all Americans?”¹

In 1990–91, I was engaged in a debate in the letters column of the now-defunct *Asiaweek* (Hongkong) magazine with an anonymous Sri Lankan (an anti-LTTE individual) on the theme of comparing the merits of LTTE rebels with America’s Founding Fathers ². That debate led me to read more about America’s revolutionary war and what I benefited is briefly presented below.

The patriotic signers of the Declaration of Independence pledged their lives, their fortunes and their honor to the cause of independence. But King George III called these rebels as ‘traitors’. The American patriots, led by George Washington, were made up of farm boys, restless apprentices and laborers. In 1778, King George’s army in the American colonies had 50,000 troops, “while Washington considered it a good day when he could field 5,000”, according to historian Joseph Conlin³. The then population of the 13 original American states was 2.5 million, almost identical to the now-partly dispersed Tamil population in Sri Lanka. According to Conlin,

“The rebels were fighting a defensive war in their homeland. As many twentieth century ‘wars of liberation’ have shown, such wars bestow a great many advantages on the defenders. Militarily, the patriots did not have to destroy or

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even decisively defeat the British. Rebels on their own ground need only to hold on and hold out in the hope that weariness, demoralization and dissent take their toll on the enemy.”⁴

That’s what happened to King George’s troops. This could foretell the plight of Sri Lankan army in Eelam as well. Despite the braggadocio penned by the parochial editors and defence analysts in Colombo, the Generals and foot soldiers of the rump Sri Lankan state are portentously happy (for not fighting and) to receive monthly duty-free pay checks. The similarities between the leadership skills noted for Washington and Prabhakaran are also rather convincing. On Washington’s performance as a military hero, historian Conlin wrote,

“In the early years of the Revolutionary War, he won a few small battles, such as those at Trenton and Princeton, but never a big one; his defeats were legion. Most of his years in command were spent in retreat, a step ahead of annihilation. It was in retreat that his military contribution to independence lay. If he rarely won a battle, he kept an army in the field against overwhelming odds. Washington survived in the face of repeated defeats, superior British forces, inadequate provisions, disease, almost no shelter for his men during several extremely cold winters, and often poor support from the Continental Congress for which he fought.”⁵

In more than one plane, Prabhakaran’s plight in guiding a Tamil militia between 1987 and 2002 was even worse than what Washington faced between 1776 and 1781. Whereas Washington didn’t have to tackle the airpower of his aggressors, Pirabhakaran had to devise novel techniques in blunting the airpower of Sri Lankan and the Indian armies. In addition, whereas Washington received financial and military assistance from France, Pirabhakaran could only solicit support from Tamils living in diaspora. Conlin had stated,

“The Revolutionary War could not have been won without the French alliance. Not only did ‘America’s oldest friend’ pour money and men into the fray, but France also provided a fleet to make up for the Americans’ nearly total lack of sea power.”⁶

That LTTE built up a home grown sea brigade as one of its vital ingredients in military armor itself is a badge of honor to the Tamil mariners of Vadamarachy region, who had it in their blood for centuries. Quite a number of ‘thinking-heads’ (which included Colombo Tamils, who boasted of an alphabet soup of degrees tagged to their names) and journalist hacks also criticised Prabhakaran’s leadership for his lack of education. But Pirabhakaran’s innovative talent in strengthening his military armor disproves the half-baked

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opinions of his critics. As a matter of fact, Washington himself was not a great thinker. According to Conlin,

“In every particular by which greatness is measured, the tall and solemn Washington comes up short. He lacked originality. He was no thinker, and seems to have read few books. He contributed no document to the rich literature of colonial protest and rarely addressed the two Continental Congresses he attended.”⁷

This suggests that, tough times needed an action hero, and not an egg-head philosopher, who could play best with the cards he had been handed with. The colonial America in the 17th century had a hero in Washington, and the Eelam in the 20th century had one in Prabhakaran. Of course, there were egg-heads (like Ben Franklin) in Washington’s group. But they willingly played second fiddle.

Conlin⁸ also had noted briefly about the pains Washington faced at the end of his presidential tenure in 1796, and which Washington recorded in his *Farewell Message*. These were,

1. Washington’s plea to his countrymen, not to form political parties, since he regarded parties as combinations of selfish people who were willing to sacrifice the common good for their own narrow interests;
2. Washington’s admonishment of Americans to ‘discountenance irregular opposition’ to the authority of the government;
3. Warning against sectarianism in the USA along geographical lines; and
4. Warning against ‘the insidious wiles of foreign influence’.

The pains faced by Washington also visited Pirabhakaran in 2004; viz., sectarianism cry along geographical lines (North versus East Eelam) raised by defector Col. Karuna, who was one of Pirabhakaran’s trusted lieutenants in the 1990s. Eelam Tamils hardly doubted that the sectarianism cry of Col. Karuna was due to ‘the insidious wiles of foreign influence’ [in the words of Washington], partly attributable to jealousy on Pirabhakaran’s success as a military-cum political leader.

What Washington termed as ‘the insidious wiles of foreign influence’ has been a perennial problem to Pirabhakaran since he opted to hold his own against the claws of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of India in 1987. How he managed to physically survive RAW’s elimination plots for the past 17 years is a remarkable achievement. A larger share of credit for Pirabhakaran’s success against the wily intelligence operatives of India should go to

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the intelligence arm of LTTE, currently led by Pottu Amman, one of Pirabhakaran’s confidants. LTTE’s Intelligence Chief Pottu Amman is for Pirabhakaran, what Major Benjamin Tallmadge (1754–1835) was for Washington. In this aspect also, Pirabhakaran’s talent in establishing and sustaining an intelligence wing of LTTE resonates with that of Washington’s skill as an accomplished spymaster of a new nation, who cultivated a vast network of spies that stretched from New England to the Carolinas.^{9–12}

None of the nominal Ceylonese Tamil political leaders [Sir. P. Ramanathan, G. Ponnambalam, S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, S. Thondaman and A. Amirthalingam] of the 20 century who preceded Pirabhakaran had the need to establish an intelligence arm. The necessity didn’t arise for them, since they were not burdened with holding a territory and maintaining a vibrant militia on their own. But Pirabhakaran’s LTTE has territory to protect, which was fairly earned for Eelam Tamils by shedding blood, sweat, tears and lives in the battle fields.

It needs emphasis that there have appeared unflattering portrayals of Pottu Amman in the print and electronic media by analysts like D. B. S. Jeyaraj^{13,14} and the deceitfully named University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna)^{15,16} run by Rajan Hoole. The criticism of LTTE’s intelligence operations by the ‘Loyalists’ faction of Eelam Tamils was no different from those made on the operations of Washington and Tallmadge in the 18th century America. What needs notice is that in their plethora of reports, briefings, position papers and commentaries, LTTE’s critics blindly ignore the historical facts of how the United States of America (the current cradle of ‘democracy’) came into existence through the rebellion of Washington and his prominent spy crews, whose performance on how they treated the Loyalists of colonial America, if judged by the contemporary politically correct yardstick of terrorism, was no different than that of LTTE’s deeds.

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Pirabhakaran’s knockout

It’s a good feeling to enter the ring with thousands of people booing you. Especially when you know you can deliver what you predict.

—MUHAMMAD ALI¹

BY FORTUITOUS circumstances, I was in Kilinochchi during the first week of March 2004, when Col. Karuna’s defection flared up in the open. Thus, I was relatively privy to the sentiments expressed in Kilinochchi by fellow Tamils. In sum, the message was ‘Col. Karuna the Tamil Hero had turned into a Zero’. Initially there was a mild shock, then a disappointment, followed by the overall verdict of ‘betrayal to the Tamil cause’.

As I was an invited guest of Kilinochchi people, I was offered the privilege of a trusted and ranking LTTE warrior (*porali* in Tamil; and this word, *porali* has a special reverence in Eelam Tamil country) as an escort. My escort was in his early 30s, single, and with a Clark Gable mustache. He solicited my views on why a much respected *porali* like Col. Karuna jumped ship, and why Karuna’s statements following his defection appeared incoherent and insane. This was not the Col. Karuna whom he knew in the battlefield of the 1990s. I briefed my warrior friend on the ‘Seven Year Itch’(1955) theme illustrated by Billy Wilder’s comedy classic with the starring Marilyn Monroe and Two Ewell. Then, I opined that similar to the ‘Seven Year Itch’ in Hollywood portrayal, there is a curse of ‘Fifteen Year Itch’ among notable Eelam Tamils. Remarkably talented individuals who gain public notice disgrace themselves after fifteen years of (plus or minus two to three years) adulation. Col. Karuna is not the first and will not be the last.

Who were Col. Karuna’s notable predecessors? First, there was the talented genius G. G. Ponnambalam, who entered the Ceylon State Council in 1934 as a champion of Tamil rights and raised the Tamil consciousness, only to somersault on his principles in 1948 by embedding himself with the D. S. Senayanayke Cabinet. The second example among politicians, was Col. Karuna’s predecessor from the East Eelam, the one-and-only Chelliah Rajadurai who received notice in 1956 as a fiery orator of the Tamil Federal Party. Though he joined the UNP Cabinet of J. R. Jayewardene in 1979 [15 plus 8 years], Rajadurai’s heart had left the Federal Party by 1972. He was

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even flirting to join Sirimavo Bandaranaike’s SLFP Cabinet in 1974 [15 plus 3 years], and possibly out of respect to his mentor S. J. V. Chelvanayakam, Rajadurai postponed his mental exit to 1977.

The third Tamil to do a Benedict Arnold was LTTE’s then deputy leader Mahataya. He joined LTTE in late 1970s, and established himself as an able LTTE warrior in campaign against the Indian army, between 1987 and 1989. But, by 1992 [after 15 years of joining the Movement], Mahataya’s morality collapsed and turned against LTTE which made him a man. He paid the price of betrayal. Col. Karuna followed Mahataya’s example in 2004. He joined LTTE as a foot soldier in 1982, gained stature in LTTE’s campaign against the Indian army by 1989, and after fifteen years lost his sanity against the wile of stinking skunks of sewer diplomacy.

Why this happens recurrently? A plausible psychological explanation is the ‘mid life crisis’ of dominant males. In all four examples cited above, the individuals gained early reputation in mid 20s or early 30s and after 15 years of adulation by the Tamils, they felt that something was ‘missing’ in their lives. They wanted ‘prestige’ as a Cabinet minister (in case of G. G. Ponnambalam and C. Rajadurai) which they couldn’t have achieved if they remained true to their principles which brought them public recognition. Even twenty five years ago, a cabinet minister position was a prestigious crown for an elected Tamil politician following a decade-old career as a legislator in Ceylon. This had been cheapened by the deflation of cabinet minister nominations in 1990s.

In the case of Mahataya and Col. Karuna, it is not difficult to infer that they succumbed to enticement of power by devious means; entrapped by the stinking skunks who pledged ‘instant leadership position’ to the LTTE’s nominal No. 2s. There is no question that both Mahataya and Col. Karuna could have attained LTTE’s leadership position, if they had waited and served the objectives for which LTTE was established. But, they fell prey to foolish temptations from the skunks and pawned the trust Eelam Tamils had on them for shekels of short-term free publicity in the international media. What will be their ultimate plights? In the annals of Tamil history, their names will be as tainted as the trust betrayers Benedict Arnold and Count Rumford in American history.

Another issue which need emphasis is that LTTE has been constantly in war since 1983. The popular scenario [as painted by paid media hacks] of war is overt war fought in the battle fields. Now, LTTE guns are silent in the battle field, since the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement. But covert war against LTTE has been going on uninterrupted in multiple theaters. LTTE’s adversaries in the covert war are the intelligence operatives (stinking skunks) belonging to

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more than four nations; including Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan and Israel. By design, media hacks (quite a number of them being indirect paid participants themselves) do not describe the covert wars truthfully. There is no denying of the fact that Col. Karuna was an LTTE hero in the overt war against the Sri Lankan and Indian armies. But, once the overt war came to a halt, he felt a cropper in the covert war against the stinking skunks of sewer diplomacy. The signal that Col. Karuna was a tempting target in the covert war between stinking skunks of sewer diplomacy and LTTE appeared in the Chennai’s *Frontline* magazine in mid 2002. The concluding paragraph had the following ‘take note’ pointers, indicating that the stinking skunks had begun to coddle him. Excerpts:

“...No one knows what Karuna is up to. It is Karuna that Sri Lanka’s Minister of Defence, Thilak Marapona, and even Prabakaran have got to watch closely. Karuna may prove people wrong, people who believe that everything will end the day Prabhakaran goes to ‘heaven’. In fact Karuna is emerging as a formidable leader of the LTTE though he hails from the East. He could be even more ruthless than Prabakaran. Karuna may even tell Prabakaran one day: ‘I will look after the East and you look after the North’.”²

This piece was a pointer that the stinking skunks of sewer diplomacy had begun to inject ego boosters to Col. Karuna. In the photo-ops which accompanied the peace parleys between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, from September 2002 to March 2003, Col. Karuna received his Warholian ‘fifteen minutes of world fame’ as one of the four LTTE representatives, the other three being Anton Balasingham, Adele Balasingham and S. P. Thamilselvan. Was it naive of Pirabhakaran that he couldn’t notice the coddling limbs of stinking skunks around Col. Karuna? One can presume that the LTTE leader was too trusting on Col. Karuna that he would not do a Mahataya. But Col. Karuna, gripped with avarice and showered by proverbial 30 shekels from stinking skunks of sewer diplomacy foolishly betrayed that trust.

In the guest house I stayed at Kilinochchi, I saw a framed photograph entitled ‘The Foundation Stones of Tamil Eelam’ [*Thamil Eelaththin Adikarkal*]. It provided details of 17 LTTE heroes who embraced heroic deaths from 1982 to 1997. Following is the list, with their enshrined date of deaths.

1. Lieut. Sankar [S. Sathiyathan] of Kambarmalai; Nov. 27, 1982.
2. Lieut. Seelan [L. Charles Anthony] of Trincomalee; Nov. 27, 1982.
3. Veera Vengai Ananthan [E. Arulnathan] of Myliddy; July 15, 1983.
4. Lieut. Sellakili [S. Selvanayakam] of Kalviyankadu; July 23, 1983.

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5. Capt. Lala Ranjan [K. Gnanenthiramehan] of Point Pedro; July 13, 1984.
6. Capt. Pandithar [S. Ravindran] of Kambarmalai; Jan. 09, 1985.
7. Capt. Reji [S. Maheswaran] of Karainagar; Dec. 02, 1985.
8. Major Albert [K. Rubanithi] of Achuveli; Dec. 21, 1985.
9. Capt. Lingam [S. Selvakumar] of Valvettithurai; Apr. 24, 1986.
10. Lieut. Col. Victor [M. Fiyuslas] of Pankaddikoddu; Oct. 12, 1986.
11. Major Ganes [S. Sittampalam] of Kantalai; Nov. 05, 1986.
12. Lieut. Col. Ponnammam [Y. Kugan] of Kaladdy-Jaffna; Feb. 14, 1987.
13. Lieut. Col. Pulendran [K. Dharmarajah] of Trincomalee; Oct. 05, 1987.
14. Lieut. Col. Kumarappa [B. Ratnapalan] of Valvettithurai; Oct. 05, 1987.
15. Lieut. Col. Santhosam [K. Umainesan] of Ariyalai; Oct. 21, 1987.
16. Col. Kiddu [S. Krishnakumar] of Valvettithurai; Jan. 16, 1993.
17. Lieut. Col. Appaiah [I. Rasiyah] of Manipay; Dec. 24, 1997.

Between the deaths of Col. Kiddu and Lieut. Col. Appaiah, Mahataya lost his life. But, by betraying the LTTE which catapulted him to fame, his name has faded. Similarly, by his March 2004 betrayal of trust reposed on him by Pirabhakaran, Col. Karuna turned out to be a zero for the Eelam Tamils in the 21st century. This indeed is a pity.

In March 2004, journalist sooth-sayers like D. B. S. Jeyaraj laboriously painted a view that Col. Karuna’s defection is detrimental to LTTE’s future and that Mahataya’s betrayal was nothing compared to Col. Karuna’s posse. He based his logic on the fact that Col. Karuna held ‘territory’. My LTTE escort in Kilinochchi rebutted this argument, with the quip:

“*Annai*, Sri Lankan army was holding territory in Vanni in mid 1990s. Now, they are beyond the checkpoints. You wait and see, how our Leader is going to tackle Col. Karuna. This is a headache for our Leader. But that’s all. These idiots are just twiddling the tail of a calm Tiger and they are going to pay for it.”

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COLLAPSE OF COL. KARUNA’S CHARIOT

Col. Karuna’s chariot which was exhibited openly to the public on March 3rd 2004 had quite a number of ‘gee-whiz’ paraphernalia to the Sri Lankan watchers.

1. It had amusing bells and whistles. Col. Karuna’s ‘spokesman’ Varadan came close to challenging Comical Ali — Saddam Hussein’s Information Minister Muhammed Saeed al-Sahaf, in providing comic relief.
2. It had polish. Who will deny that Col. Karuna was a celebrated hero, when he was with the LTTE?
3. It also had colorful blue [the color of SLFP] ropes, tinted with Indian dye for the journalists to touch, hold and probably swallow.

Sadly, when it came to the real action on April 9th, two small vital items in Col. Karuna’s war chariot were found missing. Our forefathers had taught us that however majestic the chariot appears, it is worthless without two linchpins. *Achchani illa ther-Muchchanum oodaathu* [Chariot missing the linchpin cannot move even two feet.] is a popular Tamil proverb. The word *saan* in this proverb refers to the distance of one’s palm spread; a handy measure of length used by our forefathers, equating to approximately 8 inches. *Muchchan* [three *saans*; is $3 \times 8 = 24$ inches; which equates to two feet.] The two linchpins which were missing in Col. Karuna’s chariot were: (a) Absence of ‘support force’ [*Thunai Padai*; equating to public support] and (b) Common sense.

Despite all the bells and whistles, polish, covert blessings and colorful ropes, Col. Karuna’s chariot missed the support force and common sense. It was as simple as that. Thus, when action began on the Easter Friday of (April 9th) 2004, Col. Karuna’s war chariot collapsed literally and figuratively in three days. Whatever one thinks of Pirabhakaran, the LTTE leader, he couldn’t have become a leader of Eelam Tamils, if he didn’t command popular support and blessed with common sense. Col. Karuna’s actions from March 3rd to April 12th revealed it to all that he didn’t command popular support and that his valued common sense had departed him during the Ceasefire Agreement Phase which began in February 2002. During the few days I spent in Kili-nochchi in March 2004 when Col. Karuna defected, my LTTE *porali* [fighter] escort said this to me calmly in Tamil, on March 5th Friday — the day before Col. Karuna was officially expelled from LTTE. Only five short sentences, and I repeat it for record:

‘Avar [Karuna] engaloodai ninravar. Ippa thaniya nirkirar. Annan mudivu eduthiddar. Avarrai kathai mudinchidum. Engaluku ithu periya ilappu il-

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lai. [He was with us. Now, he is standing alone. Pirabhakaran had made a decision. Karuna is history now. This is not a big loss for us.]

ANOTHER PIRABHA KNOCKOUT

Every sport has its own hair-raising magical moments. A home run for baseball, a slam dunk for basketball, a sixer for cricket, an ippon for judo, a service ace for tennis — and a knockout for boxing. Among these, knockout is something extraordinary. Not me, but George Foreman — the Big George — had said it, and no one can question Foreman’s credentials on that. To quote Big George’s exact words,

“You can practice a home run, a touchdown run, or a spectacular dunk. You can’t practice a knockout. It is still the ultimate in sports. . . . You can’t train for a knockout. A knockout is produced by an element of surprise. When it happens, you ask yourself, ‘Oops, how did that happen?’ ”³

As a major deliverer of a number of classic knockouts in boxing history, Foreman was indeed a knockout king. For record, Foreman won 76 of his 81 professional fights; 68 among these 76 wins were by knockout — an amazing percentage. In comparison, Muhammad Ali won 56 of his 61 professional fights; 37 of Ali’s 56 wins were by knockout. But interestingly, Ali’s one of 37 knockout victims was Foreman in 1974.

We are living in a time, where an unparalleled knockout champion in the battle field is our contemporary. The Pirabhakaran knockouts in the battle-fields are now becoming so magical that they would stand untouched as military records in island’s history. Let me list a few since Mahattaya [Pirabhakaran’s then deputy, who connived with India’s stinking skunks to replace the LTTE leader, for almost five years since mid 1989; Now, as one analyst cited below, has been relegated to the status of ‘forgotten footnote to Tamil history’] departed in 1994.

The Mullaitivu Base knockout of July 1996, The Elephant-Pass Base knockout of April 2000, The Katunaike Army Base knockout of July 2001, and the latest — Easter Sunday Kudumbimalai [Thoppigala] Base knockout of April 2004. If Mullaitivu (1996) and Elephant Pass (2000) were Pirabha’s knockouts in the middle rounds, Katunaike (2001) and Kudumbimalai (2004) were knockouts in the first round. Kudumbimalai Base knockout of Pirabhakaran was different from the previous ones, since it was against a former protégé turned a traitor. But still it is nothing but a knockout. The stinking skunks and their journalist handlers had hyped Col. Karuna’s standing power without knowing the chinks in his armory. Let me review chronologically the pundits and defence analysts who were ‘booing’ Pirabhakaran since March 3rd, 2004.

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‘OOPS, HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?’; KARUNA’S 38 DAY FAME

Quite a number of prattling pundits and self-anointed defence analysts would be wondering, ‘Oops, how did that Happen?’. To name a few, Iqbal Athas [*Sunday Times*, Colombo], Bandula Jayasekara [*Island*, Colombo], D. B. S. Jayaraj [*Sunday Leader*, Colombo], N. Ram, Nirupama Subramanian and V. S. Sambandan [*The Hindu*, Chennai], M. R. Narayan Swamy, Retired Major General Ashok K. Mehta, P. K. Balachandran [*Hindustan Times*], Lt. General Lionel Balagalle, Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu and Kingsley de Silva. These pundits, on the eve of Sinhala-Hindu New Year, would have experienced dyspepsia and dysphoria.

Their feelings would have been similar to those who were given in a helicopter ride and dropped waist deep in a latrine pit. From March 3rd, these pundits talked and wrote ‘pigs are flying’ stories from March 3rd with scary predictions. They were playing with their vocabulary and their vomits were marked with incredulity.

It appears now that Karuna’s spokesman Varadan played his assigned role ‘gallantly’ to fool them with his pronouncements. Here are selected samples — 27 items arranged chronologically — of published punditry in print/electronic media. I have divided the 27 items in two sections. Chronologically, items 1 to 19 (which appeared from March 3 until April 12) made Karuna a pin up model, and created a mountain out of a mole hill. From April 11, (items 20 to 27) excuses and explanations for Karuna’s run became the theme. At appropriate locations, I had made my observations on some outrageous items.

SECTION 1: MAKING A MOUNTAIN OUT OF A MOLE-HILL

Item 1: “Karuna would not have taken such a bold step as to break away unless he was sure of his support.”⁴ [Nirupama Subramanian]

Item 2: “Undiluted upto now, however, is Col. Karuna’s image as tactician and fighter.”⁵ [V. S. Sambandan]

Item 3: “Asked if Prabhakaran group was planning a covert operation to get Karuna, the spokesman said that that such a thing was very much on the cards. ‘But they cannot get Karuna. It is practically impossible.’, Varadan said. The assassination squad might either come from Trincomalee crossing the Verugal river, or from Amparai in the south, he added.”⁶ [P. K. Balachandran]

Item 4: “...Observers say this instance is different because Karuna controls troops and territory in eastern Sri Lanka that the regular Tigers cannot get into... Of the several hundred soldiers seen in Karuna’s camp, most were heavily armed and clad in the telltale fatigues of the LTTE, but Karuna seemed at ease when

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he met a stream of journalists in the past week. ‘Every person who knows the ground reality can tell how far it can be practically possible. Even if it happens, we are fully prepared’, he said about possible moves by the LTTE to send troops into his area.”⁷ [Scott McDonald]

Item 5: “... If he [Karuna] was a frontline guerrilla who fought many a battle against Security Forces in the North after mustering a large strength of eastern cadres, he had made an outstanding contribution after the ceasefire. He had raised the guerrilla strength from a paltry 3,000 in the district to well over 7,500 — a figure that exceeded Security Forces presence in the area... From a secret location in Batticaloa, Col. Karuna answered questions put to him by the *Sunday Times* on the telephone. He was assisted by an interpreter. Here are excerpts:....

Are you prepared to take him [*i.e.*, Prabhakaran] on?

Unquestionably yes.

On the loyalty of LTTE cadres in Batticaloa:

Yes, definitely they are loyal to me. It is their problems that I am fighting for...

Conditions for a settlement with Mr. Prabhakaran:

Equal and friendly partnership. No attempt towards war...”⁸ [Iqbal Athas]

Item 6: “Prabhakaran has no dearth of funds, intelligence and military resources but is not sure he can do another Mahattiya. . . Karuna has put an additional spoke in the wheel for his leader Prabhakaran. It will take more than money and will power to take out Karuna.”⁹ [retired Major General, Ashok K. Mehta]

Item 7: “The mainstream LTTE led by Velupillai Prabhakaran appears to have lost control over the candidates of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) who are running for the Sri Lankan parliament from the eastern districts of Batticaloa and Amparai (BA). Seventeen out of the eighteen candidates on the TNA list in the two districts are with the breakaway LTTE faction led by the Eastern Commander, Col. Karuna, according to a spokesman of the breakaway group. Varadan, the spokesman, told *Hindustan Times* over the phone that only Joseph Pararajasingham was with the Prabhakaran group.”¹⁰ [P. K. Balachandran]

Item 8: “There has been an under-reaction at the political level in Sri Lanka and India to the recent split in the LTTE’, Mr. N. Ram, editor-in-chief, *The Hindu*, Chennai, said while inaugurating a one-day seminar on ‘LTTE Split and Implications’, organised by *Observer Research Foundation*, Chennai Chapter, on March 26, 2004. He said the split had major implications with the present diminution in the LTTE’s strength. At the political level, the split dealt a body blow to the idea of the inseparability of the North and East. . . . Mr. Ram said it also had positive implications and was good for the democratisation of the Sri Lankan peace process. He said the split had made the armed struggle for a Tamil Eealm a non-starter. . . .”¹¹ [N. Ram]

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It should be noted that the Observer Research Foundation, Chennai Chapter is headed by B. Raman — a retired prime stinking skunk in Indian sewer diplomacy and they even organized a one day seminar on this theme. The opinions expressed by other speakers at this seminar were equally preposterous like that of media busybody N. Ram. For instance, one retired Col. R. Hariharan [identified as, formerly with Military Intelligence, IPKF] had gloated:

‘Conventional wisdom should not be applied in determining the LTTE’s fighting strength, though its capability could have been greatly diminished with the current split. The more the LTTE attempted to wish away the Karuna problem, the greater are the chances of the Tamils losing confidence in the LTTE leadership’.

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Item 9: “With several stretches of jungle such as Kudumbimalai, Vada Munai, Unichai, Punanai, Bakiella, Kanchikudhichaaru and Sangaman-kandy, the terrain is certainly conducive to guerilla warfare. So, even if the LTTE transports enough cadre to outnumber Karuna’s, the latter can abandon positional warfare and opt for guerilla tactics against the LTTE. Given the Karuna faction’s better knowledge of the terrain and support of the Eastern people, the fight could be a protracted one. The longer it takes, the greater the damage to the LTTE.”¹³ [D. B. S. Jeyaraj]

May be Karuna sure had good knowledge of the terrain in East Eelam. But it could not help him when he was knocked out. Despite his pretentious projections, when it came to predicting Pirabhakaran’s battlefield operations, Jeyaraj proved to be an ignoramus and not a seer.

Item 10: “In the aftermath of the elections, Col. Karuna no doubt will emerge strong. He will have a parliamentary team and thus the leverage to bargain with whatever Government that gets elected. That will be the biggest threat for Mr. Prabhakaran and the biggest poser for the future of the peace process. Hence, without doubt the next 96 hours will be crucial moments in Sri Lanka’s history.”¹⁴ [Iqbal Athas]

Item 11: “. . . an internal challenge to the LTTE leadership from a breakaway group led by Karuna, a former military leader of the group, could upset the TNA’s electoral calculations.”¹⁵ [editorial in *The Hindu*]

General elections were held on April 2nd. Final results were officially released on April 4th. These results revealed that the editorialist of *The Hindu* was pipe-dreaming about Karuna upsetting the TNA’s electoral calculations. Of course, Karuna acted on a script written by India’s stinking skunks, as

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suggested by me and also by Vimukthi Yapa in the *Sunday Leader* of April 11th. The problem was that his acting lacked finesse and was too amateurish for political theater.

Item 12: “The LTTE may portray itself as being representative of Tamil Eelam comprising the north and east but Karuna has raised an eastern revolt. Demanding that the east abandon Karuna now was an unrealistic demand.” ¹⁶ [D. B. S. Jeyaraj]

Item 13: ‘The ability of the Tamil Tigers to wage war is in question’, says political analyst Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, head of the international Centre for Policy Alternatives. ‘This is serious — Karuna has blown a hole in the whole Tiger structure, both politically and militarily.’... Unlike Mahatiya, a forgotten foot-note to Tamil history, Karuna is a survivor with staying power — with thousands of battle-hardened fighters under his command who have largely remained loyal....

‘The LTTE has a tradition of eliminating all potential rivals, but Karuna will be a little more difficult’, says historian Kingsley de Silva of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Colombo. ‘Karuna is not a pushover... The split will persist’... Prabhakaran’s rump Tigers may now be more pliable than before in negotiating a possible federalist solution instead of the full autonomy or sovereignty they have long demanded. With Karuna controlling the east, the northern Tigers can no longer claim to be the sole voice of the Tamil minority. ‘The LTTE will find it very difficult,’ predicts da Silva. ‘Whom do they represent? They can no longer say they represent all Tamils’... ¹⁷ [Martin Regg Cohn]

Item 14: “Karuna’s attitude is different. He doesn’t take taxes, he doesn’t want to abduct people, he doesn’t want to kill people. He has stopped all that. At least so far. I can’t speak about the future, [but] it appears he will have a fairly good support base.” ¹⁸ [Sri Lankan military commander Lt. Gen. Lionel Balagalle]

Item 15: “With the Karuna-led split, the LTTE can no longer claim to be the sole representative of the Tamils.” ¹⁹ [editorial in *The Hindu*]

Item 16: “The eastern Commander of the LTTE, Karuna Amman who has crossed swords with Prabhakaran faction, says he knows Prabhakaran better than anyone else.” ²⁰ [Bandula Jayasekara].

The wording in this beginning sentence of an interview with Karuna, by Colombo *Island* newspaper’s hack needs attention. Karuna was presented as the authentic ‘The eastern Commander of the LTTE’, though in reality he was expelled from LTTE on March 6. The real LTTE was degraded to ‘Prabhakaran faction’. One response provided by Col. Karuna turned out to be a hollow boast.

Question: Are you ready to fight back? Could you taken them on?

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Col. Karuna: “I know the LTTE inside out. I know its strengths and weaknesses. I can tell you that they cannot have more than 2000 soldiers in the Wanni. Total cadres could be about 8000. But, I am talking only about the fighters. However, I will try everything possible to avoid internal killings and shedding blood in this country again. But, despite all our attempts, if they go on the offensive, we will be forced to defend ourselves.”

Item 17: “Mr. Prabhakaran has to be on the offensive. With the advantage of his territory, Col. Karuna will be defensive’ a senior source in the security forces told *The Hindu*. . . . Col. Karuna, who was the LTTE’s military commander for two eastern districts — Batticaloa and Amparai — till the Tigers expelled him on March 6, controls nearly 70 percent of the eastern Batticaloa district, which is spread across 2,6886.3 sq. km. In addition, he controls a small part of the neighbouring Muslim-majority Amparai district 4,318.2 sq. km. . . . ‘Karuna’s men could be making tactical withdrawals and encircling the northern cadres.’ eastern security sources said.”²¹ [V. S. Sambandan]

Item 18: “. . . By morning Karuna had sent 300 cadres including some 100 of his elite commandos to Vakaneri, north of Valaichchenai as reinforcements to counter the Wanni cadres who had infiltrated Batticaloa. Apparently in preparation for a big counter attack Karuna had moved his troops towards Kanchikudichiaru jungle areas, reports said.”²² [Kasun Yapa Karunaratne, Kelum Bandara, Champika Liyanarachchi, Sunil Jayasiri and Sunimalee Dias]

Item 19: “Sources close to Karuna say that his withdrawal from the area was tactical and that he is ready for a wider offensive and a fierce onslaught now. Prabhakaran’s troops still haven’t confronted Karuna’s crack fighters.”²³ [Bandula Jayasekara]

SECTION 2: EXCUSES AND EXPLANATIONS

The journalist hacks and prattling analysts, despite being shattered by the collapse of Karuna’s much-boasted muscle, were quick to come out with excuses. And the journalist hacks who had boosted Karuna’s ego with their telephone calls and hypes, had the following to write.

Item 20: “Karuna knew that an attack was imminent and it was only a matter of time before Prabhakaran’s forces would strike. However, he underestimated Prabhakaran’s strength and build up in the area. Karuna was only prepared for a defensive operation, and had declared that he was not willing to shed blood and would avoid internal killings.”²⁴ [Bandula Jayasekara]

Item 21: “A silent section of Batticaloa residents relate to the political positions he [*i.e.*, Karuna] has adopted. However, predictably in a society where the gun is the main opinion-maker, this support base is rapidly shifting.”²⁵ [V. S. Sambandan]

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Item 22: “The odds are stacked against the breakaway LTTE leader Colonel Karuna, who is now engaged in a desperate rearguard action to thwart the advance of forces loyal to the outfit’s Supremo, Velupillai Prabhakaran. Karuna is beginning to pay the price for launching a rebellion against a Leviathan like Prabhakaran, without adequate political, financial and military preparation.”²⁶ [P. K. Balachandran]

Item 23: “Karuna’s revolt, which began with high hopes and international publicity on March 3, ended ignominiously 38 days later, with the leader meekly seeking refuge with the Sri Lankan armed forces, which he had fought tooth and nail since the mid 1980s.”²⁷ [P. K. Balachandran]

Item 24: “Prabhakaran was no doubt helped in his anti-Karuna offensive by Norway, which maintained a studied silence even as the LTTE built up its forces in the Trincomalee-Batticaloa border in violation of the peace pact signed with Colombo in February 2002, assassinated Tamils sympathetic to Karuna and then over-ran Karuna’s positions. . . . There are other factors too: the Tamil nationalism Prabhakaran has injected into the LTTE ensured the bulk of fighters with Karuna would not take up arms against a group that stands for a free Tamil state; Karuna was, politically, no match for Prabhakaran; and the Sri Lankan state simply did not have the guts to throw its lot with Karuna to take advantage of its best chance to weaken the LTTE.”²⁸ [M. R. Narayan Swamy]

Item 25: “. . . Karuna broke away, taking with him some 6,000 fighters and control of a large chunk of eastern Sri Lanka. But when Prabhakaran launching an attack on the renegades last weekend, Karuna lost all of that almost immediately. Karuna’s choices for his defenses may have set the stage for his quick downfall. He set up bases along the Verugal River, which runs halfway between the northeastern town of Trincomalee and the main eastern city of Batticaloa.

With its picture-postcard scenery, the river’s main ferry crossing was a showcase for Karuna to exhibit his defiance. Journalists were invited to inspect his positions, and photos showed breakaway Tigers readying for attack. But he didn’t bother setting up positions along his flanks. So when a force of northern-based guerrillas attacked his defenses from three sides on April 9, the situation quickly changed. Within an hour, Karuna’s fighters had retreated. . . .

Military analysts say Karuna’s decision to set up established bases created easy targets. A less structured guerrilla resistance may have made it more difficult for the main Tiger movement to overwhelm them, they say. ‘Karuna wanted to show off that he was in control,’ said retired Air Marshall Harry Goonetilleke. ‘There was complacency on his side that he was all-powerful and could take on Prabhakaran.’ In addition, Karuna may have underestimated his fighters’ loyalty to Prabhakaran. In an organization where loyalty is prized above nearly all else, years of fealty to Prabhakaran could not be easily changed. ‘At the end it was very difficult for Karuna’s eastern cadres to fight against Prabhakaran,’ said political analyst Jehan Perera of the National Peace Council research group. ‘They also realized that it was not just north versus the east, but it was Tamils against Tamils.’²⁹ [Dilip Ganguly]

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Item 26: “According to sources in the east, one of the reasons for the swift end to the operation was because it was led by eastern commanders, who had moved over to the Vanni immediately after the rebel commander parted ways with the LTTE.”³⁰ [V. S. Sambandan]

Item 27: “... He(Karuna) might have thought that he would be able to get India on his side, when he condemned the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and declared that he had Neelan, one of the plotters of the assassination, in his custody. But India did not fall for the bait, and kept aloof...”³¹ [P. K. Balachandran]

This is nothing but a classic turn-around spin by one of the leading media shrews of India, extricating India’s intelligence operatives from their folly which bombed. The prominence and the terminology used to describe Karuna’s actions [such as rebellion, revolt, vertical split and other hogwash!] in Indian print and electronic media during his ‘short 38 day glory’ expose the bold face cop-out of Balachandran. That a skunk front in Chennai [Observer Research Foundation, Chennai Chapter, headed by B. Raman] organized a one-day seminar entitled ‘LTTE Split and Implications’ on March 26, 2004, which was addressed by anti-LTTE media personnel including N. Ram [see, item 8 above] revealed how much direct interest they were indulging on Karuna’s defection.

WHAT WERE KARUNA’S PRIME DEFECTS?

The above-quoted eight items of excuses and explanations provide only bits and pieces of Karuna’s chinks. George Foreman’s reflections on how he won first [against Joe Frazier in 1973] and then lost [to Muhammad Ali in 1974] by knockouts are revelational to read. Foreman wrote,

“I remember getting ready to fight Smokin’ Joe Frazier in Jamaica in 1973, and knowing that when the bell rang, he would be coming after me with evil intentions. . . I got out there and knocked Joe down to be crowned heavy-weight champion of the world. It was the happiest moment of my career. Then, overconfidence set in. I was fighting Muhammad Ali in Zaire in 1974. I was thinking that the \$5 million I was making was the easiest money in the world. I was going to whip the guy; he was old and over the hill. And after three or four rounds I was beating him. But by the seventh round, I was tired. I hit him in the stomach and he said, ‘Is that all you got, George?’ And I’m thinking ‘Yup’. Then I got knocked down and heard the referee count. . .”³²

Give credit to Foreman’s humility, which had endeared him in American business and entertainment circles. What Big George had described about his ego and humiliating moment 30 years ago, wouldn’t be that different from what was in Karuna’s mind in 2004. Nothing but ‘overconfidence’. Among

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the prattling pundits, only retired Air Marshall Harry Goonetilleke had come near this truth, with his quip of smugness on the part of Karuna. Others, like N. Ram and D. B. S. Jeyaraj, also undoubtedly suffered a knockout blow on their punditry image. None of the prattling pundits openly acknowledged the second defect in Karuna’s armor; that he didn’t keep his vanity in check. Col. Karuna permitted himself to be manipulated by the intelligence operatives of both India and Sri Lanka. His screams of regional discrimination and other assorted ‘ready-made confessions’ were smoke-screens to hide his character flaw.

Foreman’s brief reflection on his loss to Ali in 1974 resonates perfectly with Karuna’s fall from a hero to zero in March 2004; especially ‘easy money’, ‘he [*i.e.*, in this case — Pirabhakaran] was old and over the hill’, and ‘I hit him in the stomach’. Whatever post-hoc excuses or explanations the pundits and prattling wordsmiths produce, a knockout is a knockout, and Pirabhakaran delivered it convincingly when Eelam Tamils were expecting it.

Each of Pirabhakaran’s battlefield knockouts [Mullaitivu Base, Elephant Pass Base and Katunaike Base in particular] have turned out to be classics for their design, audacity and execution. Col. Karuna claimed a legitimate share of his glory in these knockouts. But the recent Kudumbimalai Base knockout is probably sweeter to Pirabhakaran, since he had his prestige on line to show the world who is the Master of the Ring. Narayan Swamy’s reflection [in Item 24, cited above] was captioned as ‘Dare Devil Prabhakaran’³³. It is nothing but appropriate from the angle of India’s intelligence operatives; but for Eelam Tamils, Pirabhakaran has proved again that he is a guardian angel.

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Epilogue: One in a Million

In our search for truth we shall not succeed if we bandy about catch-words and slogans. Let us beware especially of all-isms, whether political or religious, such terms as socialism, capitalism, communism or Victorian liberalism and conservatism. Even the word ‘democracy’ is unsatisfying and does not suggest a sufficiently high ideal. It may be used as a cloak to conceal a plan for the domination of minority by a majority.

— H. S. ALLEN¹

PROFESSOR ALLEN’S above-cited thoughts were from a 1940 address he made to the Mathematical and Physical Society of the University of St. Andrews. In 1940, Ceylon was a colony of imperial Britain. It seems that Allen had correctly anticipated the political events which would engulf Ceylon in 1980s and 1990s. Allen’s criticism on bandying catch-words and slogans on individuals (and organizations of dissent) remains meaningful. If there was one individual who had received a mountain-load of name calling from many corners since 1976, Pirabhakaran ranks high in the roster. Sinhalese, Muslims, Indians, Americans, British, and last but not the least, cognition-challenged human rights activists and few phony democrats (with dubious credibility among Tamils) have slung labels and epithets on Pirabhakaran; terrorist, murderer, fascist, Pol Potist, Hitlerite and war criminal are the prominent ones. In this book, I have diligently challenged the falsity of these labels.

After completing the first 51 chapters of this book, I visited Vanni and Jaffna districts from March 2nd to 8th, 2004. My previous visit there was in November 1986 — two months before Pirabhakaran returned to Jaffna from Tamil Nadu. During the intervening 18 years — the span in which Pirabhakaran’s dominant influence in the island’s politics, social fabric and Tamil pride has taken roots firmly — I witnessed first hand that the Sri Lankan state which I knew of 1960s and 1970s had become partitioned into two entities, both literally and psychologically.

What Jeyaratnam Wilson prophetically predicted in 1988, had turned into a reality. To quote,

“The war may take several years for a final decision. The longer it takes, the more likely it is that a separate state will emerge. In the interim it is probable

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that patchwork compromises will be implemented, with New Delhi acting as the monitoring agent, but this cannot continue for ever. Compromise agreements will, as history has repeatedly shown, not be honoured on a permanent basis. The war will be resumed. The partition of Ceylon is already a fact of history.”²

On what basis, one can assert that Sri Lanka had split? Ignoring the legalistic hair-splitting and the technicalities of international recognition, I subscribe to the pragmatic indicator expressed by Richard Haass in 1979. He had stated,

“A fundamental attribute of statehood is the ability of a government to manage the use of force. Internally, this ability is basic to the maintenance of order; without it, a government jeopardizes its claim to international recognition, and, in fact, its very existence. Externally, the inability to marshal sufficient force against an adversary will result in a diminution of influence, territory, or sovereignty. . . .”³

By this indicator of Haass, one can infer that the post-independent Ceylon (of 1950s and 1960s) and the Sri Lanka (of 1970s and 1980s) have ceased to exist now. Its internal boundaries have shrunk. Eelam state, as envisioned by Pirabhakaran in mid 1970s had become a reality now. It is not inappropriate at this juncture, to present excerpts from a column of mine which appeared in October 1992. It was contributed under my pen-name C. P. Goliard. Excerpts:

“... [Poet] Kannadasan paraphrased Abraham Lincoln’s much quoted maxim, ‘You can fool all the people some of the time; and some people for all the time; but you cannot fool all the people all of the time.’ The Tamil poet laureate wrote,

*Palarukku sila kaalam;
ethuvum silarukku pala kaalam;
Evarukkum oru kaalam;
unmai velivarum ethir kaalam.*

Despite the validity of these universal maxims, quite a number of journalists (both Sinhalese and Tamils) still keep on dispensing half-truths and untruths to satisfy the egos of their patrons. For instance, one of the well versed journalists in Sri Lanka, Mervyn de Silva commented recently on the eulogy to the ten prominent Sinhalese casualties of August,

‘This [*i.e.*, the current war between the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE] was not a Sinhala-Tamil war. It was a war against a group of guerrillas, one of the most ferocious in the world, who had launched a war to establish a separate state because that was the only way to remedy many, long-standing

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grievances against the Sri Lankan state in their view’. [*Lanka Guardian*, Aug. 15, 1992]

In this sugar-coated racist view, whose original proponent was none other than J. R. Jayewardene, the Tamil struggle for equality has been completely twisted into a ‘war with ferocious guerrillas’. And the editorialist of the *Tamil Times* questioned, ‘Can the Tigers legitimately claim that they have achieved by engaging in this war more power or territory than they possessed before June 1990 when they were negotiating with the government?’ [*Tamil Times*, Aug. 1992]

Well, as poet Kannadasan has aptly written,

‘*Evarukkum oru kaalam unmai velivarum ethir kaalam*’.

The answer to these doubting Toms has been provided by a panel consisting of six of North America’s most noted political geographers. According to the *Los Angeles Times* — world report (Aug. 29, 1992), these geographers predict that the maps of the world in the year 2000 and beyond will have a separate Tamil homeland Eelam. Will anyone (other than the doubting Toms) doubt that this pragmatic prediction is mainly the result of LTTE’s ardent campaign for the past 9 years for a separate state for Tamils?”⁴

I continued further, citing another Kannadasan movie lyric of 1960s, to sustain my point. To quote,

“... The Sinhalese power brokers had their chance, but they blew it by their arrogance and stupidity. Also, the Eelam warriors should not relax now, because of the endorsement given by the elite geographers of America. We need to concentrate our efforts to complete the mission. And no one other than Kannadasan had told it to us better. In a song composed for one of the MGR’s movies, *Panathottam*, the poet laureate advised as follows:

Ennathaan nadakkum nadakkadume –
Irutinil neethi maraiyaddume
Thannale velivarum thayangaathe –
Oru thalaivan irukkiraan mayangaathe.

The song states forcefully that whatever may happen and even when justice seems hidden in darkness, somehow it will come to light and gain recognition. The recognition given to Eelam by the geographers of international repute seems to prove the poet’s lines. Kannadasan continued,

Pinnale therivathu adichuvadu –
Munnale iruppathu avan veedu
Naduvinile nee villaiaadu –
Nallathai ninaiththe pooraadu

Ulagaththil thirudarkal sari paathi –
Oomaikal kurudarkal athil paathi

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*Kalagaththil pirappathu thaana neethi –
Manam kalangaathe mathi mayangaathe.*

Though this movie lyric was written by Kannadasan more than 30 years ago, one can still marvel at the meaning of these verses and its relevance to the current scene in Eelam. The poet laureate observes that the past is imprinted with memorable footsteps and one needs to target the future and fight for the good cause. He also cautions that the world is filled with thieves and among them, dumb and blind folks comprise half the population. The figurative reference to the dumb and blind folks is very poetic indeed, when one thinks of the callousness of the majority of international newsmedia to the atrocities in Sri Lanka...⁵

In 1994, Dayan Jayatilaka, a virulent Sinhalese arm-chair polemicist with Leftist ideology, critiqued LTTE as follows:

“General Giap reminds us that if you try to override the objective laws of the development of a phenomenon, the objective laws will override you! The LTTE seems to have forgotten the objective laws of the development of a people’s war. The structure of a People’s Army is a familiar one — firstly, at the base, there is a rural militia, then there is a local guerilla force which operates in a geographical locality and finally there is a strategic mobile force. The LTTE has no such structure. They hit and move and then the army moves in leaving the area been defended by them and the people cannot be prevented from falling under army control simply because there is no rural militia.”⁶

Ten years later, in 2004, the *de facto* Eelam state is a reality now, and Jayatilaka’s critique on LTTE has been blown to pieces. Pirabhakaran made it happen by raising a legitimate, vibrant (albeit small) Tamil army. As all legendary heroes had experienced during their lives, Pirabhakaran has been called names by his adversaries and critics with half-baked thoughts^{7–9}.

A few of the derogatory epithets which had been thrown include, ‘terrorist’, ‘South Asian Hitler’, ‘the next Pol Pot’ and what not! This is not unusual though. Among the high achievers who preceded Pirabhakaran in the 20th century and with whom he shares affinity in his chosen area of expertise [as varied as Mahatma Gandhi, Isoroku Yamamoto, Douglas MacArthur, Mao Ze Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, Nelson Mandela and Menachem Begin], who escaped this name calling?

Time and again, Eelam Tamils are served with statements from the American decision makers on politics that LTTE should give up its “arms forever”, and this is bloated into headlines by Sinhalese diplomats (both real and fake varieties like Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar) and scribes. For instance, I quote excerpts from a Colombo hack’s recent jottings.

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“United States Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage said here on Wednesday that the United States will not remove the LTTE from their list of terror groups until the LTTE gives up arms forever and unless they do so they will not have any chance of having a relationship with the United States. Speaking to reporters after his meeting with Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadiragamar at the State Department, Armitage said the US had never supported the LTTE in any way and not given aid to the LTTE at any time and the aid given to the people in the north/east of Sri Lanka have been channeled through the NGO and other organizations.”¹⁰

I suspect that the reason for Richard Armitage’s peeve with the LTTE is ‘infection with a virus of crypto-racism’. Of course, there are millions of politically enlightened, liberal whites in America who have no offense against the LTTE or Pirabhakaran. But sadly, they do not belong to the decision making tribe in Washington DC. One of the politically enlightened liberal white in America whose thoughts I respect is Norman Mailer.

NORMAN MAILER’S PROVOCATIVE THOUGHTS

My politically incorrect suspicion of LTTE being a victim of an infectious strain of crypto-racism in Washington DC was enhanced after I read Norman Mailer’s opinion piece entitled “We went to war just to boost the white male ego” [April 2003]. Norman Mailer is, for sure, opinionated. But, two factors made me to pay attention on his point of view First, as an American original in the literary kingdom, Mailer is no paper weight. Thus, his observations elicit thoughts, reflection (and also vehement criticism from his opponents). Secondly, he is also a white American male. **This particular Mailer’s point of view appeared in 2003 — merely five weeks, after President George Bush’s decision to enter the Iraq terrain militarily.** It received quite a flak from fellow American whites, who hated Mailer’s guts to vent an unflattering opinion on the predominantly white American decision makers (exceptions being Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice). Here are excerpts from Mailer’s provocative commentary.

“...The key question remains — why did we go to war? It is not yet answered. In the end, it is likely that a host of responses will produce a cognitive stew, which does, at least, open the way to offering one’s own notion. We went to war, I could say, because we very much needed a war. The U.S. economy was sinking, the market was gloomy and down, and some classic bastions of the erstwhile American faith (corporate integrity, the FBI, and the Catholic Church, to cite but three) had each suffered a separate and grievous loss of face. Since our administration was probably not ready to solve any one of the serious problems before it, it was natural to feel the impulse to move into larger ventures, thrusts into the empyrean-war!

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Be it said that the administration knew something a good many of us did not — it knew that we had a very good, perhaps even an extraordinarily good, if essentially untested, group of Armed Forces, a skilled, disciplined, well-motivated military, career-focused and run by a field-rank and general staff who were intelligent, articulate, and considerably less corrupt than any other power group in America. In such a pass, how could the White House not use them? They could prove quintessential as morale-builders to one group in U.S. life, perhaps the key group: the white American male. If once this aggregate came near to 50 percent of the population, it was down to . . . was it now 30 percent? Still, it remained key to the president’s political footing. And it had taken a real beating. As a matter of collective ego, the good white American male had had very little to nourish his morale since the job market had gone bad, unless he happened to be in the Armed Forces.”¹¹

Then, Mailer narrowed in on, what he termed as ‘the ongoing malaise of the white American male.’ If a non-white had written the following lines, it could be conveniently tagged as ‘nothing but a racist diatribe’, but Mailer is an American white male. Excerpts:

“... He [that is, the white American male] had been taking a daily drubbing over the past 30 years. For better or worse, the women’s movement had had its breakthrough successes and the old, easy white male ego had withered in the glare. Even the mighty consolations of rooting for your team on TV had been skewed. There was now less reward in watching sports than there used to be, a clear and declarable loss. The great white stars of yesteryear were for the most part gone, gone in football, in basketball, in boxing, and half-gone in baseball. Black genius now prevailed in all these sports (and the Hispanics were coming up fast; even the Asians were beginning to make their mark). We white men were now left with half of tennis (at least its male half), and might also point to ice-hockey, skiing, soccer, golf (with the notable exception of the Tiger) as well as lacrosse, swimming, and the World-Wide Wrestling Federation — remnants and orts of a once-great and glorious centrality.

On the other hand, the good white American male still had the Armed Forces. If blacks and Hispanics were numerous there, still they were not a majority, and the officer corps (if the TV was a reliable witness) suggested that the percentage of white men increased as one rose in rank to the higher officers. Moreover, we had knockout tank echelons, Super Marines, and — one magical ace in the hole — the best Air Force that ever existed. If we cannot find our machismo anywhere else, we can certainly settle in on the interface between combat and technology. Let me then advance the offensive suggestion that this may have been one of the cardinal reasons we went looking for war. . . .”¹²

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UNCOMFORTABLE WITH NON-WHITE MILITARY MUSCLE

There you have it. Norman Mailer had eviscerated point blankly (as is his wont) the troubled psyche of American white male in the first decade of the 21st century. Due to shrinking spheres of ‘white dominance’ in larger number of sports [which are nothing but attenuated mutations of warfare, under strictly regulated rules of time and space], the predominantly white American male policy makers would like to maintain dominance and limelight, at least on the military warfare. They hate competition from non-white territories. Sounds simple. But, isn’t it the politically incorrect truth as well?

In the past century, from 1940s to the mid 1970s, the predominantly white American male policy makers were repeatedly challenged by the non-white Asian military heroes. Americans won one, drew one and lost one. They won against Gen. Isoroku Yamamoto in the 2nd World War, by first assassinating him sneakily. They drew against Mao Ze Dong in the Korean War. But they lost to Gen. Vo Nguen Giap in the Vietnam War. Thus understandably, they have developed a psychological allergy to non-white Asian military heroes. Next to Giap, none other than Pirabhakaran has appeared as an authentic military hero in Asia.

One should also be reminded that in Asia, blind-sighted US policy mavens even went to the extent of irrationally providing political and diplomatic support to Pol Pot’s regime in Cambodia, to spite Vietnam. And Pol Pot, in the eyes of the then dimwits of U. S. State department and the Executive branch was a ‘great democrat’ in the second half of 1970s! I wonder how the current Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage would counter now, a question on the American support for Pol Pot’s regime in the not so distant past. On October 15, 2002, in an interview to CNNi’s Larry King Live TV program, Harry Belafonte — the aged black singer and outspoken civil rights activist — ripped the hyperbole of American policy Poo Bahs on terrorism with the following reflective wisdom:

“Our hands are not clean, Larry. There are nations all over this globe that suffer from policies that we have implemented. People go away bitter with a great sense of loss and families are destroyed. Terror isn’t only our experience. Terror is experienced by people all over the place and we have helped instigate some of it.”¹³

Sadly, this type of wisdom from liberal Americans do not play well in the policy corridors of Washington DC. One could infer that since Pirabhakaran and LTTE had demonstrated military muscle for the past two decades (though not directly against the American military), this performance is rather uncomfortable to the American white male decision makers, who are infected with

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a virus of crypto-racism. Folks like Richard Armitage would welcome only army-less freedom fighters in the caliber of Dalai Lama, who are adorable Mickey Mouse-type caricatures for photo opportunities. But Pirabhakaran is in good company. The myopic American bureaucracy failed to grant formal diplomatic recognition to Mao and Communist China from 1949 to 1972. Though diplomatic recognition came in 1972, mainly for American business to compete in the billion-strong market, even 32 years later, China hasn’t turned into a bastion of democracy.

ON THE FLAWS OF TWO PIRABHAKARAN CRITICS

Last but not the least, I should add a couple of paragraphs on Pirabhakaran’s two Tamil critics, namely Rajani Thiranagama and Daya Somasundaram, both professionally qualified in medicine. Their collaborative publication [*The Broken Palmyra*], in association with two more of their Tamil peers, was undoubtedly a pioneering attempt in etching the trauma of Eelam Tamils in the 1980s, despite suffering from serious lapses and omissions. Though quite a large number of highly qualified Tamil medical professionals (living in Sri Lanka and also in the diaspora) and sympathetic non-Tamil medical professionals^{14–18} were openly critical on the state terrorism perpetrated on Eelam Tamils, Thiranagama and Somasundaram took it upon themselves with missionary zeal to publish their criticism on the leader of LTTE, while soft-pedaling on the crimes of Sinhalese-dominated armed forces^{19,20}. Thus both (Thiranagama posthumously, following her premature death in 1989)—had received accolades and support from the camps who are hardly interested in resolving the primary political and social problem faced by the Sri Lankans since 1977.

It appears to me that some bizarre infatuation with Christian fundamentalism (as in the case of Thiranagama) coupled with self-loathing and abysmal lack on the psychological pride of being born as Tamils had blinded the thoughts of Thiranagama and Somasundaram. As the multi-talented physician-author David Horrobin had recorded, the **fundamental philosophy of medicine itself, [is] “to cure sometimes, to relieve often, to comfort always.”**²¹. It cannot be contested that Pirabhakaran’s ingenuity to the vexing problem of post-independent Sri Lanka, has not only comforted Eelam Tamils from ridicule, but also provided psychological relief to Tamils suffering from state terrorism since 1956. In their half-baked criticism on the deeds of LTTE since 1983, and posturing as human-rights activists, it is indeed a pity that Thiranagama and Somasundaram had failed to grasp the fundamental philosophy of medical discipline in which they came to be trained.

The pseudo-altruistic tenet of Christian fundamentalism that ‘war is to

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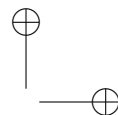
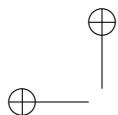
be abhorred and violence is sin’, though commendable in abstract terms, is practised in breach by the dominant Christian nations in the contemporary world. If this tenet is observed in spirit and in practice, the nominally Christian superpowers — namely USA, UK and France — should abolish its armies. As George Kohn had observed,

“War has a long and intriguing history and has been a prominent feature of human existence even since the day when rival men — or women — decided to settle their differences by use of force. In many instances, the history of a people is the history of its wars.”²²

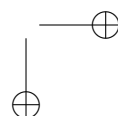
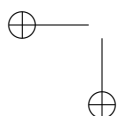
Thus, one can summarise Pirabhakaran’s genius in two steps. First, he thought about a vital question, on something what Eelam Tamils lacked for the past 500 years. His question was, ‘Why Tamils in Eelam had to be so meek to surrender their cultural heritage, political rights and their traditional homelands in the island?’ Secondly, he acted upon his thoughts, and achieved something despite Himalayan obstacles.

CONCLUSION

In the minds of more than 60 million ethnic Tamilians inhabiting this globe, Pirabhakaran is an acclaimed military genius and a historical hero. His achievements have been foretold in the Tamil proverb, *Kaayaa marathukku kal eri vizhuma?* [Will the barren tree gets bombarded with stones?] Pirabhakaran is **one in a million**, having achieved something which ethnic Tamilians were yearning for the past 500 years. In a span of 30 years, he delivered something which none of his overachieving fellow Tamil contemporaries (Nobel laureates in science, multi-national business moguls, acclaimed academic giants, globe-trotting international diplomats and suave politicians) could do. He delivered a military presence for Tamils. Thus, **Pirabhakaran is indeed a matchless phenomenon.**



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Abbreviations used in the Text

AIADMK	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, India
CBI	Central Bureau of Investigation, India
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency, USA
CID	Criminal Investigation Department, Sri Lanka
CLI	Ceylon Light Infantry
CWC	Ceylon Workers Congress
DDC	District Development Council
DK	Dravida Kazhagam, India
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, India
DUNF	Democratic United National Front
ENLF	Eelam National Liberation Front
EPDP	Eelam People Democratic Party
EPRLF	Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front
ERCP	Eelam Revolutionary Communist Party
EROS	Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students
FBI	Federal Bureau of Intelligence, USA
IPC	Indian Penal Code
IPKF	Indian Peace Keeping Force
JVP	Janatha Vimukti Peramuna, Sri Lanka
KKS	Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, Sri Lanka
MDMA	Multi Disciplinary Monitoring Agency, India
MISA	Maintenance of Internal Security Act, India
MO	Material Object
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
NLFT	National Liberation Front of Tamails
PA	People’s Alliance, Sri Lanka
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PLOTE	People Liberation of Tamil Eelam, Sri Lanka
PW	Prosecution Witness
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing, India
RELO	Revolutionary Eelam Liberation Organisation
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SC	Supreme Court
SIT	Special Investigation Team, India
SLAF	Sri Lanka Armed Forces
SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
STF	Special Task Force (of Sri Lankan Police)
TADA	Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act
TANSIT	Tamil Nadu Special Investigation Team, India

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TEA	Tamil Eelam Army
TELA	Tamil Eelam Liberation Army, Sri Lanka
TELO	Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation, Sri Lanka
TENA	Tamil Eelam National Army, Sri Lanka
TMPP	Tamil Makkal Padukapu Peravai
TNA	Tamil National Army, Tamil National Alliance
TULF	Tamil Unitd Liberation Front
UF	United Front, Sri Lanka
UNP	United National Party, Sri Lanka
UTHR	University Teachers Human Rights, Jaffna
VVT	Valvettithurai, Sri Lanka

Appendix 1

Rashomon story and Truth

‘*Rashomon*’ and ‘*In a Grove*’ are two original short stories by Japanese author Ryunosuke Akutagawa. *Rashomon* is the name of a famous gate in old Kyoto city. Japanese movie director Akira Kurasawa, made the internationally acclaimed movie *Rashomon* in 1950, by combining both stories, but keeping the name *Rashomon* as the title. The story plot of Kurasawa movie is as follows: A samurai husband and wife travel through the forest. The wife was raped by a bandit. The husband was subsequently murdered. Then, what happened? Four versions of the events were presented by the participants and a witness.

Version 1 of the bandit [a participant] He raped the woman in front of her husband. When he was about to leave, the woman stopped him and demanded a duel between him and her husband. In the duel, he killed the husband and the woman ran away.

Version 2 of the woman [a participant] The bandit raped her, and left. After the rape, her husband spurned her, because she lost her purity. In grief, she killed her husband and ran away.

Version 3 of the husband [a participant; though killed, appears as a medium] The bandit raped his wife. His wife agreed to leave with the bandit, but insisted that bandit should kill him (husband) first. The bandit left the scene in anger. Then, he (husband) committed suicide being shamed by his wife’s behavior.

Version 4 of a wood cutter [who says that he was a witness] The bandit raped the woman. After rape, bandit pleaded with her to join him. She said, only men can decide and she cannot decide what to do. Her husband and bandit had a duel and the bandit killed the husband. Then, the woman ran away.

Inference: Two events had occurred in the forest; a rape and a murder. On rape, all agree that the bandit did it. On murder, the bandit says he killed; the woman says she killed; the victim says he committed suicide; the wood-cutter (witness) says the bandit killed. What in fact was the truth?

Appendix 2

SUCCESSFUL ASSASSINATIONS OF HEADS OF STATE BETWEEN NOV. 1918 AND OCT. 1968

[source: James F. Kirkham, Sheldon G. Levy and William J. Crotty, 1970, pp. 301–325]

	Name of Head of State	Country	Date of Assassination
1.	Paes Sidonia	Portugal	Dec.16, 1918
2.	Habibullah Khan	Afghan	May 17, 1919
3.	Carranza, V.	Mexico	May 21, 1920
4.	Droubi Pasha	Syria	Aug. 23, 1920
5.	Dato Eduardo	Spain	Mar.9, 1921
6.	Dos Santos Machado	Portugal	Oct. 21, 1921
7.	Granjo Antonio	Portugal	Oct. 21, 1921
8.	Hara Takashi	Japan	Nov. 5, 1921
9.	Narutowicz Gabriel	Poland	Dec. 16, 1922
10.	Stambuliski Alexander	Bulgaria	1923
11.	Petlura Simon	Poland	May 25, 1926
12.	Obregon Alvaro	Mexico	Jul. 17, 1928
13.	Hamaguchi Yuko	Japan	Nov. 14, 1930
14.	Doumer Paul	France	May 7, 1932
15.	Inukai	Japan	May 16, 1932
16.	Sanchez Cerro, L.M.	Peru	Apr. 30, 1933
17.	Nadir Shah	Afghanistan	Nov. 8, 1933
18.	Duca Ion G.	Rumania	Dec. 30, 1933
19.	Sandino, A. C.	Nicaragua	Feb. 23, 1934
20.	von Schleicher, K.	Germany	Jun. 1934
21.	Dollfus Engelbert	Austria	Jul. 25, 1934
22.	Okada, Admiral	Japan	Feb. 26, 1936
23.	Saito, Viscount	Japan	Feb. 26, 1936
24.	Sidki Bakr	Iraq	Aug. 12, 1937
25.	Calinescu Armad	Rumania	Sep. 21, 1939
26.	Iorga, Nicolas	Rumania	Nov. 29, 1940
27.	Enriquez, General A.	Ecuador	May 31, 1942
28.	Boris	Bulgaria	Aug. 24, 1943
29.	Maher Pasha Ahmed	Egypt	Feb. 24, 1945
30.	Mahidol Ananda	Siam (Thailand)	Jun. 11, 1946
31.	Villaroel Gualberto	Bolivia	Jul. 21, 1946
32.	San U Aung	Burma	Jul. 19, 1947
33.	Yahya ibn Mohammed	Yemen	Feb. 17, 1948
34.	Gaitan Jorge E.	Colombiai	Apr. 9, 1948
35.	Nukrashy Pasha Mahmoud	Egypt	Dec. 28, 1948

Appendix 2

36.	Arana Francisco Javier	Guatemala	Jul. 19, 1949
37.	Al-Barazi Muhsin	Syria	Aug. 14, 1949
38.	Zaim Husni	Syria	Aug. 14, 1949
39.	Hazhir Abdul-Husayn	Iran	1950
40.	Al Hinnawi, Col. Sami	Lebanon	Oct. 31, 1950
41.	Delgado Chalbaud Carlos	Venezuela	Nov. 13, 1950
42.	Razmara Ali	Iran	Mar. 8, 1951
43.	Al Sulh Riad	Jordan	Jul. 16, 1951
44.	Abdullah	Jordan	Jul. 20, 1951
45.	Liaquat Ali Khan	Pakistan	Oct. 16, 1951
46.	Remon Jose Antonio	Panama	Jan. 2, 1955
47.	Al Malki, Lt. Col. Adnan	Syria	Apr. 22, 1955
48.	Somoza Anastasio	Nicaragua	Sep. 21, 1956
49.	Castillo Armas Carlos	Guatemala	Jul. 26, 1957
50.	Abdul Ilah	Iraq	Jul. 14, 1958
51.	Faisal II	Iraq	Jul. 14, 1958
52.	Nuri Al-Said	Iraq	Jul. 16, 1958
53.	Bandaranaike Solomon	Ceylon	Sep. 25, 1959
54.	Majali Hazza	Jordan	Aug. 29, 1960
55.	Lumumba Patrice	Congo	Jan. 17, 1961
56.	Yrujillo Molina Rafael	Dominican Rep.	May 30, 1961
57.	Rivagasore Louis	Burundi	Oct. 1961
58.	Olympio Sylvanus	Togo	Jan.13, 1963
59.	Kassem Abdul Karim	Iraq	Feb.9, 1963
60.	Ngo Dinh Diem	South Vietnam	Nov. 2, 1963
61.	Kennedy, John F.	U. S. A.	Nov. 22, 1963
62.	Dorji Jigme P.	Bhutan	Apr. 5, 1964
63.	Al-Shishakli, Gen. Adib	Brazil	Sep. 27, 1964
64.	Ngendandumwe Pierre	Burundi	Jan. 15, 1965
65.	Mansour Hassan Ali	Iran	Jan. 21, 1965
66.	Mendez Montenegro Mario	Guatemala	Oct. 31, 1965
67.	Balewa Sir Abubakar	Nigeria	Jan. 15, 1966
68.	Ironsi Aguiyi, J. T. V.	Nigeria	Jul. 30, 1966
69.	Verwoerd Hendrik F.	South Africa	Sep. 6, 1966

Appendix 3

UNNATURAL DEATHS OF CEYLONESE SOVEREIGNS BETWEEN 543 BC AND AD 1527

[source: James Emerson Tennent, 1859, pp.320-324]

Rank	Name of Sovereign	Death
10	Suratissa — put to death	247 BC
11	Sena and Guttika (horse traders) — put to death	237 BC
13	Elala — killed in battle	205 BC
18	Khallatanaga — put to death	109 BC
20	Panca-Dravida — put to death	103 BC
23	Coranaga — put to death	63 BC
24	Kuda Tissa — poisoned by his wife	51 BC
29	Amanda gamani Abhaya — put to death	AD 19
32	Queen Singhawalli (Sivali) — put to death	AD 33
35	Yasalaka Tissa — put to death	AD 52
36	Sabha (Subha) — put to death	AD 60
43	Chudda Naga — murdered	AD 186
46	Wairatissa (Vera Tissa) — murdered	AD 209
49	Vijaya Kumara — put to death	AD 242
50	Sangha Tissa I — poisoned	AD 243
60	Sotthi Sena — poisoned	AD 432
62	Mitta Sena or Karal Sora — put to death	AD 433
64	Dhatu Sena (Dasenkelleya) — put to death	AD 459
65	Sigiri Kasyapa — committed suicide	AD 477
67	Kumara Dhatu Sena (Kumara Das) — self immolation	AD 513
68	Kirti Sena — murdered	AD 522
69	Maidi Siwu (Siwaka) — murdered	AD 531
72	Datthapa Bhodi (Dapalu 1st) — committed suicide	AD 547
74	Kirtisri Megavana — put to death	AD 567
78	Sangha Tissa — decapitated	AD 633
79	Buna Mugalan (Laimini Bunaya) — put to death	AD 633
82	Kaluna Detu Tissa — committed suicide	AD 648
83	Dhatthopa Tissa (Dalupia Tissa) — killed in battle	AD 665
89	Hatthadatha (Hununarū Riandalu) — decapitated	AD 720
120	Wejayabahu 2nd — murdered	AD 1186
121	Mihindu 5th — put to death	AD 1187
122	Wirabahu — put to death	AD 1196
123	Wikramabahu 2nd — put to death	AD 1196
129	Nayaanga (Nikanga) — put to death	AD 1209
148	Jayabahu 2nd — put to death	AD 1462

Appendix 3

153 Wejeya Bahu 6th — murdered

AD 1527

Appendix 4

UNNATURAL DEATHS OF HEADS OF STATE AND EX-HEADS OF STATE BETWEEN 1967 AND 2001

[source: Sri Kantha — an incomplete list, compiled from open reference sources]

	Name of Head of State	Country	Date of Unnatural Death
1.	Humberto Branco	Brazil	1967
2.	R.Barrientos Ortuno	Bolivia	Apr. 27, 1969*
3.	Abdirashid Ali Shermarke	Somalia	Oct. 15, 1969
4.	Salvador Allende	Chile	Sept. 11, 1973 [†]
5.	Richard Ratsimandrava	Madagascar	Feb. 11, 1975
6.	Faysal ibn Abdal Aziz	Saudi Arabia	Mar. 25, 1975
7.	Francois Tombalbaye	Chad	Apr. 13, 1975
8.	Sheikh Mujibur Rahman	Bangladesh	Aug. 15, 1975
9.	Murtala Mohammed	Nigeria	Feb. 13, 1976
10.	Juan Jose Gonzalez	Bolivia	1976
11.	Juscelino K. de Oliveira	Brazil	1976 [‡]
12.	Mohammad Daud Khan	Afghanistan	Apr. 27, 1978
13.	Ali Mtsashiwa	Comoros	May 13, 1978
14.	Zulficar Ali Bhutto	Pakistan	Apr. 4, 1979 [§]
15.	Nur Mohammad Taraki	Afghanistan	Sept. 16, 1979
16.	Park Chung Hee	South Korea	Oct. 26, 1979
17.	Hafizullah Amin	Afghanistan	Dec. 27, 1979
18.	William R.Tolbert Jr	Liberia	Apr. 12, 1980
19.	Anastasio Somoza Jr	Nicaragua	Sept. 17, 1980
20.	Ziaur Rahman	Bangladesh	May 30, 1981
21.	Omar Torrijos	Panama	Aug. 1, 1981 [¶]
22.	Mohammad Ali Rajai	Iran	Aug. 30, 1981
23.	Anwar Sadat	Egypt	Oct. 6, 1981
24.	Maurice Bishop	Grenada	Oct. 19, 1983
25.	Indira Gandhi	India	Oct. 31, 1984
26.	Olof Palme	Sweden	Feb. 28, 1986
27.	Samora Machel	Mozambique	Oct. 19, 1986 [¶]
28.	Thomas Sankara	Burkino Faso	Oct. 15, 1987
29.	Zia ul Haq	Pakistan	Aug. 17, 1988 [¶]
30.	Ahmed Abdereman	Comoros	Nov. 26, 1989
31.	Nicolae Ceausescu	Romania	Dec. 22, 1989 [§]
32.	Samuel K. Doe	Liberia	Sept. 9, 1990
33.	Rajiv Gandhi	India	May 21, 1991
34.	Ranasinghe Premadasa	Sri Lanka	May 1, 1993
35.	Zviad Gamsakhurdia	Georgia	Dec. 31, 1993 [†]

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36.	Melchior Ndadaye	Burundi	Oct. 21, 1993
37.	Cyprien Ntaryamira	Burundi	Apr. 6, 1994
38.	Gen. J. Habyarimana	Rwanda	Apr. 6, 1994
39.	Muhammad Farah Hassan	Somalia	Aug. 1, 1996
40.	Mohammad Najibullah	Afghanistan	Sept. 27, 1996 §
41.	Ibrahim Barre Mainassara	Niger	Apr. 11, 1999
42.	Laurent Kabila	Congo	Jan. 16, 2001
43.	King Birendra	Nepal	Jun. 1, 2001

*[in helicopter crash]

†[suicide?]

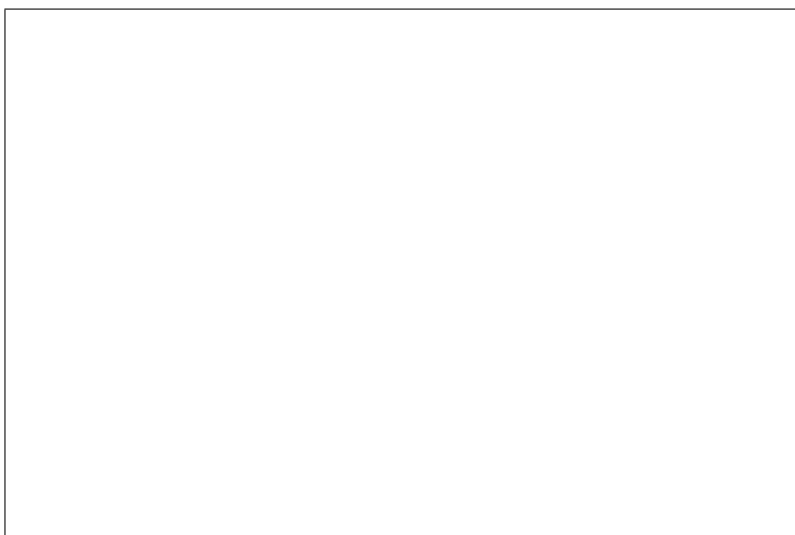
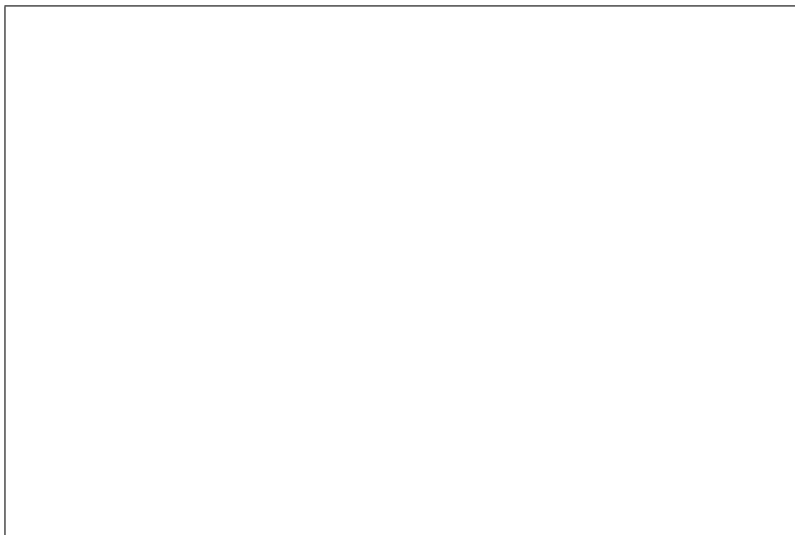
‡[accident?]

§[execution]

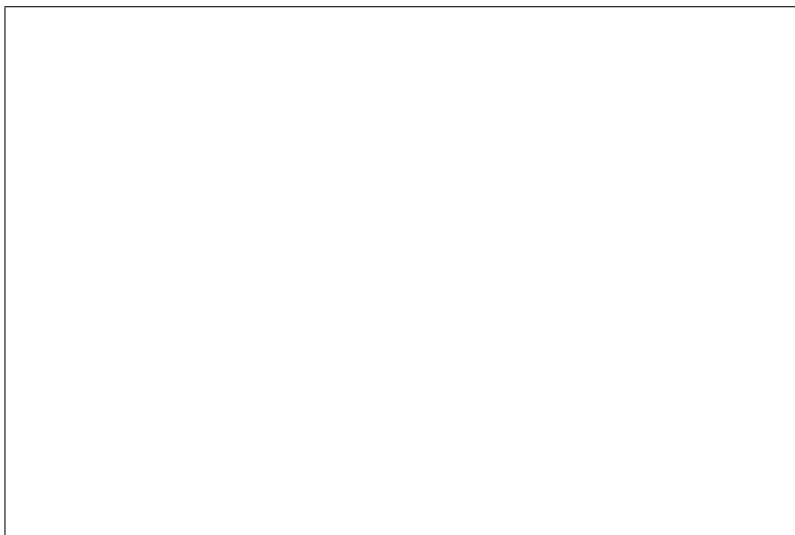
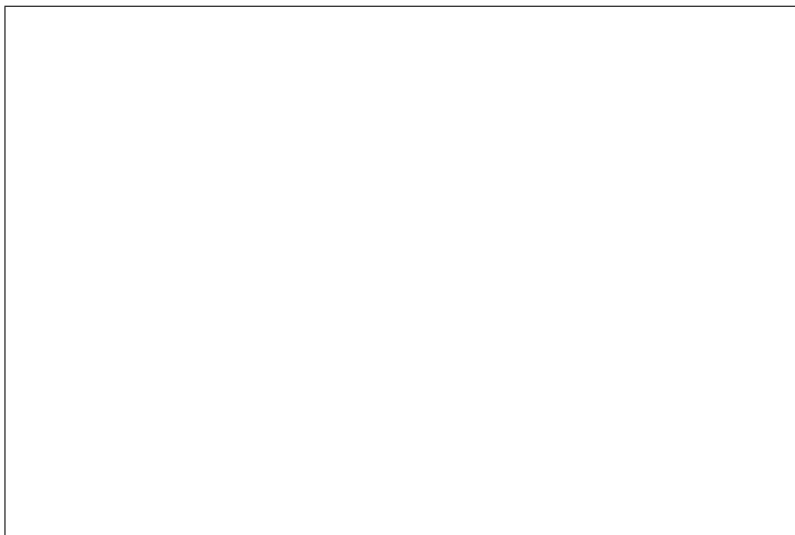
¶[in plane crash]

Appendix 5

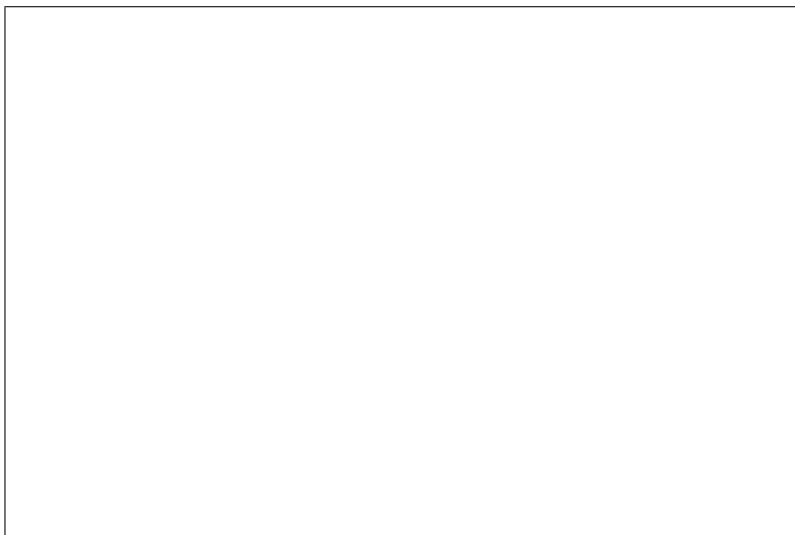
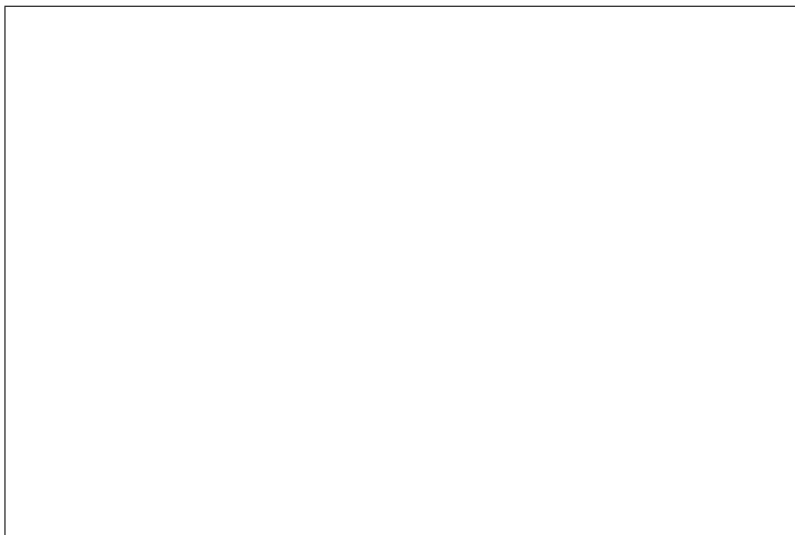
DEEDS OF PIRABHAKARAN (AND HIS MASCOT), AS SEEN BY
CARTOONISTS/ CARICATURISTS.



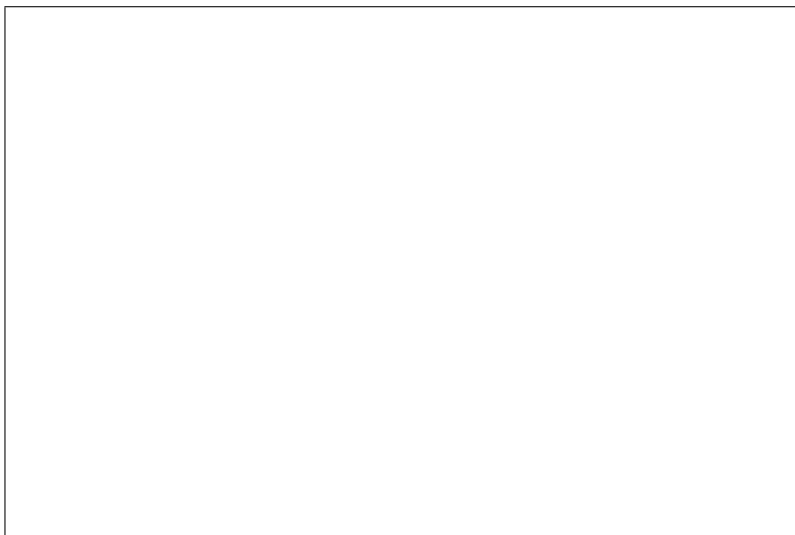
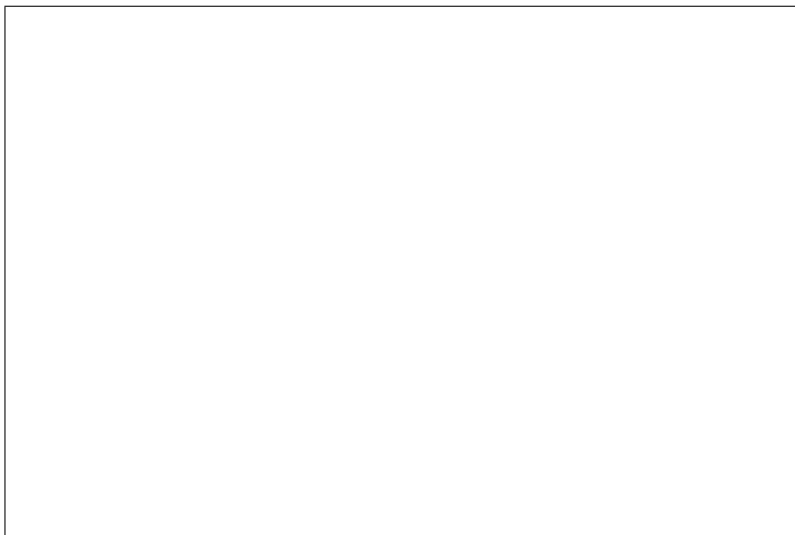
Appendix 5



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Appendix 5



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Project Ploughshares [57 Erb Street West, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 6C2] is operated under the auspices of the Canadian Council of Churches. This report, dated December 2002, states the total number of deaths in Sri Lankan civil war since 1983 as ranging from ‘60,000 to 100,000’. My calculation of nearly 70,000 deaths corroborates well with this range. And if one includes the deaths caused by the JVP terror campaign and Sri Lankan state’s counterterror actions, from 1987 to end of 1989, the highest figure of 100,000 is acceptable beyond doubt.
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- EPRLF (total 73 men), TEA (total 31 men), TENA (total 25 men), RELO (total 13 men), TELA-Rajan group (total 10 men), EROS (total 8 men), TMPP (total 6 men), ECRP (total 4 men) and NLFT (total 2 men). Thus, the LTTE cadres constituted only 15 percent of the total number of trainees. [details from 1997 *Jain Commission Report*, vol. 5, chapter 16, as it appeared in the website of *India Today* magazine; [www.india-today.com/jain/vol5/chap16.html]
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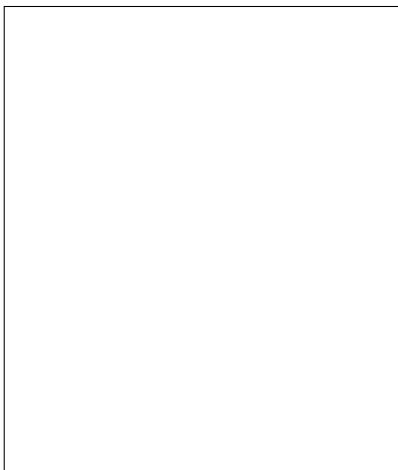
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Sri Kantha is currently engaged in research on the behavior of New World primates.

Though Prabhakaran is often dismissed as a 'thug' by his critics and a narrow-minded, if brilliant, militarist by others, the LTTE supremo has intuitively grasped the geo-political aspects of this secessionist struggle.... Though the military rather than the political dominates his thinking, Prabhakaran is no crude militarist. He understands the importance of land, people, natural resources—in short, the viability of his EELAM project.

—Mervyn de Silva [editor, *Lanka Guardian*, March 1, 1994]

One of the favourite expressions used by all and sundry to put Prabhakaran in the dock is the word 'intransigence'; that is, refusal to compromise. The accusers fail to realize that it is this intransigence that has brought the Tigers to their commanding position today.... And he stands alone, supported only by his Tiger boys and girls whose fierce commitment to the cause and their reverential loyalty to their leader is a phenomenon rarely seen in the world today.

—S. Sivanayagam [editor, *Hot Spring*, Jan.-Feb., 2000]

What Sri Lankan rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and his Tamil Tiger guerrillas are carrying out is nothing new. The fight to the death for an independent homeland was patented by George Washington and his gang 225 years ago. And why the fuss over Prabhakaran's penchant for guns, when the Second Amendment provides the same security to all Americans?

—Sachi Sri Kantha [in Letters, *Time-International* edition, July 3, 2000]



Sachi Sri Kantha is a Tamil scientist, living in Japan since 1986. His previous books include *Thamil Isai Theepam* (1977), *Prostitutes in Medical Literature: An Annotated Bibliography* (1991), and *An Einstein Dictionary* (1996).

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