

On the 13th of November the Burmese dictatorship, once again, released Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest. In this way, she had been on and off house arrest for the last twenty years of her life. She was deprived of seeing her dying husband, Aris, and her two children who lived in England. She, however, telephoned her children daily during her house arrest periods. One would have expected to see the marks of this mental and physical torture on her face but observers remarked as she came out that she was still looking utterly peaceful and resplendently beautiful with a yellow flower on her hair. Age simply did not show; nor did her spirit seem weakened when she addressed thousands

that was going on," she said in a speech in Rangoon on 26 August 1988. Inspired by the non-violent campaigns of US civil rights leader Martin Luther King and India's Mahatma Gandhi, she organised rallies and travelled around the country, calling for peaceful democratic reform and free elections.

The army seized power on September 1988 and brutally suppressed the rebels. The military government called national elections in May 1990. Aung San Suu Kyi won a landslide victory winning 329 out of the 485 seats. However, the army junta was not going to let her govern. They refused to hand over power and has

strike one on meeting Ms Suu Kyi. The first is how improbably well-preserved she is. At her press conference on Sunday, a Burmese journalist even asked her for her beauty secrets. Consider how Tony Blair and Barack Obama have been aged by the strains of office. Ms Suu Kyi has faced assassination attempts and separation from her family, and has spent 15 of her past 21 years in jail - and still looks 10 years younger than one born in 1945.

The second thing is her calm, her equanimity. She talked about her detention as someone else might recall a tiresome delay at a fog-bound airport - a minor inconvenience it would be indulgent to make too much of.

"It wasn't all that difficult," she said. "I was in my

By S. Piyasena

"I AM the Parliament today not because of any achievement of my own. I am here because of the services that were rendered to the peasants of the Hambantota District by my father. A judgment debtor engineering within the walls of Welikada Prison. The people of Ruhuna sent him to the state Council and until his death he fought relentlessly against the feudal overlords who were lordling it over in the backwoods from which I come. On his death the only inheritance he left me was the heritage of a name and this little brown shawl I wear round me of kurakkan colour which symbolizes the struggle of the peasantry in Ruhuna against the feudalists and the headmen who were opposing the people at the time"

THE 'LION'

This was how Mr. George Rajapaksa the MP for Mulkirigala opened his speech in Parliament the day he resigned from the post of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

His father the late Mr. D.M. Rajapaksa who was popularly known among Sinhala poets as the "Lion of Ruhuna" was the first non-party member of the State Council to support the Anti-Imperialist struggle.

D.M. was the president of the "Suriya Mal" Movement. In the first year George Rajapaksa was the only student at Royal College who came to school on the 11th of November with a "Suriya Mal" pinned to his shirt.

The father used to visit his son at Royal frequently. His dress - the cloth and the banian - was a big joke to the sophistries of Royalists. George Rajapaksa was then the Captain of the College Cricket eleven. In spite of that his friends used to tease him for his father's dress.

But one day there appeared in the "Ceylon Daily News" a sports feature referring to the cricketers in the State Council. It introduced D.M. Rajapaksa as a great school boy cricketer during his day at Richmond. From that day the Royalists had different ideas of the cloth clad father of their cricket captain.

IN PRISON

D.M. RAJAPAKSA was in prison during the 1936 election. But his supporters carried on the campaign taking young Lakshman and George to the election platforms. He was elected by a majority of 12,000 votes.

Being an active supporter of the LSSP he brought his sons very close to the left movement.

In 1945 D.M. was suddenly taken ill in the State Council building. George Rajapaksa who was in Colombo was summoned to his father's bedside by Mr. W. Dahanayake.

The dying father told his son "George I have not been able to complete my work. I have left nothing for my children except the goodwill of the peo-

THE LADY OF BURMA

Power of the Powerless

of supporters who had gathered outside her house by the lake.

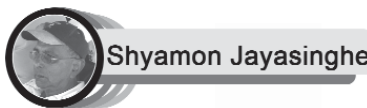
While under house arrest Aung San Suu Kyi had two maids to assist her. She spent her time reading

remained in power ever since. The junta tightened its hold by liquidating the relatively independent arms like the judiciary and the police and by taking absolute control of the media. Does this ring a bell about the 18th Amendment in our country?

own home. What was I going through? I was simply sitting in my house. I've never been one for going out a lot. I listened to music. I like sketching a bit and so on. I'm a very indoors sort of person, if you like, so it was no great hardship."

Then she compared her treatment with those of the estimated 2100 other political prisoners in Burma. "What do you think it would be like for those who have been imprisoned for years and years and years?" she asked."

Aung Sa Suu Kyi is the contemporary international example of peaceful resistance in the face of oppression. In the year she had won the Nobel Prize for Peace committee chairman,



Shyamon Jayasinghe

What the junta cannot control now, however, is the growing network of internet facilities and mobile camera-cum telephone facilities. When a few years ago thousands of gold-

philosophy, politics and economics- the subjects of her learning while at Oxford. She also played the piano. Sometimes she entertained diplomats. There was a twenty-four hour surveillance around her house.

The germ of Aung San Suu Kyi's political career had been set when as a two-year-old child in the year 1947 she saw her father, General Aung San the independence hero of Burma, being assassinated. She went through her schooling and ended up at Oxford University where she met her would-be husband, Aris, who was a scholar in Tibetan culture. She married, had her children and spent the early youthful years in England.

In 1988 Aung San Suu Kyi returned to Rangoon to look after her ailing mother. Burma was then in the throes of political turmoil as thousands of office workers and monks took to the streets demanding democratic reform from the then dictator, General Ne Win. "I could not, as my father's daughter remain indifferent to all

en-robbed Buddhist monks walked the streets in protest pictures SMSs reached the corners of the globe revealing the brutal attack on monks. Some monks were kicked; others were shot. It is to this same dictator that Sri Lanka gave a rare diplomatic welcome whereas all other leaders of the globe have refused to recognize him- with the exception of China and India who are trading with the regime. The party of Buddhist monks, the JHU, laid no objection at this considerable sacrilege. Such is political life!

The recent national elections held was a laughing stock of the world when the junta's political party was manoeuvred to win. It had been a nominal concession to growing local restlessness and global concern. The dictator's election strategy in such circumstance is to mount an election with a veneer of democracy. Aung San Suu Kyi's party, The National League for Democracy rightly boycotted the show.

Aung San Kyi has resumed her peaceful struggle. She is shrewd not to openly offend the junta. She works with hard resolve but shows no harsh attitude toward her enemy leaving responsibility for victory in the hands of her thousands of followers.

Said one news report: "Several things



Francis Sejested, called her "an outstanding example of the power of the powerless".

The Burmese experience reveals the malignancy of dictatorship. In her famous "Freedom from Fear" speech Aung San Suu Kyi said: "It is not power that corrupts but fear; fear of losing. Power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it." She also believes fear spurs many world leaders to lose sight of their purpose. "Government leaders are amazing," Aung San Suu Kyi once said, "so often it seems they are the last to know what the people want."

Sri Lankans- those living inside the country and outside should take a conscious look at the great Lady of Burma- Aung San Suu Kyi. Like a constant light in the night sky this remarkable lady does offer all of us a perpetual light in times like these that trouble the thinking being within us; those who are not used to free thought may remain composed within their chosen prisons.

වම් අකුරට රසික සුරියආරච්චි මහතාගේ ආදරණීය පියාණන්ගේ අනාවය ඡේතුවෙන් "චමා නොවී වම් අකුරට" මෙවර පළ නොවන බව කරුණාවෙන් සලකන්න. සන්නස කාර්ය කණ්ඩායමේ සාහිෂ්‍ය සංවේගය මේ සමග රසික සුරියආරච්චි සොයුරුව පිලිගන්නවමු.