

Voice of Shakthi Thursday 15 November 2001

There must be mixed feelings within the Sri Lankan community about the results of the Australian general election held last Saturday. Whether we voted for the Liberal National Coalition or the Labor party, or whether we said a pox on both your houses and voted for one of the minor [parties](#), there must surely be a questioning, in the final analysis, of what it is that the Australian people have really voted for.

The theme of both major parties was strong leadership. But did we really get it at the end of it all? We at Shakthi, do not feel we did. In the end, what it all boiled down to was, in our [opinion](#), an appeal to the baser instinct in all of us, black or white or, as one media commentator said prior to the election, [the darkness](#) of our souls.

Did many of us vote to preserve the *status quo*, the sense of [security](#) that a well-fed, well-heeled society feels when it is threatened from elements outside its own comfortable spheres?

From those who voted for these policies, we would like to ask, where was your sense of humanity, of *ahimsa*, to brand and vote against a mass of helpless human beings who simply sought shelter from persecution and harm, a condition many of us migrants are so familiar with. Did you vote to preserve Australia's ties to a now defunct empire with which we do not identify at all, to deny the legitimate rights of the original owners of this land, to look away from the sheer injustice and harm 200 years of colonialism had done to them, just as much as it had done to all of us who have left our homelands.

Did we grasp with great abandon, the crumbs the so-called warriors against terrorism deigned to throw at us, forgetting that these same powers had ignored us all these years as we fought our own battles against terrorism in our homelands, at the cost of so many innocent lives.

With the Labor [party](#) now in total disarray, only one hope remains that the current tide of racism, xenophobia and economic rationalism at all costs, will be checked to some extent in the next three years. And that is the emergence of the Democrats and the Greens as the moderating influence in the Senate.

If they remain true to the high principles they enunciated during the election campaign, the opportunity will be there for these parties to spell out a future for a far more cohesive, inclusive [Australia](#)

, not the narrow-minded, bigoted and suspicious one which this election has produced.