

IN MEMORIAM

THE EVA I KNEW...

A Woman for All Seasons

Eva Ranaweera was a many faceted woman journalist, bilingual writer, poet, activist and feminist. Over and above all these, she was a true friend and colleague, with an intelligence, sincerity and charm that over rode the many slings and arrows that fortune dealt her through her life.

As director of the NGO, Voice of Women she worked single handedly producing the tri-monthly journal *Voice of Women* in English, *Kantha Handa* in Sinhala and *Penin Kural* in Tamil. She wrote most of their contents, at times identifying men and women relevant to her theme and deeply concerned about it, to contribute. She thought about the journal, dreamed about it and planned it months ahead, seeking current and relevant topics. At the time of her death she was preparing for a journal on *The Displaced* which she explained will not only be about women displaced by the conflict, but about women displaced through tradition and convention in the Sri Lankan content.

She planned workshops, training programmes, and art classes on feminist themes. Her end of the year calendar was a mosaic of drawings on feminist themes by the young people who attended the art classes she organized. There were occasions when she travelled to distant rural areas – amid much discomfort and trouble, often managing with her own finances to bring to rural women the idea of gender, women's development and the need for them to move away from their kitchens to the wider world. She had many critics, but she forged ahead with her mission.



As a journalist too she always sought the unusual, the unconventional and lived by those standards despite public opinion. She read avidly and was a collector of books. Her knowledge and love for her own language, Sinhala, lasted throughout her life, thought, she worked and wrote mainly

in English. Her study at her home in Ragama has publications in both languages and valuable classical editions. Her knowledge of writers and writing was always at her finger tips. I remember with gratitude the numerous times she helped me with her knowledge of these, willingly and with infinite patience.

Her social consciousness was clear in her work as a journalist which she extended in later years to her writings in *Kantha Handa*. She picked on themes and topics crucial to the women of this country with unerring accuracy. War and gender, AIDS,

displacement, domestic violence, sexual abuse, children, family, women and transport were some of the areas she explored in her writings.

The most outstanding quality of her life was her own special view of the world and its happenings. In this, as in many things in her life, she lived to the fullest, generous to a fault and a friend for life. ■

Vijita Fernando

The SSA mourns the loss of Eva Ranaweera who all her life was associated with progressive movements. Before joining *Voice of Women*, she had been in Cairo, Egypt for a decade in the Secretariat of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization (AAPSO). There she interacted with liberation organizations and Third World leaders. Previously in Sri Lanka she was close to the Left movement and was active in the Ceylon Peace Council and the local Afro-Asian Solidarity Association. Her death leaves a void in the feminist and left movements.