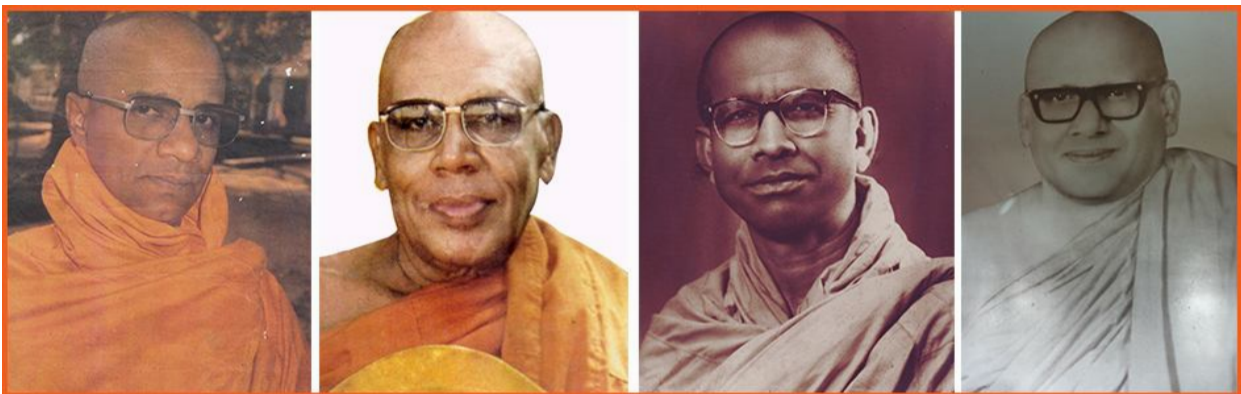


JVP insurgency II: death strikes 724 bhikkus
Posted on August 10th, 2015

by Dharman Wickremaratne



After the JVP was proscribed following Black July 1983, the party's strength by early 1987 was based entirely on radical young trade union workers and university students among other youth opposed to Tamil separatism. They were represented by the Janatha Satan Peramuna (People's Militant Front) which was formed at market complex, Dematagoda on June 8, 1986. The Mawbima Surakeemay Viyaparaya (Movement for the Protection of the Motherland) was launched at Patanagara Vihara, Dematagoda on July 26, 1986 to oppose proposals for provincial councils. During the second insurgency JVP began to rely more on radical bhikkus after Politburo member D.M. Ananda took over the bhikku section in February 1986. By that time he was JVP Political Secretary in the Western and Sabaragamuwa Provinces and was also leading the students' women's and bhikku fronts of the party. He became the JVP's unofficial leader at the end of the second insurgency.

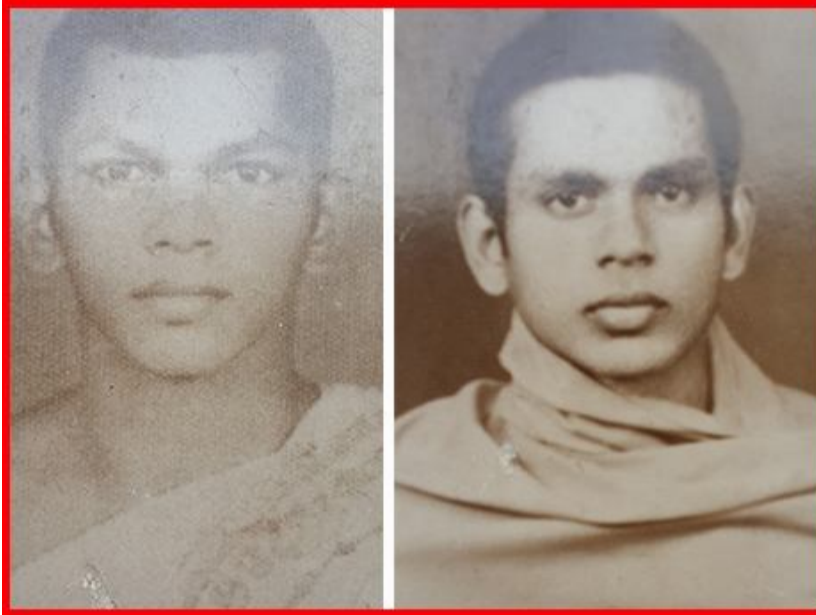


[Some of the chief Buddhist monks among 41 bhikkus the JVP assassinated \(from left\): \(1\) Ven. Poddaramulle Pemaloka Chief Sanghanayake of Thotamuna, Kalutara \(2\) well-known preacher Ven Kotikawatte Saddhatissa, \(3\) Ven. Welthota Pannadassi of Matara and Ven. Beligalle Mahinda, Chief Incumbent of Purana Viharaya, Middeniya.](#)

Born at Wariyapola in 1954 Dissanayake Mudiyanselage Nandasena alias D.M. Ananda was the father of one child. An arts graduate of the Peradeniya University in 1980 he was at one time a

Buddhist monk by the name of Ven. Narada. His activities in the JVP bhikku section were coordinated by Upali Gamage alias Mahanama an activist in the party's cultural section. A former bhikku by the name of Ven. Premananda of the Peradeniya University's Arts Faculty, Gamage later disrobed and became a full time JVP activist.

By the time of the JVP's second insurgency its all organisations were under party leader Rohana Wijeweera and the Politburo which was directly responsible for propaganda, finance, educational, armed operations (Deshapremi Janatha Vyapaaraya), workers, youth, women, students and bhikkus who were involved with the party. The Politburo monitored the activities of 19 districts in the Uva, Eastern, Southern, Western, Sabaragamuwa, Central and North-Central Provinces under the JVP's Central Committee.



Two of the 681 bhikkus killed by the Government's official and unofficial armed groups (from left): Ven. Ransegoda Dhammaloka and Ven. Walallawita Chandrasiri

JVP bhikkus organized themselves via the Socialist Bhikku Union. Even during the first insurgency of April 1971 the JVP was able to address a considerable number of bhikkus. The number of bhikkus killed during that insurrection was nearly 50 while hundreds were arrested. The Socialist Bhikku Union worked at national committee, district committee and electoral levels and by 1987 their activists numbered nearly 524. In general about 750 bhikkus countrywide extended their support while thousands of other bhikkus indirectly supported the JVP. Before the party was banned in 1983, about 550 bhikkus participated in that year's May Day rally under the banner of the Socialist Bhikku Union.

By 1986 there were 8,582 temples which had 14,681 fully ordained monks, according to Government statistics. The number of novice monks was 16,741. All these bhikkus numbering 31,422 belonged to 32 recognized chapters under Sri Lanka's three main Buddhist Sects.



Fr. Michael Paul Rodrigo of 'Subasetha' Buttala and Pastor Lionel Jayasinghe of Lanka Dewa Sabhawa, Tissamaharama

By the time of the second JVP insurgency the Socialist Bhikku Union was a clandestine organisation. It became affiliated to the Deshapremi Janatha Vyapaaraya under the name Kudapola Balaklava (in memory of Ven. Kudapola executed by the British during the Matale rebellion of 1848). The overt activities of JVP bhikkus during 1985 to 1989 were confined to the Manawa Hithawaadi Bhikku Sangamaya (formed at Kelaniya University after the 1983 JVP proscription) and the Inter University Bhikku Federation formed at the Kelaniya University on March 4, 1985.

These bhikkus had many organisational and strategical advantages in working closely with JVP activists in the second insurgency. Bhikkus who were graduates had become a kind of intellectual class in society. During this period these bhikkus played a leading role in the cultural and human rights areas. The Sinhala monthly 'Vinivida' which the Manawa Hithawaadi Bhikku Sangamaya launched became very popular during 1987-88 and on one occasion 62,000 copies of a single issue were sold.



Grief stricken patrons after the assassination on August 29, 1989 of Ven. Pituwala Dharmakeerthi alias Lenin Haamuduruwo who was one of the leading bhikkus behind the Mawbima Surakeemay Vyapaaraya (Movement for the Protection of the Motherland)

The bhikkus who gave leadership to the JVP's Socialist Bhikku Union towards the end of 1980 were the Ven. Balaharuwe Soma Convener of the Inter University Bhikku Federation, Ven. Tharaperiye Rathanaajothi Secretary of the Deshapremi Students Movement, Ven. Egodabedde Gunasiri of the Manawa Hithawaadi Bhikku Sangamaya and the Ven. Thalokolawewa Chandraratna, President of the Eksath Bhikku Sangamaya.

Born in Balaharuwa, Matara Ven. Soma was a second year arts student of the Kelaniya University. Ven. Tharaperiye Rathanaajothi, also born in Matara, was a second year student of the Kelaniya University.

Among the other Socialist Bhikku Union leaders were Ven. Mangala and Ven. Ananda of the Colombo University and Ven. Uduwela Dhammajothi of the Kelaniya University. The security forces killed several activists of the Socialist Bhikku Union. The victims included Ven. Gunasiri of Badulla whose body was found in Badulla. Another monk, Ven. Sapugolle Indrasiri swam to safety by jumping into a river when he was about to be executed near the big bridge on No.5 road following his arrest at Kurunegala.



Left: Ven.

Beruwala Sobhitha and Ven. Piyarathana of the Kawududoowa Temple, Wadduwa standing near the body of the Ven. Pohoddaramulle Pemaloka kept at the Kalutara Town Hall on December 21, 1988 Right: The body of Rev. Lionel Jayasinghe kept at the Debaawewa Church for the public to pay their last respects.

Before the end of the second insurgency Ven. Thalakolawewa Chandraratana, a Socialist Bhikku Union leader after being arrested at Ratnapura in October 1989 appealed to JVP university students and militant bhikkus over TV to surrender to the Government. Later, pardoned by the Premadasa Government he was able to go Japan where he disrobed. After his mother passed away he attended her 'pinkama' in Sri Lanka. He is a father of two children today. He was born in Nikaweratiya as the son of a farmer.

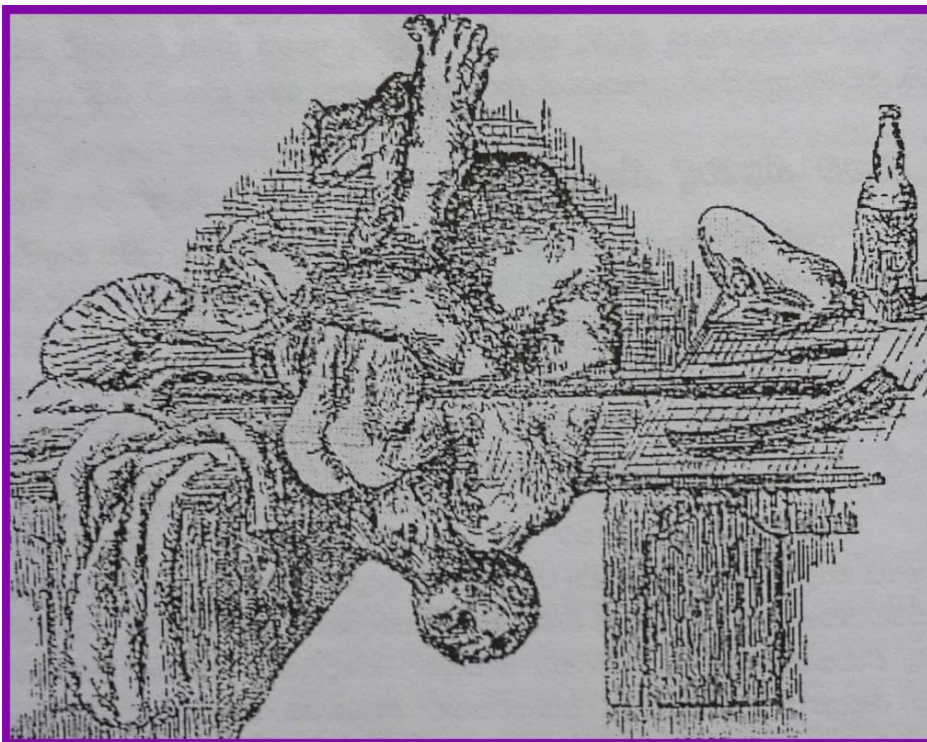
After the second JVP insurgency was crushed 12 surviving bhikkus of Socialist Bhikku Union's National Committee met at the Kehelwathugoda Temple, Yakkala on December 26 and 27, 1989. On the 27th at 11.00 p.m. a police team led by HQI Gampaha Gamini Silva came to the temple and arrested 11 bhikkus. One of them escaped and waited in hiding for two days in the Attanagalu Oya. Thereafter in the morning of December 29 he tried to commit suicide by jumping before an oncoming train near the Daralau Oya railway station between Veyangoda and Gampaha but was saved by villagers who sent him safely to his hometown. All other the bhikkus taken into custody – except four – were later released. It is said that the four had been subsequently killed.



JVP Politburo member D.M. Ananda who was in charge of the party's bhikku section, Upali Gamage alias Mahanama of the JVP's Culture Section, Ven. Tharaperiye Rathanajothi Secretary of the Deshapremi Student Movement and Ven. Balaharuwe Soma, Convener of the Inter University Students Council. Ananda and Mahanama who had already disrobed while Rathanajothi and Balaharuwe Soma disrobed and sought asylum in Japan and France after the insurgency was crushed

Among those released were Balaharuwe Soma, Egodabedde Gunasiri and Tharaperiye Rathanajothi. This writer saw Balaharuwe Soma at Horawapathana on December 29th at 2.00 p.m. Later he disrobed and went to France. Today he is a father of three. He first came into prominence when he led the successful struggle demanding a hostel for 540 university bhikkus and occupied the university building on March 4, 1987. It was also the beginning of the Inter University Students Federation.

Tharaperiye Rathanajothi now lives in Japan after disrobing. This writer met Egodabedde Gunasiri by chance inside a Thai airlines plane which was about to take off on January 23, 1990. After arriving in Thailand to attend an environmental seminar organised by UN Environmental Programme I met Gunasiri's request to locate for him Thai Buddhist leader Sulak Sivaraksha's residence where he (Gunasiri) was going to stay temporarily. Later he disrobed and now lives in Australia. He is the father of two children.



A sketch of how bhikkus were tortured by the 'Dharmachakra' method.

Ven.Pituwala Dhammakeerthi – a strong JVP Socialist Bhikku Union activist – was popularly called Lenin Haamuduruwo. A graduate who lost his job in the July 1980 General Strike, he was brutally killed after being abducted on August 29, 1989. Another bhikku activist was Ven. Hikkaduwe Gunasiri, a third year student of the Jayawardenapura University and President of the University Bhikku Union. He was residing at Kotiyagala Kanda in the Agalawatte Electorate when the Mirihana Police arrested him and detained him at the Pelawatte and Boossa camps. Later he disrobed and became a Pradeshiya Sabha member under the name Hikkaduwe Dasanayake. Today he is a teacher.



A sketch of how bhikkus were tortured after they were taken into custody

On September 7, 1988 security forces raided Gothami Vihara and seized all property belonging to the Manawa Hithawadi bhikku organisation. Eight bhikkus were arrested and questioned at length but were subsequently released following a request the UK-based Amnesty International made to the Sri Lanka Government. The then Colombo Mayor Ratnasiri Rajapaksa coordinated these activities. It was Ven. Undugoda Soratha who published the journal 'Vinivida' on the JVP's behalf assisted by several others including Ven. Dikwelle Soratha, an undergraduate of the Jayewardenepura University. The artist was Bandara. Ven. Kongasdeniye Ananda who was at one time 'Vinivida' Associate Editor fled to France to escape the reign of terror. Ven. Mandawala Pannawansa now resides in the USA. Ven. Bhatiyagammana Uttarananda currently leads a meditative life at a hermitage in Nikaweratiya.

The Socialist Bhikku Union's central publication was 'Vimukti Maga' (Path to Liberation) edited supposedly by Ven. Dharmakeerthi. But the actual and unseen editor was Professor W.S. Karunaratne. The 'liberation sermons' which the union prepared became very popular. These were based on Seehanada Sutra, Kootadhantha Sutra and Anganna Sutra which Bhikku Union's members used in a subtle way to popularize the JVP ideology. (The lay patrons of a Buddhist Temple in Kegalle had complained to the police against one of these so-called liberation sermons).



Sri Lanka. Monk seated on the ground surrounded by tear gas. Pettah bus stand, Colombo, 28th July 1987. Protest at the signing of the Indo Lanka Peace Accord between India and Sri Lanka.

Samanera Bhikku, Ven. Kegalle Vimala the only person who fearlessly continued his protest during the attacks on 20,000 demonstrating against the Indo-Lanka Accord on July 28, 1987

Workshops for this purpose were held at seven places including the Paragoda Raja Maha Vihara. The credit for this goes primarily to Ven. Dr. Wilegoda Ariyadeva who worked for the party from 1969 to 1983 when the JVP was banned. (Until recently he worked with several people's organizations)

The country began heading towards a state of anarchy as a result of the UNP Government's brutal repressive measures versus JVP terrorism. The reign of terror led to the government replacing normal law with the law of the jungle. Progressive bhikkus including Socialist Bhikkus Union members were hunted down. Some of the arrested monks were killed and their bodies burnt on tyre pyres. The 'Dharma Chakra' torture method was specially meant for bhikkus. Many were tortured to death. Some bhikkus, no longer able to bear the repression, disrobed.



Ven.

Dr. Wilegoda Ariyadewa in a discussion with bhikku activists of the Kelaniya University in late 1990 on those who were killed and who dissappeared after the defeat of the second insurgency.

What the JVP did was not to get bhikkus to study the Buddha Dhamma in depth for social progress but to use bhikkus for political purposes to spread the party's ideology among the people. It led to disastrous consequences. The aim of the Bhikku Union members was to build a new society but the activities of the JVP's armed wing turned everything upside down.

Eventually the JVP killed not only those who opposed the party but also bhikkus who supported the UNP and also other Left parties. During the second insurgency, from 1986 to 1990 the JVP's armed wing, the Deshapremi Janatha Vyapaaraya killed 41 Buddhist monks and two Christian priests. The number of Buddhist monks killed by the Government's official and unofficial armed groups was 681. Accordingly the total number of members of the clergy killed during the JVP's second insurgency was 724 out of which 722 were bhikkus.



From left: University Bhikku

Leaders Ven. Athureliye Rathana (Peradeniya) Ambalangoda Jayantha Jayamuni who was a JVP assistant leader Badulla during the 1971 insurgency and later joined the Agrcultural Department Peradeniya and Ven. Kalupahana Piyarathana (Kelaniya) after a discussion on the need for a spiritually guided-indigenous political movement.

Among the chief monks the JVP killed were Venerable Pohoddaramulle Pemaloka, Chef Sanghanayake of Thotamuna, Kalutara, well-known preacher Ven. Kotikawatte Saddhatissa, Ven. Welthota Pannadassi of Matara and Ven. Beligalle Mahinda, Chief Incumbent of the Purana Vihara Middeniya.

Pohoddaramulle Pemaloka, Adviser to the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party, was a bhikku who had fought strongly against the water tax and the sale of lands in Wellassa to foreigners. A graduate of the Jayewardenepura University he lost his teaching job at Kalutara Maha Vidyalaya when he participated in the general strike of July 1980.

Having entered LSSP politics with Dr. N.M. Perera and Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, he became one of the main speakers supporting SLFP Candidate Hector Kobbekaduwa during the Presidential Election campaigns of 1982.

Ven Pemaloka supported the Indo-Lanka Accord and was injured when a bomb was thrown at Mahajana Party meeting at Kosgas Handiya. On December 18, 1988 at 7.30 p.m. two insurgents who entered the vihara he was staying at Thalpitiya, Wadduwa shot him on the face and stomach and fled. Ven. Waskaduwe Wimalajeewa, Ven. Pohoddaramulle Nandaloka and Ven. Thalpitiye Wimalasara who in the temple at the time rushed the victim to hospital but he was found dead on admission. The cermation was done in the presence of a massive crowd at the Kalutara Municipal Grounds after being kept at the Kalutara Town Hall on December 21, 1988 for the public to pay their last respects. Since the shooting had disfigured his face, the upper part of the body was covered.

In the same year the Deshapremi Janatha Vyapaaraya (DJV) killed Ven. Walambagama Pannasara, Chief Incumbent of the Dharmashrama Vihara, Habarakada, who was also Principal of the Bodhiraja Vihara Dhamma School, Panagoda Army Camp, for ignoring the DJV order not to conduct Dhamma classes for children of military personnel. The insurgents even banned his

cremation and the body was kept at the Dharma Hall, Panagoda. On the same day Ariyaratne, a well-known physician of Habarakada was also killed.

During this time, the DJV had given orders on how to perform the last rites of its victims. No funeral ceremonies were allowed and only a maximum two bhikkus were permitted to perform the religious rites. Pall-bearers were allowed to raise the coffin not more than one foot above the ground. Not more than 10 persons were allowed to attend the funeral. Those who ignored these orders were severely punished.

Well-known preacher and pro-UNP bhikku, the Ven. Kotikawatte Saddhatissa was killed inside his temple on August 3, 1989. The Ven. Welthota Pannadassi of Matara was killed at the Kithalagamawa Vihara on August 3, 1989. Ven. Beligalle Mahinda, Chief Incumbent of the Middeniya Purana Vihara was killed on May 28, 1989. The reason for his murder was his refusal to chant seth pirth for a group which was demonstrating against the Provincial Councils Bill. Ven. Reddagoda Saranankara who participated in farmers' struggles in Kurunegala was also killed.

Other bhikkus the JVP killed included Ven. Kumbagoda Gnanaoka of Mihintale Vihara (July 11, 1987), Ven. Marmbe Somarathana (December 31, 1988), Ven. Upali of Angunukolapelessa (January 7, 1989), Ven. Hemaloka Nandimithra of Pallama Vihara (August 4, 1989), Ven. Pannatissa of Athurugiriya Vihara (August 13, 1989), Ven. Pannasara of Soragune Raja Maha Vihara (August 20, 1989), Ven. Kirawanagama Pannarama (August 21, 1989), Ven. Pelpola Dharmapala of Jayasumanarama (September 4, 1989), Ven. Muditha of Sudarshanaramaya (Sept.4, 1989), Kahawa Wimalasiri of Bodirajaramaya (Sept.9, 1989) and Ven. Mahanuvara Dhammarakkhitha of Bambaragala Vihara (September 18, 1989)

The JVP also killed two Catholic / Christian Priests – Fr. Michael Rodrigo of Subaseth Gedera, Alukawila, Buttala, Kataragama and Pastor. P. Lionel Jayasinghe of the Lanka Deva Sabhawa of Tissamaharama.

Fr.. Rorigo was killed on November 10, 1987 at 7.30 p.m. for working with groups accused of supporting Tamil separatism. The DJV publication 'Wedi Handa' (Gun Fire) claimed responsibility for his death. A past pupil of St.Peter's College Bambalapitiya, Fr. Rodrigo was known for his work in improving child education and among farmers. He was also accused of being involved in the Kurunegala-based Janatha Sangamaya.

Pastor Jayasinghe was killed on March 25, 1988 at 8.45 p.m. His wife was Lalani and his son Shamil Emmanuel was only 11 months old when the murder occurred. Started in 1914 the Lanka Dev Sabhawa has 502 branches countrywide. One of its pioneers was Pastor Colton Wickremaratne. In Tissamaharama, the Deva Sabhawa has 1500 members while the number of followers in the whole of Hambantota District is nearly 5000.

Pastor Jayasinghe came to the vilage of Sedawatte, Tissamaharama in 1980 and engaged in many community activities with the villagers. The insurgents shot him after entering the house by opening the door. When the seriously injured victim managed to enter his room and sit the two assailants stabbed on the chest and again shot him on the face. He was dead on admission to the Tissamaharama Hospital. The body was buried in the General Cemetery, Tissamaharama on March 28, 1988.

On February 9, 1989 the JVP seized some weapons after attacking the police post at the Sri Dalada Maligawa, Kandy. Two insurgents were killed and three civilians were seriously injured during the attack, which was carried out by 11 rebels. They included five women, Matale Ganga, Nadeeka, Mangalika Lilalnthi and Weerasinghe. The operation was planned by JVP Central

Committee Member Upali Jayaweera alias Manel Mahattaya. Some of the attackers who escaped were later arrested. Two of them had been trained in a jungle hideout in Meemure, Matale.

As long as people remain religious it is not possible to prevent them from coming under the influence of members of the clergy. As long as the latter maintain close relations with the public it is also impossible to prevent them from being drawn into political movements. During the JVP's second insurgency the first victims were pro-Government Bhikkus whom the JVP killed. Eventually it boomeranged and caused the deaths by the Premadasa Government's official and unofficial armed groups of not only pro-JVP bhikkus but also other bhikkus who supported progressive movements. It was a great tragedy. (The writer is a senior journalist who could be reached at ejournalists@gmail.com)

4 Responses to “JVP insurgency II: death strikes 724 bhikkus”

1.  *Christie Says:*

[August 10th, 2015 at 4:51 am](#)

ජාතික විමුක්ති පෙරමුණ කියන්නේ ඉන්දියානු ජඩ්සින්ගේ මුදලින් හදා වඩා කවා පොවා ගෙනගිය විශාපාරයකි. ඉන්දියානු ජඩ්සෝ සින්හලයින් ලවා සින්හලයින් මරවා සින්හල මරුවන් සින්හලයින් ලවා මරුවේය. මනීමරුවන්ගෙන් වැඩිදෙනෙක් සින්හල හොදින් කතා කලහැකි ඉන්දියානු පරපෝෂිතයෝය. අද වන්ද විශාපරයේ විමිපකයාට පස්සේ වැඩියම සල්ලි විසිකරන්නේ මුත්ය. ඉන්දියානු ජඩ්සින්ගේ සල්ලි.

2.  *Susantha Wijesinghe Says:*

[August 10th, 2015 at 9:42 am](#)

JVP BUDDHIST PRIESTS KILLED BUDDHIST PRIESTS. THEY ARE NOW PARLIAMENTARIANS. WHAT A BUDDHIST COUNTRY THIS IS EH ? I HAVE SEEN MANY BODIES OF SINHALA BUDDHIST YOUTH BURNING ON TYRES ON THE KATUGASTOTA WATTEGAMA ROAD. THESE SAME JVP KILLERS NOW WANT TO GET INTO PARLIAMENT, AND GOVERN THE COUNTRY. RAN ILL IS SO BANKRUPT, HE WILL CUDDLE A PROSTITUTE IN PUBLIC.

3.  *Fran Diaz Says:*

[August 10th, 2015 at 12:40 pm](#)

Mr Wickremaratne has given a heart rending account of death, extreme anger & despair of the Sinhala youth from the 1983 time onwards.

We have to think of the circumstances of those times. Colonisation of some 500 yrs had left behind vast frustrations among local people, particularly the youth. The education system was not really geared toward employment either. Arts Faculty graduates especially found it hard to get employment outside the State sector. I hope someone writes extensively of the socio-economic conditions of Lanka in those times.

I am also puzzled as to why TALKS were never held by the govts of those times with the JVP leaders, both in 1971 & late 1980s.

We also note that the late 1980s JVP insurgency started due to the Tamil leaders separatist

demands. Isn't Tamil leaders Separatism really the crux of the problem, even in present day Lanka ?



4. *Fran Diaz* Says:
[August 10th, 2015 at 1:20 pm](#)

Attempting to answer my own question re why talks were never held with the JVP :

Probably because it was a Cold War (1946-1991) period that the JVP arose. That is how the Colombo/village divide widened. Even Mrs B's Land Reform Act did not give EMPLOYMENT to the Youth of the country. Also with the Land Reform Act, feudal Buddhist landlords who earlier supported village activities were removed. Also, Colonial Capitalist system imposed on the colonised countries did not help the masses re Employment.

Comments welcome.

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