

Voice of Shakthi Thursday 10 August 2000

It was with very great interest that we at Shakthi followed the unfolding events in Sri Lanka this week. Like thousands of other moderate Sri Lankan expatriates who have always advocated a negotiated settlement to Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis, we had hoped, that the current Government's most recent attempt would go some way to solve this curse which had hung over all our loved ones for more than two decades.

The loss of tens of thousands of lives, the displacement of thousands of others, the massive destruction to property and the divisions which have been created among all communities, we thought, would make the political masters of Sri Lanka to put aside, even at this late stage, their petty differences and work towards a solution which could bring peace and dignity to all.

Instead, what we got was the usual circus.

Despite its election promises to solve the crisis as soon as it came to power, the ruling PA Government has dithered and prevaricated to such an extent that their proposed Constitutional amendments have virtually no hope of being passed now, with another general election only weeks away.

Instead of doing away with the Executive Presidency - as it also promised before the last election - the Government insists on retaining it. Their insistence on this has paved the way for the main opposition UNP to conveniently back out of their promises to support the package. The UNPs role in this situation is another aspect of this tragi-comedy.

The [party](#) which looked on as the July 1983 riots took place and escalated the North-East conflict, which brutally suppressed the JVP insurrection of 1989-90 and ruled the country with an iron fist for 13 years, now says proper consultation with the people is essential if the package is to be accepted.

Despite our criticism of the current Government's incompetency on this issue, and the Opposition's claim that the package is an attempt to remain in power, it must be admitted that the proposed amendments do contain some elements which seeks to meet the genuine aspirations of the Tamil people.

So let's take a look at the stances of other players in this tragi-comedy. To pay any attention to those who say the Tamils have no problems in Sri Lanka would be a waste of time, in our [opinion](#). Leave alone the current package, these elements would protest even over King Dutugemunu's constitution, because even his rule recognised the dignity and respect due to Sri Lanka's Tamil

people.

We should also not be very surprised by the attitude of some of the leading members of the Buddhist clergy on this matter. Instead of attending to their ecclesiastical duties, it has been the [fashion](#) for some, to give more prominence to their power-broking roles.

The one-time radical JVP has however, to its credit, has moved away somewhat from its one-time Sinhala nationalistic line. But their flirting with other extremist Sinhala groups still continue to some extent. Caught in the middle of this circus of [course](#), is the ordinary Tamil population of Sri Lanka. It has been the continuing mantra of the LTTE that the Tamil people should never depend on the Sinhalese [leadership](#) of the country to produce a solution for their grievances. The current antics of our political leaders can only reinforce this view and drive them even closer to Velupillai Prabhakaran. To a person faced with an ever-weakening army, this will be manna from heaven. Our politicians and those members of the clergy currently agitating against the reforms should bear the full responsibility for this.