

WELCOMING POLITICAL PROPOSALS

We welcome the wide-ranging constitutional reform package offered by the People's Alliance Government as a political solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. The PA government was elected by the people with a clear mandate to restore peace, ethnic harmony, and democracy in our war-ravaged country. By presenting its own proposals to the people of Sri Lanka, the Government has demonstrated a commendable measure of courage and political imagination. We hope that the people of Sri Lanka will use this opportunity to work towards rebuilding a secular, democratic and multi-ethnic country on the basis of a genuine sharing of power between all communities.

The present proposals contain a number of positive features. These proposals are the most expansive ever presented by a Sri Lankan government to politically resolve the ethnic conflict. They constructively build on previous attempts at instituting regional autonomy in Sri Lanka.

They entail the sharing of legislative and executive power between the centre and the provinces. The political reforms envisaged in the PA Government's proposals can form a sound basis for deepening democracy and ending ethnic enmity in Sri Lanka.

These proposals have been revealed at a time of intensified war. We appeal to both parties to the military conflict to take another bold initiative to enable the people living in the North and East to join the national dialogue in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity. We specifically appeal to the government to take necessary steps to enable the people in the North and East to participate in this dialogue without fear.

We are confident that all Sri Lankan people will reject extremism, violence and hatred, and see their collective future in moderation, peace and reconciliation.

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EASTERN MAN, WESTERN MAN

Eastern man walks slowly
Afraid of the flash in the sky,
Western man walks swiftly
Less reason why.

Eastern man walks slowly
Afraid of the bolt from the blue
Western man walks swiftly
Blind to the view.

Eastern man walks slowly
Shakes as the rockets boom,
Western man walks swiftly
Swiftly to his doom.

by Guy Amirthanayagam from *Poems*

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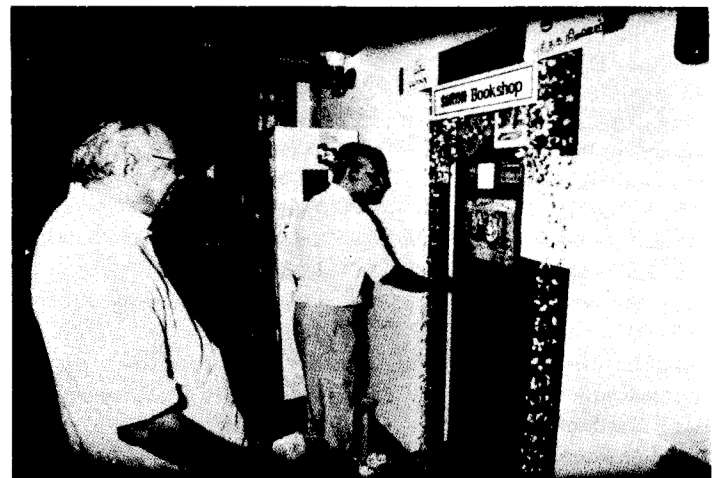
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In discussion. Dr. Lesley Gunawardena, author of recently released **Historiography in a time of Ethnic Conflict**; Quadri Ismail & Pradeep Jeganathan, editors of **Unmaking the Nation - Identity & History in Modern Sri Lanka**.



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