

## PHRRE New Year Message 2001

**Dear All,**

As another New Year dawns, Shakthi wishes its friends, listeners and well wishers, a prosperous and peaceful 2001. We look forward to your continued support in working towards a peaceful and united Sri Lanka in the not too distant future.

It is a huge task, as many of you realise. It is not easy to battle against entrenched community attitudes, which see the crisis facing our motherland in black and white terms; to bring some sanity into the increasingly polarised rhetoric, which currently prevail among the Sinhalese and Tamil Diaspora.

Shakthi has consistently opposed a militaristic solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka and will continue to do so. To go against those who stand to benefit from continued warfare, the arms merchants, the robber barons and those seeking power through the barrel of a gun and their cohorts in Australia will be not be easy.

But if we are to be true to the aims and objectives of Shakthi and the PHRRE organisation, we will have to continue to appeal to the good sense of both communities in accepting the realities of the situation in Sri Lanka; that peace is not possible unless there is a genuine commitment from both sides to the conflict; that flag-waving and extremist rhetoric by those in Sri Lanka and abroad will only result in continued misery for its people, who desire nothing but to live in [harmony](#) with their neighbours.

The current developments in bringing both [parties](#) to the negotiating table gives us hope that the conflict can be resolved through peaceful means. We regret that international mediation is deemed necessary to achieve this end.

We believe it is possible for Sri Lankans themselves to end this senseless war, through acceptance of the genuine grievances of the Tamil people. Shakthi will continue to work towards this goal in the year ahead.

We believe both Sinhalese and Tamil listeners to our program have appreciated our efforts in this direction. The feedback we have received indicates that more and more people are tuning to our program for a fair and independent view of Sri Lankan affairs.

However, more needs to be done, especially in light of the sustained campaign carried out by extremist elements to push their narrow political viewpoint over our community airwaves these days.

So this message is first, an appeal to join us in our efforts to achieve what over 90 per cent of ordinary Sri Lankans have clamoured for through their votes in many general elections in the past, a just and durable peace in Sri Lanka.

Secondly, it is to alert you to what is happening right on your door-step here in Australia, the injustices and prejudices which is perpetrated against the most disadvantaged people of this country, the original inhabitants of this land and those who seek to make a positive contribution to this country which they have adopted as their own.

We believe it is imperative for the Sri Lankan community in Australia to recognise the commonality of these issues. Australian society - despite the pressure of people in powerful positions who claim to speak on behalf of "mainstream" society - is based on the basic notions of justice, [equity](#) and fair-play to all residents, regardless of the [backgrounds](#) they come from. It is a reputation, which has been gained through a great deal of sacrifice by many people. It must not be given up easily.

It is a message we have to convey to the people of our Motherland who live in a similar multicultural society and to those Sri Lankans who live in Australia, where their sons and daughters reap the benefits of living in harmony with their fellow citizens.

That is why Shakthi has been in the forefront of local issues such as protest campaigns against mandatory sentencing, attempts to curb the right to unionised labour and the demand for reconciliation with the Aboriginal people of this country.

We have also been agitating, with other Australian agencies, in seeking to ban landmines throughout the world. We will continue these crusades and seek broad partnerships with like-minded Sri Lankan Australians and members of other communities.

Sri Lankans in Australia enjoy a high standard of education, [employment](#) and social status in this country when compared to most other communities. Which is why we believe your voices need to be heard much more loudly than at present on a host of issues that affects our lives, not only in Australia but in Sri Lanka too.

Shakthi is willing to provide you the platform for expressing such views. On the threshold of another millennium, our hope is that you are equal to the task.

Thank you

Shakthi