A VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN SRI LANKA

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1. Preamble

Sri Lanka was long famous for its rich social diversity and the harmonious co-existence of its various communities. Since independence, however, there has been a failure to define and realize an inclusive national vision from the perspective of this distinctive heritage. Instead, divisive politics and policies have fostered deep social, cultural, political and economic schisms and engendered violent armed conflict.

The struggle in the north (with primary focus on ethno-linguistic difference) and the uprising in the south (with primary focus on class disparity) reflect an inadequate post-colonial national vision and strategy. As a result political discrimination in governance, a lack of equitable development policies, and failure to preserve and respect local and cultural knowledge have become endemic.

Competitive ethnic politics became institutionalized in post-colonial Sri Lanka. Democracy came to represent the "tyranny of the majority," while a political culture premised on the notion that "might is right" became entrenched in the various regions of the island. Politicians and others who claim to represent majority interests both in the North and the South have frequently undermined the rights of minorities. Sri Lanka no longer upholds the true sign of civilization and social democracy that consists of protecting the vulnerable; those with the least access to power; the poor and the homeless.

Anticipating peace after decades of armed conflict, we propose a renewed inclusive multicultural vision for the country based on the principles of security and dignity for all groups and persons, and respect for cultural diversity. Our attempt is to address the causes of the conflict while recognizing the deep scars that the violence of the last decades has rendered upon a multicultural society. The need of the hour is for power-sharing to promote trust building and co-existence between diverse communities in order to forge a common future.

While the conflict in the North and Esast has a major ethnic component, the war is not reducible to ethnicity. Poverty, inequality, and intra-ethnic divisions played a part in fuelling the conflicts in the North and South alike. A just and sustainable peace will require understanding the complexity of Sri Lanka's two post-colonial conflicts, as well as transcending competitive ethnic politics.

Our vision encompasses a post-conflict reconstruction and development program that recognizes the need for equity, democracy, respect for human rights and broad-based human development in a globalized economy that has enabled growth but also generated deep regional, economic, and social inequalities. We note that profound inequalities and poverty render societies vulnerable to cycles of conflict and violence and as such development trajectories that exacerbate inequality and poverty are to be avoided.

The proposed vision for Sri Lanka is then based on and builds from an acknowledgement and appreciation of the island's historic, largely pacific and multi-cultural past with due recognition of its more violent and divided present.

2. Recognition of Multiculturalism, Respect for All Identities, and Regional and Local Minorities

Sri Lanka is a plural and multicultural land. Multiculturalism refers to the island's cultural diversity inclusive of three overlapping linguistic categories (speaking Sinhala, Tamil and English, and regional dialects including Veddha languages); four great world religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, and their sects, as well as indigenous deities and spirit beliefs); more than six ethnic groups recognized in the National Census; and a number of overlapping and cross cutting castes and sub-castes.

Various ethno-national groups based on linguistic, ethnic, regional and religious elements, such as the Burghers (Dutch and Portugese), Sinhalese (Kandyan and Low Country), Tamils (Sri Lankan and Malaiyaha), Muslims (Moor and Malay), Parsis, Colombo Chetties, Vannialatto (Veddah) and several others have emerged as significant identities; several of these categories are composed of distinct sub-categories. Additionally, the island's population may be sub-divided according to gender, class, and regional cultures depending on the rational for classification.[1]

Sri Lanka's cultural diversity and complex mix of identities is not unique. Most modern nations are plural, diverse and complex. However, in the post-colonial period diversity has been perceived as a threat rather than a gift. The result has been marginalization and discrimination against smaller and less powerful groups on linguistic, ethnic, religious, caste and/or class basis, giving rise to various forms of violent political conflicts. In turn, many of these conflicts have resulted in riots, attacks, forced displacement and/or colonization of regions occupied by one community by another and the building of enclaves and territories dominated by one ethnic group or another.

Acknowledgement of Sri Lanka's mixed cultural geography and ancient multiculturalism entails recognition that a majority group

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in a region is bound to respect and protect those who are in the minority in that particular region. Every group or individual is in a minority outside his/her own territory, region, or neighborhood. A balance of power between regional majorities in different parts of the country with regard to respect and protection for the persons and property of regional minorities is a sine qua non for sustainable peace. It is also necessary to reverse the pattern of ethnic ghettoization and ethnic cleansing of regional and local minorities that occurred during the twenty years of armed conflict and the riots prior to it in the north and south of the country.

Several multi-religious sites attest to a history of peaceful coexistence among the various religious communities in the island. These sites of multi-religious significance are especially to be celebrated in the aftermath of a polarizing conflict. We propose that sites such as Siripada, Kataragama, and Madhu shrine, with their diverse traditions be recognized and celebrated as multi-religious zones of peace and amity.

3. Acknowledging the Root Causes and Legacy of Violence and Division

1. Any vision for sustainable peace in Sri Lanka must first acknowledge fully the complexity of the conflicts and their historical roots. It must start from an acknowledgement of the human and material consequences of the conflict and its multi-faceted multi-layered causes.

2. While all communities suffered during the two decades of violence, the people of the North and East of the country bore the brunt of the violence, displacement, and destruction. Forced displacement and the bitterness it generated in turn fuelled the civil war. During the two decades of civil war the predominantly Tamil speaking North and East emerged as a region with special concerns that need to be urgently addressed.

3. The consequent political reality is that, without prejudice to the integrity of Sri Lanka, the region in the North and East has acquired a special claim to a large measure of devolution. Only then will it be possible to adequately address other equally important concerns in order to build an inclusive, sustainable and peaceful future.

4. During this long conflict, a political culture premised on the manipulation of ethnic, caste, and class ties, including the practice of colonization for political ends, spread across all parts of the country, and entrenched a culture of violence. This in turn saw the emergence of para-military outfits and the settling of scores with opponents through force rather than dialogue. Targeted violence against civilian populations reduced many communities to a state of despair and destroyed the social fabric. In many regions there are marginalised communities currently living in a state of insecurity. In this process there have been victims and perpetrators among all the major communities.

5. The 1987 July uprising of the JVP and the manner of its suppression brought about one of the most violent periods in our recent history with thousands of deaths and disappearances still unaccounted for. While the underlying causes of the two arenas of violence - the North and East, and the South - and their consequences are different, it should nevertheless be remembered that there were many similarities that speak to a common malaise. The poverty and inequality that motivated the uprisings against the state and the role of the military and other armed groups in their suppression the break down of due process and the rule of law, and the disappearances are factors in common. The still simmering consequences of the Southern violence - where sixty thousand persons are said to have lost their lives in the space of three years are still to be adequately dealt with.

6. While some women were engaged in the conflict, larger numbers of women were also targeted for degrading and violent abuse. Women-headed households have become a social reality due to conflict-related death and displacement. Consequently women have had to face loss of income, psychological trauma, the insensitivity of the state apparatus, and sexual harassment. In addition women have had to take on the dual burden of motherhood and being the primary earner. During the conflict many women also actively agitated for peace, both in the North and East, and in the South.

7. Along with women, children from all communities can be considered to be those most affected by the violence and brutalization of the conflict. Both as combatants and as bystanders, children have been victimized and deprived of their rights as instituted in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to which Sri Lanka is a signatory. Over 270,000 children are internally displaced by war in Sri Lanka. Many have lost at least one parent in the fighting; a high proportion are orphans. Up to 50 per cent of displaced children have lost their birth certificates, causing problems with their schooling. One in five displaced children is malnourished.[2] Measures have to be taken to deal with children affected by armed conflict. Further measures should also be instituted to ensure that children's rights are safeguarded in keeping with the CRC.

8. In the current political culture, there is rampant institutionalized corruption and a lack of accountability. Politicians of all hues use violence with impunity, instrumentalize the general public in their pursuit of power,

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and have contributed to the proliferation of small arms, to a decline in respect for the rule of law, and to a deterioration of faith in public institutions.

9. During and prior to the war years, in many localities, entire populations from one or more ethnic groups fled or were evicted from their ancestral lands and habitats, and are as yet unable to return and resettle there. Many fled due to riots, fear, and insecurity. Very large numbers of people were forcibly displaced as a result of riots and ethnic cleansing. In this context, commitment to preserve the country's mixed social geography is needed to ensure the return of forcibly displaced persons with security and dignity.

4. Identifying a Sound Basis for Constitutional and Institutional Design

1. A just and lasting solution to the conflict lies in recognizing the strength of ethno-national consciousness developed in the past twenty years of conflict, the need for power sharing under a federal system, and equally the need to balance the claims of diverse groups.

2. A lasting solution to the violence among ethno-religious and ethno-linguistic communities requires recognition that individual and group identities are historically complex and shifting and often politically constituted. Regional majority groups are by that very fact internally diverse, and each of the regions includes citizens of linguistic, religious and ethnic groups who constitute regional, local and non-territorial minorities.

3. Certain regions have no clear majority community, and majority/minority status often depends on the manner in which regional units are conceived.[3] We must then seek to transcend the tyranny of majoritarianism – nationally, regionally and locally.

4. Power sharing should reflect the county's multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual society and mixed cultural geography, and the center needs to better reflect this rich diversity. Therefore we need to evolve a political tradition of inter-ethnic consultation. It may help to revert to a bicameral legislature, with the second chamber re-designed as a "chamber of communities"; in the context of devolution, we would need bicameral legislatures at the regional level too, with regional chambers of communities.

5. A political culture and social acceptance of diversity and inclusiveness is needed at all levels – from the center to the periphery. Whereas there should be no politically motivated colonization, whether by the centre or by the region, no territory should be regarded as ethnically exclusive. The concept of traditional habitations is legitimate (e.g. for cultural purposes), but there should be no concept of a mono-ethnic homeland. Every citizen of Sri Lanka should be free to live and work in any part of the island.

6. The centre currently has virtually unfettered powers to override the periphery, and to even dissolve the elected regional or local assemblies and substitute its own officers to attend to the regional or local administration. We need constitutional barriers to such abuse of central power together with the strengthening of administrative and financial autonomy of local bodies (e.g. through changes in the taxation system all over the country).

7. Capacities for local level planning should be promoted, combined with democratic principles that ensure sufficient and constructive space for people's participation.[4]

8. Since those most vulnerable to forced displacement are minorities (national and regional), the preservation of the island's multicultural social fabric and its culturally diverse communities is both the prerequisite for and guarantor of secure and sustainable peace in the island. Recognizing, respecting and balancing the rights of majorities with those of minorities in all regions, and recognizing the need to formulate mechanisms to address community aspirations in regions without a clear majority are essential for the return of displaced regional, local and non-territorial minorities and to enable a durable peace.

9. Women may be seen as constituting a minority within every cultural group. This is particularly the case where strong patriarchal traditions, norms, and cultural practices prevail. As such, special measures are required to enable inter- and intra-cultural gender equality and equity.[5]

10. The post-conflict constitution and institutional design must contend with and overcome the legacy of a bureaucratic system and political culture that resisted meaningful devolution of power to regions and self-determination for communities throughout the country. Such devolution need not be uniform – there is a good case for asymmetric devolution in the North and East, together with special institutional arrangements to meet the concerns of local minorities within multi-ethnic regions.

11. The Provincial Council model that was attempted to overcome these ills was a failure. It denied autonomy and self-determination for local communities and also contributed to the politicized construction of ethnic majority enclaves at regional and local levels through the capture of local governance institutions. Any federal model should be guided by the principles of internal self-determination and maximum devolution. There is no right to unilateral

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secession, but each region, sub-region and local government area should enjoy maximum autonomy.

5. Identifying a Sound Basis for Post-conflict Reconstruction and Economic and Social Justice

i. The UN World Conference against Racism 2000 affirmed that intolerance and discrimination breed in economic and social conditions that are inequitable, and that genuine equality of opportunity for development for all individuals and groups is fundamental for sustainable peace. We recognize that in Sri Lanka inequitable socio economic conditions and short sighted political decisions had much to do with the ethnic polarization that led to the war and continue to perpetuate feelings of ethnic animosity between all communities in the North and in the South. We reaffirm, therefore, the need for an equitable social system to generate sustainable peace.

ii. Post-conflict development must also go beyond ethnic discourses and recognize the role of intra-ethnic factors, such as poverty, unemployment, landlessness, and caste discrimination in fuelling the war. The civil war in the North and East is primarily rooted in ethnicity, but there are also other social and economic conflicts everywhere in the island, mostly localized but occasionally, as in the case of the JVP uprising, acquiring a national dimension. Sometimes, such socioeconomic conflicts acquire an ethnic dimension, as has been the case in the sporadic Sinhal-Muslim or Sinhala-Malaiyaha Tamil clashes that have occurred in the south in recent years. A recognition of the diverse aspects of poverty, social exclusion, psychosocial distress and other forms of marginalization (based on socio-economic, political, cultural or ecological determinants) is necessary.

iii. While globalization in today's context appears to be inevitable, it is likely to bring many social problems in its wake. Therefore corrective mechanisms need to be instituted to address such problems. The emphasis on growth must be balanced by mechanisms to ensure fair distribution. Economic policies should focus more on the rural poor and on the plantation workers, and a consistent agricultural policy should be pursued. A social welfare system that includes free health and education must be instituted to counter the rampant economic inequality that is prevalent. Given the stark differences in lifestyles that are evident within the populace today it is essential that remedial measures are speedily instituted to avoid future conflict based on economic inequities.

iv. Poverty eradication programs should be based on a holistic perception of poverty to avoid the exclusion of certain categories, such as plantation workers. Although their per capita income is very low, since two or more members of the household may be employed, their household income may be above the cut-off point for relief. Moreover, they are totally dependent on wages from a single source. The failure to take a holistic view of poverty has led to its persistence in the plantation sector.

v. Steps should be taken to redress concerns specific to women. It is necessary to ensure equal participation of women in planning implementation and monitoring infrastructure development programs that facilitate access to safe drinking water, sanitation, roads, transport services, energy and thereby employment, markets, services and inclusive development. There should be bilateral agreements between the Sri Lankan government and countries that employ Sri Lankan migrant workers to safeguard their rights and welfare in their workplaces. The private sector must be sensitized to the need for gender equality in socio-economic development.

vi. The elimination of gender role stereotypes in secondary and tertiary curriculum materials, and introducing materials that promote gender equality and the empowerment of women is necessary. Law reform that addresses discriminatory practices - particularly in the area of personal law - must be considered. Measures should also be in place to enhance the capacity of women candidates to secure election and to participate effectively under the proposed quota provision. Legislation to deal with domestic violence must also be introduced.

vii. Food security and preservation of bio-diversity should be priorities and development policy should be formulated and implemented based on conflict impact assessments and community participation. Access to information on development policies is a prerequisite for economic and social justice and equitable development.

viii. One consequence of the conflict has been the devastation of the environment. Since 24% of the population lives below the poverty line (as defined in the Household Income and Expenditure Survey –2002), environmental concerns have long been considered a luxury issue for the country. But such a view is shortsighted. For equitable and sustainable post-conflict development, natural resources must be creatively and equitably used, and the environment protected and held in trust for future generations. Policies have to be formulated to combat air pollution, deforestation, land degradation and unregulated exploitation of natural resources. Eco-tourism needs to be regulated in the light of analysis of its benefits and ill effects.

ix. Bio-diversity conservation should be conducted not through a species protection-based approach but through a holistic "eco-system" approach that recognizes the

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interconnection between species. Resources should be protected from the adverse effects of globalization; for instance, bio-piracy should be prevented through appropriate eco-friendly patenting laws.

x. There should be transparency in government and donor agreements and dealings on environmental issues. Local communities and knowledge should be utilized in eco- projects and conservation. Policy making on ecological considerations should be in keeping with a countrywide policy. People's right to have access to natural resources like water should be recognized.

xi. As indicated in the Youth Commission Report youth have long felt that their needs and aspirations were not adequately considered in the making of policy. Given that Sri Lanka within the last twenty years experienced two youth uprisings in two regions of the island it is timely that the ongoing peace process makes certain that youth get adequate space to present their interests and perspectives. As a first measure policy makers and all stakeholders should make sure that universities and other tertiary institutions are part of the consultation around the peace process.

xii. A major problem in the transition from war to peace is to find or create productive uses for the services of ex-combatants of all categories. This needs to be done to ensure the welfare of the ex-combatants, to mobilize their skills for national development, and also to reduce the likelihood that they may revert to war or divert to violent criminal activities. It is in everyone's interest that ex-combatants on both sides are successfully integrated into civil society as quickly as possible.

6. Dealing with the Past

i. No community has a monopoly on suffering, and all communities have experienced violence. However, there is a tendency for each community to dwell exclusively on its own sufferings. This tunnel vision is of course a consequence of the trauma that has been suffered but which must be transcended for true healing and reconciliation. It is therefore important to look beyond one's own group and recognize the suffering of all communities.

ii. There can be no enduring and comprehensive reconstruction, physical or social, economic or political, local or national, without reconciliation; and there can be no true reconciliation without all sections of the population collectively examining, diagnosing and working out remedies to eliminate the cancers that have eaten into our society. The nature of these wounds is such that healing will not occur with the mere passage of time; rather, they will continue to fester if unattended.

iii. The exercise in healing could be led by a post-conflict Truth and Reconciliation Commission established with an appropriate mandate. Such a process would be time bound, but its prescription could include the institution of commemorative processes and memorials countrywide to help us to address the causes and consequences, and to prevent the recurrence of those ills. These could cover an annual programme of Remembrance and Reconciliation of the pogrom of the last week of July 1983, as well as common memorials of collective mourning and reconciliation at the sites of the massacres, ethnic cleansing and other ethnic violence/attacks on major non-military institutions.[6]

iv. There are also several battle sites, which mark the death of large numbers of combatants, from the Sri Lankan armed services and the LTTE. There has also been much ethnic cleansing. Irrespective of the ethnic affiliations of the perpetrators and the victims, each of these outrages diminishes us collectively. The manner in which these deaths and disasters should be commemorated can be decided after peace is established and the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission sets out its proposals.

v. The many tragedies of the conflict need to be addressed collectively on an all-island basis with a view to healing and reconciliation. However, this should be done without prejudice to any steps that may be taken to secure justice. There should be no blanket amnesty. Rather, a balance needs to be struck between what Bishop Tutu, in his foreword to the report of the South African Truth Commission, referred to as 'retributive and punitive justice' and 'restorative justice which is concerned not so much with punishment as with correcting imbalances, restoring broken relationships, healing, harmony and reconciliation.'

vi. The decades of violence have not only left lasting social and psychological scars but also caused material destruction. While healing and memorializing must be emphasized, institutional mechanisms must also be provided for the victims of violence to be heard and for recompense and restitution.

7. Aspirations of the National Vision: Human Security, the Right to Development and Protection of all Sri Lankan Citizens and Residents

The proposed National Vision for Sri Lanka would be based on the following to enable all groups and citizens to achieve their full human potential.

(i) Local, regional, indigenous and non-territorial minorities will have the right to internal self-determination within a commonly accepted and consensually determined federal institutional and constitutional structure based on a united Sri Lanka. The appropriate degree of self-determination

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may vary according to the special needs, circumstances and aspirations of the various communities in their respective locations.

(ii) All citizens will have the right to live without fear where they choose. The historically multicultural social fabric will be enshrined and protected via national legislation and the promotion of multilingualism.

(iv) The customary rights of regional minorities, including those local minorities who have been displaced and/or discriminated against on the basis of caste, and aboriginal and landless peoples, will be protected and their security guaranteed.

(v) Individual rights, dignity and freedoms will be protected. All citizens will have constitutionally guaranteed equal opportunities for education and self-realization and a level playing field irrespective of gender, sexuality, caste, class, ethnicity, language, religion or region.

(vi) Local knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles will be respected, preserved and maintained, in accordance with international norms and conventions. Sanctuaries shall be set aside for the preservation of lifestyles and practices of indigenous peoples and traditional communities.

(vii) The right to development of all citizens and communities will be recognized, enabling them to achieve a decent life, with social and economic justice.

(viii) Through provision of adequate educational facilities in the national languages, and the effective implementation of the Official Languages Act, the right of every Sinhala, Tamil & English speaking person to be educated and to transact official business in that language will be protected. Multilingualism will be encouraged. Given the power that facility in English language has in determining people's access to information and employment it is necessary that measures are taken countrywide to ensure that all students have adequate access to English language instruction.

8. Developing Policies and Practices to Engender the National Vision

It is necessary to develop further this vision of Sri Lanka as a plural multicultural, multiethnic and mixed society that recognizes diversity as a source of strength and richness, and the right of all groups to equitable development. The specific policy and practice changes required to engender this vision must be debated and framed through a process of inclusive dialogue and consensus building. Thereafter, these policy recommendations must be implemented through concrete actions, programmes and legislation in order to bring alive this vision across the country.

In the first instance, a combination of specialized seminars and open discussion fora that involve policy makers, journalists, professionals, academics, educators and community leaders and the concerned public at all levels, would be required to permit full open and inclusive debate of the key elements of the vision and the policies, legislation and programmes required to realize the vision.

Some of the specific policy and practice changes to enable the vision for peace and equitable development described above include:

1. Constitutional provision to enable the return of displaced persons and local minorities and to guarantee protection of their persons and property. These regional minorities have been displaced forcibly or through fear of those claiming to act in the interest of national /regional majorities. Communities should be encouraged to work together in reconstruction and rehabilitation activities as a means of rebuilding local level ethnic and community relationships.

2. Peace and conflict impact assessments of macro-economic policy, sector development policies and all development projects to ensure equitable and sustainable development and post/conflict reconstruction. Full acknowledgement of existing expertise and use of the capacity that exists within the country (and in the diaspora) in planning development policy is necessary.

3. Multicultural educational material and textbooks including history textbooks should be mainstreamed. Texts should be carefully screened to delete any ethnocentric propaganda or flavor. The government should recognize and work closely with national experts in multicultural policy formulation.

4. The Equal Opportunities Bill should be revised, updated and steered through Parliament.

5. Affirmative action programs should be undertaken as an interim measure within a time frame in order to right historical wrongs and enable marginalized and under-represented groups and those living in under-developed areas to secure adequate representation pending other steps to level the playing field for all groups to compete equally.

6. Good governance and accountable and transparent public institutions, leaders and politicians are necessary to ensure that the right to development and economic and social justice for all groups and citizens becomes a reality. As a first measure a code of conduct for politicians should be developed.

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7. A bill to render the incitement and instigation of ethnic, linguistic, and religious intolerance and hatred by politicians, religious leaders, opinion makers, and the media unlawful should be crafted.[7] An independent media culture needs to be fostered.

8. A feature of the system of majoritarian democracy practiced in Sri Lanka is that decision-making is based on debate and vote along party affiliation, and not on consultations and consensus. This system has permitted the development of political fiefdoms. We need to move away from the "winner takes all" Westminster parliamentary model into a system in which political minorities are involved in government at all levels – national, regional and local.

9. The census needs to be recalibrated and pluralized in order to accommodate those with mixed ethnicities and multiple identities.

10. Material destruction from the recent decades of conflict includes the destruction of sites of historical and archeological significance that are a treasure not just of Sri Lanka but the world. Steps should be taken to ensure their renovation and preservation and respect for such sites should be fostered in future generations.

11. Sites of religious, historic, cultural or environmental importance that are of value to all citizens should be designated by law as Zones of Peace. Such Zones of Peace should not merely be "Demilitarized Zones," but sanctuaries protected and preserved by local communities free from weapons, acts of violence, injustice and environmental degradation. A Zone of Peace may be regarded as nurseries from which peaceful thoughts and acts may grow and spread into the surrounding social environment. As training grounds for new generations of responsible citizens, Zones of Peace have the potential to revitalize Sri Lanka's traditional culture of peace.

The most sacred shrines of the four world religions operating in this country, World Heritage sites and other areas of Multi-Religious sanctity or of Environmental importance can be designated Zones of Peace. Such Zones should be so designated by law, with codes of conduct. In determining such codes of conduct and in determining administrative mechanisms of such places, the local residents should be involved. Their traditions or techniques of non-violent conflict resolution should be preserved, promoted and taught to youth including people from other communities. Tree-felling and/or hunting (for Vannialatto/Adi vasi communities of ancestral hunters), when allowed, should be restricted and conducted according to agreed norms designed to protect the sanctuary's bio-diversity, tree cover and sustainable carrying capacity. Provision should be made to recognize and protect indigenous intellectual property rights through legal channels as required.

8. Conclusion

There is a temptation after the end of bitter and long-drawn conflict to return to the familiar, to maintain the status quo ante. Yet the end of conflict and the transition to peace provides 'a watershed opportunity for societies to achieve greater justice while building peace.'[8] 'The insights and lessons learned from crisis provide opportunities for constructive change and future reform. They are new points of departure on the path of innovation and sustainable development. Emergencies are often springboards for progress.'[9]

This is our challenge in Sri Lanka. We believe that it is possible to overcome the violence of conflict, and the divisiveness entrenched since colonial times, and to build together a vision of a country that is united in its cultural and religious diversity, and just and inclusive in its economy and polity. We believe that the Sri Lanka that once symbolized a land where all peoples and faiths were welcomed and prospered, is once again near at hand. This is the vision that we seek to regenerate from the ashes of war.

Notes

1 "Multiculturalism" as a term has been the cause of much debate. It is said to not adequately recognize the multiple identities that people occupy, as well as not adequately account for the unequal relationships and hierarchies that exist between communities that it defines. In the present context we self-consciously use the term as descriptive of the island's cultural plurality that has to be recognized as a national asset, with awareness of the need to avoid the faults associated with multiculturalism as policy in some countries in the west.

2 "War Brought Us Here: protecting children displaced within their own countries by conflict, " Save the Children, 2000.

3 For example, while the combined North and East is predominantly a Tamil ethnic majority area, the East taken on its own is clearly multi-ethnic with Muslims constituting over two fifths of the population, the Tamils about a third, and the Sinhalese a fourth, and with other ethnic groups in smaller but significant numbers.

4 The case of the South Indian state of Kerala's "People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning" would be worthwhile to study as a means of conflict transformation for Sri Lanka. Such reform ideas could be an important means to make constitutional reform ideas attractive for the Southern parts of Sri Lanka as well.

5 Women constitute a minority not in terms of numbers but in relation to access to power and resources.

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யாழ்ப்பாணம்

6 Below are some of the major incidents of attacks on civilian targets and killings of noncombatants and events of ethnic cleansing. Mawattegama, Anuradhapura Railway Station and many other places (August 1977), Jaffna (August 1979), Jaffna Public Library (31 May 1981), Jaffna (23 & 24 July 1983), Kent and Dollar Farms (November 1984), Murunkan (04 December 1984), Valvettithurai Public Library (09 March 1985), Akkaraipattu (May 1985), Anuradhapura Sri Maha Bodhiya (14 May 1985), Pullumalai (November 1986), Kituloothuwa (14 April 1987), Pettah (April 1987), Aranthalawa (February 1987), Aranthalawa (June 1987), Jaffna Hospital (21 October 1987), Valvettithurai (02 August 1989), Rufuskulam, Thirukkovil (11 June 1990), Veeramunai Pillaiyar Temple Refugee Camp (12 July 1990), Kurukkal Madam (12 July 1990), Kaththankudy Mosque (03 August 1990), Eravur (12 August 1990), Eastern University (05 September 1990), Sathurukondan (09 September 1990), Mannar (28 October 1990), Jaffna (30 October 1990), Mailanthanai (09 August 1992), St. James Church Refugee Camp, Jaffna (November 1993), Navali RC Church (09 July 1995), Nagarkovil (21 September 1995), Ampara (October 1995), Central Bank (January 1996), Kilivetti (11 February 1996), Jaffna (July & August 1996), Jaffna (January 1997), Dalada Maligawa (early 1998), Gonagala (September 1999), and Katunayake International Airport (July 2001).

7 See British law on prevention of the incitement to racial hatred, and EU laws on political hate speech.

8 Rama Mani, *Beyond Retribution: Seeking Justice in the Shadows of War* (Cambridge, Polity, 2002), p.22.

9 UNDP, 'Working for Solutions to Crisis: the Development Response' (New York, UNDP, July 1998). ■

LABOURING TO LEARN

Towards a Political Economy of Plantations, People and Education in Sri Lanka

by

Angela W. Little

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