

Many amongst us seem to be unable to grasp the true importance of human rights. The notion just surfs over our consciousness as something abstract or out there-perhaps in a Platonic world of Universals. Self-appointed patriots of Lanka- especially the humorless types living overseas- who are burdened with the self-delusion of ownership of the island- simply hate anything associated with the human rights discourse. With the run up to the Geneva meeting of the UN Human Rights Council in March this year government leaders are nervous about the whole idea. Yet, leaving specific sensitive situations apart, the notion of human rights or "HR," is simply about the basic dignity of you and me as individuals. Let's ask ourselves

tainly are. Particularly after George Bush's "war on terror," America and its allies were open to such allegations. The US naval base at Guantanamo Bay was the scene of torture. The invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan raised our eyebrows. Hopefully, all this would soon be forgotten as a reaction to the grave Nine Eleven threat to the survival of the United States of America and to European civilization.

Probably one line of defense for the Sri Lanka government may be to make an equal and convincing claim of the threat by the LTTE to the survival of the population-both Sinhalese and Tamil. This is better than a stupid claim to "zero casualties." The gov-

indicted Pinochet for torturing Chileans in Chile and Britain would not have extradited him back to Chile to face trial.

As way back as the year 1215 the world had the famous British Magna Carta or the Bill of human rights. Even further back in ancient times the major religions embodied the core values that underpin modern human rights consciousness, namely "the dignity of the human being, their equality of fundamen-



ness may be said to have originated and evolved during the half century after the fall of Hitler's Third Reich. Atrocities still take place but the hard fact is that the need for human rights protection has been accepted as top priority by the supreme world body-the United Nations. A whole and huge gamut of laws and conventions at both the international and regional levels have grown and proliferated. The Universal Declaration of Human rights and related covenants are merely the core of a vast corpus of international law. The latter includes, for example, widely ratified treaties on the rights of children, of women, of refugees, racial discrimination, genocide and torture. There are also a whole heap of mechanisms set in motion for implementation of HR. These include reporting mechanisms, monitoring devices, public hearings, special mediation, investigative bodies, complaint procedures, economic sanctions at bilateral and multilateral levels and so on right up to the option of military intervention.

All this is, however, still work-in-progress. Violations continue to erupt as we live in an imperfect world. Yet, the global revolution in human rights consciousness is unstoppable and all humanity must fall within its catch-all scope sooner or later. Technology has endowed man with devices for the rapid spread and dissemination of information and for their education and enrichment. The revolution of consciousness will ride on the growing power of technology. It ought to be so. For you and I deserve to live as free individuals, enjoying this only life of ours in dignity, security and comfort. Sans such basic assurances human life would "nasty, brutish and short." We cannot allow plastic dictators to govern our lives for their advantage. What right has one man or a coterie to hold a population under their grip with the force of acquired arms? Individuals must decide their fate by being able to freely elect governments and overthrow the latter when they get rotten.

HUMAN RIGHTS CONSCIOUSNESS IS GRIPPING THE WORLD



tal worth, their need to live in the community with respect and empathy from others," their need for individual liberty, security of life and so on. Thus the core values have been all along part of humanity's cultural mores. The sharp difference, however, is that in the past most cultures saw such values typically as duties whereas today we perceive them as rights. These cultures "emphasized the community more than individuals and enforced them more by authoritarian compulsion or by social

the question: 'shouldn't we be allowed to live in dignity, in security and without fear'? At this point an abstract concept becomes a live reality.

We are witnessing today a revolution in global consciousness about human rights. By that I mean that pursuing the goal of human rights is essentially a modern phenomenon. Human civilization has no doubt erupted in the past with numerous brutalities and unkind treatment to fellow beings. Slavery was regarded as acceptable and even fashionable among the affluent in the West. Persecuting dissent in religion or politics was normal. Remember the Spanish Inquisition? Beating down Aborigines and hunting them down in the bush was something of a sport in the Australia of the past. Sri Lankan critics of HR are in the habit of citing such instances to scorch the Western powers over the UN rights issue. What is

ernment of Sri Lanka (GOSL) sorely needs a great advocate; it needs to replace Rotweiler attack with that advocacy. Of course, GOSL would have to investigate the alleged incidents and punish those who resorted to criminal acts out of combat necessity. An essential repertoire of the new global consciousness is the laws pertaining to the conduct of war. Those who deliberately violated such laws and shamefully acted in excess must be brought to book by such a GOSL investigation. For example, whoever butchered Prabhakaran's son had engaged in an unforgivable criminal conduct. His son was an innocent youngster who didn't share the father's insanity. The sins of parents cannot fall on kids. In the meantime, the government must reestablish the rule of law, prevent new HR abuses and approach genuine reconciliation without believing that the setting up of army camps in the North could solve the problem of the need for

ethos than by law."

The revolution in global social conscious-

I am not saying that the Western powers are not guilty of HR abuse even today. They certainly are. Particularly after George Bush's "war on terror," America and its allies were open to such allegations. The US naval base at Guantanamo Bay was the scene of torture.

wrong about such a critique is that all those actions had been part of the spirit of the times or the moral zeitgeist of an era. Such behaviors are now rejected as unacceptable and even abhorrent. The line has been drawn between the old era and the new and we have to honor that. Those in power among the diverse human collectives called countries or nations cannot be allowed to continue in such abusive behavior. Human civilization must move ahead.

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Tamil dignity. Let's get back from our digression to return to the revolution in global consciousness. Had General Pinochet's atrocities occurred just fifty years before they did that would have been ignored. Pinochet wrested power from the elected government of Chile in 1973 and thereafter he engaged in a series of tortures, murders and disappearances of thousands of political opponents. In 1923 there was no torture treaty, no Amnesty International, no genocide covenants, no BBC television. Spanish courts in 1923 would not have

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අවස්ථා ක්‍රීඩාවේ සිල්වෙස්ටර් පසු කුසලානය අතරින් පළමු සේනාරංගී සිටියි.

තරඟයේ දක්ෂතම ක්‍රීඩකයා වශයෙන් සම්මාන ලබාගත්තේ කෙණු 55ක් ලබා ගත් අවස්ථා ක්‍රීඩක පිලේ ආනන්ද ආනන්දයි.

තරඟය සඳහා අනුග්‍රහය දුන්වූ රවී/මල්ලිගා කරවිදුණිය අනුමැතිය සැමටත් ප්‍රධාන අනුග්‍රහය දුන්වූ සන්තප ප්‍රවීණයන් සංවිධානය මණ්ඩලයේ ස්තූතිය ගිවිසෙයි.

