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Mixed Marriages and Nation Building Processes: Sri Lanka and Malaysia

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Abstract

Although the diversity and richness of the Asia-Pacific region affirms the universality, interdependency and inalienability of all its capacities to contribute to the development and well being of their societies, the nation-building process in the region has led to some groups being rendered stateless, refugees, internally displaced people and migrants, and being discriminated on the basis of their cultures, languages and religions. This paper traces the increasing gendered nature of nationalism, nation building and citizenship in South Asia and how the role of women have become central in strict and exclusionist state regulations and policies around migration and citizenship. What began in the colonial period as a foisted process of classification and categorisation has been transformed in the post-colonial period into a locally constructed process of re-affirmation of their own structures of ethnicity, culture and economic development in which women are 'the guardians' of the nation. The paper argues that the problems raised by 'inter-cultural, inter-religious, multi-lingual and inter-racial marriages' or 'mixed marriages' not only reveal the intricacies and complexities of nation-building processes in the region, but also raise issues concerning the goal of 'unity in diversity', as regulations regarding intermarriage may affect basic human rights of the nationals of a country. It stresses that boundaries and constraints are not only imposed by the state, but informally by the people through traditions and attitudes, which views intermarriage as a form of cultural subversion, yet whose influences are being threatened by Westernisation, particularly among the youth.

Résumé

Bien que la diversité et la richesse affichée par la région du Pacifique asiatique renvoient aux notions d'universalité, d'interdépendance et au caractère inaliénable de sa capacité à contribuer au développement et au bien-être de ses sociétés, le processus de construction de la nation, lui, a provoqué des situations où certains groupes sont devenus apatrides, réduits à des conditions de réfugiés, de déplacés, de migrants à l'intérieur même d'un pays; d'autres souffrent de discrimination du fait de leur culture, de leur langue ou de

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leur religion. Cette communication décrit la coloration «genre» de plus en plus marquée caractérisant le mouvement de nationalisme, ainsi que le processus de construction de la nation et la citoyenneté dans le Sud de l'Asie, et le rôle central joué par les femmes dans le cadre des régulations et politiques étatiques strictes et exclusionnistes portant sur la migration et la citoyenneté. Le processus forcé de classification et de catégorisation entamé pendant la période coloniale s'est transformé au cours de la période post-coloniale en un processus local de réaffirmation des structures locales d'ethnicité, de culture et de développement économique au sein desquelles les femmes jouent un rôle de «gardiennes». Cette communication nous révèle que les problèmes soulevés par les «mariages inter-culturels, inter-religieux, multilinguistiques et interracialisés» encore appelés «mariages mixtes» sont une indication des subtilités et complexités du processus de construction de la nation dans cette région ; elle aborde également les questions liées au principe «d'unité dans la diversité», car les réglementations relatives aux mariages mixtes peuvent avoir une incidence sur les droits humains fondamentaux des ressortissants d'un pays donné. Cette contribution précise également que les limites et contraintes ne sont pas uniquement imposées par un pays, mais sont également dictées de manière informelle par les traditions et comportements, considérant les mariages mixtes comme une sorte d'«anomalie culturelle»; cependant, ces traditions sont actuellement remises en cause par l'occidentalisation des jeunes de cette région.

Nation-building, though not possible without state-building, is viewed as a cultural or psychological aspect of political development. It is defined as a process through which people transfer their petty commitments and loyalties from groups, tribes, villages, regions on petty principalities to a larger single national system.¹

The Declaration of Asian and Pacific Non-Governmental Organisations in preparation for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances, reaffirms the universality, indivisibility, interdependency and inalienability of all human rights irrespective of distinctions of any kind. It recognises that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and have the capacity to contribute constructively to the development and well being of their societies. 'All human societies, including those of the Asia-Pacific Region are based on shared values of tolerance, solidarity and pluralism'.²

The Declaration continues to highlight the issue that 'the Asia-Pacific Region is rich with a diversity of cultures, languages, religions and peoples. However the nation-building process in the region has resulted in some groups being rendered stateless, refugees, internally displaced people and migrants, and being discriminated on the basis of their cultures, languages and religions'. South Asia, indeed, is a region immersed in permanent political tension, due mainly to the conflict existing between India and Pakistan. This tension has made it almost impossible to open borders and build up foreign relations based on mutual trust. At the same time there is a lack of solidarity and tolerance among the different communities based on ethnic or religious fundamentalism. For the ones—the outsiders—who want to become a member of a community this can be a process that goes beyond the

formalities. It is an experience which is deeply rooted in the attitudes of human beings and how these are also influenced by gender issues.

'If this kind of nationalism in its fetish for group purity, territorial exclusivity and spatial boundary, is opposed to the very concept of cosmopolitanism, that makes those boundaries porous and carries the imperative to register the moral and cultural existence of non-citizens... what is the backlash suffered by women who embark on such a project?', asks Neloufer de Mel, Sri Lanka feminist writer.³ For women, in fact, it is influenced by their race, economic situation, behaviour, motherhood and dress code. Men may be only affected by race or economic discrimination.

About Numbers and Races

Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake in her article 'Bi-polar Ethnic Identity in Post Colonial Sri Lanka',⁴ argues that the 'logical classification and enumeration of the peoples of the colony was a necessary aspect of the colonial mission civilatrice, which was "to educate the masses in the ways of the civilized men"'. Rajasingham-Senanayake refers to the importance of the Census as an important mechanism in order to implement this strategy. Years before, letters and books written on Ceylon by foreign visitors referred to it as an island inhabited by different races. Captain Percival, quoted by Rajasingham-Senanayake, mentioned European, Cingalese, Malabars, Travancorins, Malays, Hindoos, Gentoos, Chinese, Persians, Arabians, Turks, Maldivians, Javians, Africans, Cafrees and Buganese living on the island, each of whom with their own language and traditions. In 1835 the population was counted under the terms 'whites', 'free blacks', 'slaves', and 'aliens and resident strangers'. In 1871 for the first time the term 'race' appeared along with nationality. Some 78 nationalities and 24 races were recorded in Ceylon. By 1881, identities were considered in terms of race-communal differences. The Census held at that time only recorded 8 races: Europeans, Singhalese, Tamils, Moors, Malays, and Veddhas (aboriginals).

During the post-colonial period the new nations entered a process of re-affirmation of their own structures of ethnicity, culture and economic development. This process was constructed on the basis of a 'swadeshi' (made locally) approach in opposition to a 'videshi' (foreign made) perspective. Following this tendency, women played an important role as 'the guardians' of the nation. It is mainly because of the contribution of the women's movement and the feminist scholars that the issue of the gendered nature of nationalism, nation building and citizenship has been highlighted.

Women have been basically seen as mothers who are the symbols of culture, tradition and the 'honour of a nation'. This approach has been used as a justification when citizenship and immigration issues were considered, with qualifying criteria based on the father's line. The denial of citizenship to male foreign spouses or the difficulties men could face, can be taken in contrast to the treatment female foreign spouses undergo when applying for citizenship or residence visas.

In the case of Sri Lanka, this discriminatory approach was justified—until recently—by the Controller of Immigration and Emigration. The justification was given that Sri Lankan women

have to be protected from foreign men who may use marriage as a cover-up to apply for citizenship, or who may indulge in indecent sexual behaviour. Another underlying reason for the approach was to prevent the high numbers of Indians and Pakistanis being able to take advantage of more open regulations.⁵

The relation among marriage, immigration and citizenship is a 'grey' area where the private sphere interacts with the public sphere, thus making the establishment of boundaries difficult. A lack of statistics and the absence of clear and transparent policies regarding immigration constitute a problem.

Immigration laws have tended to become tighter in recent times for many reasons, and not only to tackle issues like illegal immigrants or the large numbers of immigrant workers. This trend affected the situation of those who legitimately want to live in a different country because of marriage: the case of 'foreign spouses'. Ratna Kapur, a feminist from India, when commenting on the issue of 'alien marriages', recalls the recent case of the Danish Alien's Act 2000. Kapur says that under this Act 'alien marriages' were assumed to be different and 'suspicious'. She argued that measures like this do not contribute to empower women but rather to stigmatise mixed marriages.⁶

One of the important issues to be raised, as Kapur mentions, is that existing policy 'sets up a second tier of marriage, where "alien" marriages are assumed to be different and suspicious and subject to "State scrutiny"'. For example, the Danish Alien's Act requires a person to be 25 years old in order to bring a spouse to Denmark. The European Commission on Racism and Intolerance described these provisions as 'xenophobic and discriminatory', targeting mainly Somalis and Muslims. In fact this kind of regulation also contributes to enforce nationalist feelings that fuel discriminatory attitudes towards 'others'.

The problems raised by 'inter-cultural, inter-religious, multi-lingual and inter-racial marriages' or 'mixed marriages' certainly reveal the intricacies and complexities of nation-building processes in our region. At the same time they raise issues concerning the goal of 'unity in diversity', as regulations regarding intermarriage may affect basic human rights of the nationals of a country.

A classic example of how regulations were drafted against inter-racial marriages is the case of black and white marriages in the United States. Bans against intermarriage in that country arose in the late 1600s. The law banned 'Negroes, mulattos and Indians intermarrying with English or other white women'. Here not only interracial sex but also marriage is targeted. Over the course of the 18th century, all southern states—and many of the north—outlawed all marriages between blacks and whites. In 1967, 0.7 percent of blacks married someone of another race. By 1994 it was 12.1 percent. The 1960 Census recorded 51,000 black-white marriages and now the amount is more than 300,000. Attitudes of the people have changed, especially among the younger ones. The numbers are high, and there are more marriages between whites and non-whites. Among 25 to 34 years old, 52 percent of Native Americans and 40 percent of Asians married outside their race, while 6 percent of African Americans did so. It is shocking to discover that only in 1999 did the state of Alabama vote to repeal its

constitutional prohibition against interracial marriage. This was a full 32 years after the Supreme Court prohibited the ban on the same issue in the state of Virginia.⁷

The Politics of Love

After Independence new nations confronted the need to establish clear immigration criteria. In Sri Lanka, the restrictions have been marked by an attitude of 'legitimate exclusion' rather than an inclusive and open policy regarding aliens. In Malaysia the policy appears to be 'selective'.

Sri Lankan authorities considered that unrestricted immigration would have the effect of limiting economic opportunities for the local population. The Citizenship Act of 1948 and the Indian and Pakistani's Residents (Citizenship) Act of 1949 established strict regulations based mainly on the principle of restriction of immigration. The Citizenship Act provided two types of citizenship: by descent and by registration. An applicant who was the spouse, widow or widower of a citizen of Ceylon by descent, and had one year's residence in Ceylon preceding the date of application, could apply to become a citizen of Ceylon by registration.⁸

The Immigrant and Emigrants Act No. 20 of 1948, still in force, therefore establishes a very clear and strict distinction between citizens and non-citizens of Ceylon. However it specifies that 'no temporary residence permit or permanent residence permit would be refused to spouses and dependent children of citizens of Ceylon...'

Nevertheless there has been a lack of criteria regarding the different kinds of immigration involved. In the case of foreign spouses and children born of these unions, the law has been applied with no alternatives for the residence visa holder despite his/her marital status or the number of years living in the country. There is no permanent residence visa for the foreign spouses or their children. This situation has led to protests against what is clearly a legal bias. It is clear that while a 'tourist or investor is welcomed', a foreign spouse is treated rather harshly in many cases.

In a letter addressed to the President of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka in January 2002, the UN Special Rapporteur for Violence against Women, Dr. Radhika Coomaraswamy, said: 'I have been aware of the problems Sri Lankan women married to foreigners suffer as well as the tribulations faced by foreign women married to Sri Lankan men. Some of these problems are the difficulties to access information on their rights and immigration procedures, the denial of working permits and the temporal character of their visas, which does not reflect their true status. The existence of gender discrimination as well as the violation of their children's rights has become a common feature of their experiences'.

According to the recorded history, intermarriages have existed in Sri Lanka since its early origins. After the arrival of Vijaya, Sinhalese men from the Govi caste⁹ married Veddah women and even gave their daughters to the Veddahs. In contrast, the Tamils followed very strict caste and religious prohibitions and did not mix with Veddahs. Traditions of marriage in both communities have followed caste considerations, and concerns about dowries, the use of trace-connections, and attention to position and occupation. Intermarriage existed in the

Sinhalese ethnic group with Europeans, mainly Portuguese, as well as in the Tamil ethnic group. But mixed marriages constituted a minority of all unions, and in some cases could lead to the social isolation of the couple concerned.

P.E.Pieries, in his book *Ceylon and the Hollanders* mentions the case of a Dutch man named Lanerolle. The King gave him his 'Royal pardon' and appointed him 'Mohotalla'.¹⁰ Later he married one of the ladies of the King's Court. At that time (1760s) only the people born in Europe were classified as 'Europeans'; the children of a European father born in the country were called 'pusties', named 'casties', and classified as 'natives'. They were paid a lower rate than Europeans. The Mestici were the offspring of mixed marriages with Asiatics. The men of all these classes as well as the descendants of free slaves dressed alike; while women wore distinctive costumes.¹¹

Western women came to work and live in India and Sri Lanka during the colonial period. Some of them were pioneers of social and political change. The case of Mary Rutnam, née Irwin, of Canada was one such pioneer, whose 'mixed marriage' evoked considerable social reaction. As a missionary doctor she suffered isolation from her own colleagues and missionaries because of her marriage to a native, Samuel Christmas Kanaga Rutnam, son of a Pastor of the American Mission of Jaffna and a Christian school teacher. Kumari Jayawardena points out that many Burghers (people of European and local origin) in the 19th century had married European women and some Europeans in the colonies had local wives. What was rare was the marriage between European women and Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim men, because it was considered that those marriages cut across all the racial barriers and social conventions of a segregated colonial society, and were badly regarded by the British. Missionary women had to set an example, spread the Gospel, and not cause a scandal by their association with local men. Mary Rutnam was isolated by the missionaries, and although she never spoke about her experience, her husband was very explicit about their situation.¹²

An interesting case to take into consideration was the situation of the Burghers or people of Dutch, German or French origin. This term means 'free citizen, coming from the Dutch term 'Vryburgher'. They adopted English as their language and enjoyed high levels of literacy. They were a small minority and, therefore, their families were very closed and inter-family marriages were encouraged.¹³ Jean Arasanayagam, a Sri Lankan poet, sought an affinity between her roots and her identity as a Christian married to a Hindu husband. She concluded that there is never an equal mixing of diverse inheritances, and that cosmopolitanism is classed and racialised.¹⁴ For those who wish to become part of the 'other' through marriage, this search for a new identity can be affected by the same considerations of class and race, in addition to political privileges.¹⁵

Mixed marriages have not been accepted easily in Sri Lanka among some sectors of the population. S.N. Arsecularatne, a scientist who spent four years in Malaysia, quoting a Sri Lanka interviewed by him states: 'an acre just cost \$55 in 1924 but mother wasn't keen to buy land for the children, fearing their (racial) intermarriage if they decided to remain in Malaya'.¹⁶ On the other hand, Sri Lankans have been migrating to Malaysia over a long period of time. Ceylonese convicts under the Dutch and British administrations were perhaps the earliest immigrants to the Malay Peninsula. Arsecularatne, quoting Eric Pieris, reports that the

Ceylonese emigrants were absorbed by the job market as agriculturists and fishermen, 'intermingled with locals in their kampongs, some married Malay women and even moved elsewhere in Malaya'. These emigrants did very well in business and trade with the result that presently there is a demand for teachers, nurses and medical doctors from Sri Lanka.

The Malays in Ceylon are supposed to have been brought by the Dutch who employed them in the military. However, there are other stories related to their presence earlier than that. These Malays married Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim women and lived mainly in Colombo, Hambantota, Badulla and Nuwara Eliya.¹⁷

Moving Forward

In the year 2001, a move towards an automatic three years visa period was being considered in Malaysia. The proposal was supported by the Ministry of Women and Family Development in order to amend discriminatory laws and allow foreign spouses to stay in the country. Women's Aid Organisation, a Malaysian NGO, raised the issue of discrimination against foreign spouses. 'Even though there is a concern by the Government on foreigners who may be marrying Malaysian citizens mainly for the sake of attaining a green card, the approach to this concern should be free from gender bias. It is unfortunate enough that foreign husbands of Malaysian women are not even granted the eligibility to PR status or citizenship. The operation of current legislation should not promote an unequal standing ground between the husband and the wife within the family'. This proposal has been under study for several months and it is now in the hands of the Ministry of National Unity.¹⁸

Taking into consideration the proposal under consideration in Malaysia and the various problems faced by foreign spouses in Sri Lanka, a group of foreign spouses from western countries thought it was timely to file a petition before the Human Rights Commission, taking into consideration the peace process in Sri Lanka and the proper ambience of tolerance and nation-building that is being promoted. Amendments to the Citizenship Act were presented in Parliament and the Bill was officially passed on March 8th 2003. As a consequence, local women married to foreigners are now entitled to pass their citizenship to their children if they wish. After attaining the age of 22, they will have to opt for one nationality, if there is no possibility of obtaining dual citizenship. Discrimination based on gender has been eradicated.

Another achievement has been the formal approval of a new set of Guidelines regarding Residence Visas to Foreign Spouses. This is considered as a major step towards the recognition of the human rights of foreign spouses of Sri Lankans.

The previous sets of Guidelines clearly gave the impression that all mixed marriages were viewed as suspicious. Currently, after much discussion on the matter, the regulations concerning the cases of 'marriages of convenience' for the sole purpose of obtaining a residence visa constitute an exception and not the rule. Until recently, every year a foreign spouse had to apply for a renewal of the visa along with a letter of consent from the local spouse in order to be able to have the visa extended for one more year. The letter of consent, which also contained an undertaking that the local spouse would be responsible for the foreign spouse, was required irrespective of the duration of their marriage.¹⁹

Under the new Guidelines, the Controller of Immigration and Emigration is able to endorse Residence Visas up to 2 years, and the Minister²⁰ up to five years. The change has also resulted in 'nearly doing away' with the letter of consent and such a letter is not required for those who have been married for a long period. The situation of widows, widowers and divorcees was also very unstable, as after the end of the marriage they were formally required to leave the country due to the automatic termination of their visas. Under the present Guidelines, they can apply for a new visa considering the number of years of residence, the number of children, etc.

The present process of peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka and the interest demonstrated by the officials of the Government in discussing the issues raised by foreign spouses clearly indicate the existence of a more comprehensive attitude to these areas, which constitutes an important part of the nation building process in the country. However, it is necessary to add that the changes that have been introduced have only come about after a long campaign. In addition, it can be argued that they are a necessary consequence of the new economic programmes of the country, the need to attract investors, and more than anything else, the need to bring Sri Lankans living abroad back home. One can conclude that issues of citizenship, immigration and marriage are being currently influenced by economic factors, using even a gendered rationality.

Considering the economic growth of Malaysia and its politics of 'selective inclusion',²¹ doubts may arise whether the development of the economy was the factor that induced the Government to change its attitude. The impression imparted by some officials interviewed is that the 'case by case' approach is preferred so that control can be maintained over who is accepted and who is not.

In relation to the Sri Lankan situation and the present context, however, it is my personal opinion that a positive impetus to nation building has been generated in a society that currently is so polarised.

Those Invisible Boundaries

It is also necessary to explain that boundaries and constraints are not only imposed by the state, but informally by the people through traditions and attitudes. N.D. Wijesekera, in his book *People of Ceylon*, observes that parents often ostracise children who violate rules and traditions regarding marriage partners. He adds that the influence of the West has threatened to undercut all these social institutions and values. Intermarriage could be considered to represent an example of this cultural subversion, and explains the strict regulations adopted when issuing visas to foreign spouses.

A 'Survey of youth attitudes to aspects of culture in Sri Lanka today', conducted during 1997, revealed some interesting features concerning the attitudes of young students (between 16 and 19 years old), attending schools in Colombo and nearby Maharagama. In reaction to the statement 'One must marry within one's race, religion and caste', both male and female students felt no obligation to do so (M: 100 percent, F: 80 percent). Female students appeared to be more concerned about parental approval than the male students.²²

The same pattern of responses appeared in a survey conducted on 'Sri Lankan Youth: Profiles and Perspectives' regarding various topics, including marriage, ethnicity, etc. 'If we first take the issue of arranged marriage which has traditionally been the dominant form of marriage in the country, it is significant that today only 39 percent of the sample youth express their preference for it... The majority of the youth 54 percent have a preference for "love marriage"'²³ The study confirms that young people interviewed in the survey, are not favorable to marriages crossing borders, in the sense of 'ethnic barriers'.²⁴

This study concludes that 'Moving into an area of social and cultural orientations of youth, it is clear that there is a high degree of ethno-linguistic and spatial segregation of youth in most parts of the country. This often breeds ethnocentrism... this is also evident from the strong tendency among youth to find it problematic to locate a marital partner outside one's ethnic group'.

Mixed marriage represents an area that deserves a more serious and comprehensive approach as it reflects deeply the prevailing concepts of 'nation building' in our countries. Prevalent attitudes regarding citizenship applications are still imbued with considerations around nationality and gender. This kind of perspective contrasts with the formal changes included in the 2000 Draft constitution of Sri Lanka.

Article 1.2 of the Draft Constitution presented to the Parliament in 2000 reiterates that the State shall preserve and advance a Sri Lankan Identity, recognizing the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious character of the society. Some of the important aspects included in the Draft are:

1. There shall be one status of citizenship known as 'status of citizen of Sri Lanka'.
2. A citizen of Sri Lanka shall for all purposes be described only as 'a citizen of Sri Lanka' whether such a person became a citizen by descent or by virtue of registration in accordance with the law relating to citizenship.

Malaysia is a country, which is also involved in the creation of a 'Malaysian national identity', where certainly all ethnic groups will have a role to play. Nevertheless there exists the same ambivalence regarding foreign marriages and foreigners applying for citizenship. Foreign women married to locals will obtain citizenship; for foreign men it remains difficult.

Notes

1. See 'Ethnicity and Nation Building in Sri Lanka', Subhash Chandra Nayak, Kalunga Publications, Delhi, India, 2001, p. 35.
2. Representatives of Asian and Pacific NGOs and other national, regional and international civil society organisations met in Teheran during February 18-19 2001 and in Kathmandu during 27-29 April 2001 in preparation for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related intolerances, held in South Africa. See: www.isiswomen.org/campaigns/wcar/declaration2.htm

3. De Mel, Neloufer, 'Women & The Nation's Narrative', 2001, Social Scientists Association, Colombo, Sri Lanka.
4. See *Ethnic Futures: The State and Identity of Politics in Asia*, Sage Publications, 2001, London, pp.109-134.
5. This attitude was reflected when the author and a group of foreign spouses—from Western countries—filed a petition before the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka. The appointment of a new Controller and a change of attitude among Sri Lankan authorities have generated a more sympathetic approach to our cause. However fears of immigration from India and Pakistan still remain. Renuka Senanayake in her article 'The quest for equal treatment', in *Moot Point Legal Review 2000*, states that the rationale for the discriminatory application of administrative discretion is stated by the Controller in a report submitted to the Commission for Elimination of Discrimination and Monitoring of Fundamental Rights in Sri Lanka on 7th March, 1994.
6. Paper presented at the Asia Pacific NGOs meeting held with the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women; Colombo, August 2002.
7. See 'White weddings: The incredible staying power of the laws against interracial marriage', by David Greenberg, <http://slate.msn.com>.
8. See S.U.Kodikara, 'Indo-Ceylon relations since independence', The Ceylon Institute of World Affairs, Colombo, Sri Lanka.
9. The caste dedicated to agricultural occupations.
10. A title referring to a position of Secretary of the Court. It was a high position.
11. P.E.Pieries, *Ceylon and the Hollanders*, Navrand, Lake House, 1995. From 1658 to 1796 Sri Lanka was dominated by the Dutch East India Company, (the Veerenidge Oost Indische Compagnie [VOC]). After the Portuguese the Dutch continued exploiting Sri Lankan resources, especially cinnamon and other spices.
12. See Jayawardena; Kumari, 'Dr.Mary Rutnam, A Canadian pioneer for Women's Rights in Sri Lanka', Social Scientist Association, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1993.
13. Brohier, Deloraine, 'Dr.Alice de Boer and some pioneer Burgher women doctors', Social Scientists Association, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1994.
14. See De Mel, Neloufer, op.cit.pp.162-202.
15. Based on my personal experience when applying for citizenship, some of the foreigners — already Sri Lankan citizens—used to comment that maybe my procedure was taking a long time because of 'not being sponsored'. 'Yours is taking a long time because you have not met the proper person'. In relation to the same experience in Malaysia, some representatives of a Malaysian NGO also stated: 'Everything is different is somebody is sponsoring you or if you are so and so—for the rest it is almost impossible to get it (citizenship)'.

16. S.N.Arsecularatne, *Sinhalese Immigrants in Malaysia and Singapore 1860-1990*. The book includes findings from interviews with generations of Sinhalese immigrants to Malaysia, commenting their attitudes and contributions to the economic development of that country. See p. 58.
17. N.D.Wijesekera, *The people of Ceylon, 1949/1965*, M.D. Gunasena ed., Colombo, Sri Lanka.
18. This was the information given by the High Commissioner for Malaysia in SL to the author.
19. In the case of Malaysia, the visa is authorised for one year and at the moment of authorisation the presence of the local spouse is required.
20. The Minister of the Interior.
21. Malaysia has stated that the country is encouraging 'brilliant Malaysians' to come back, under a package of different facilities including reference to their spouses.
22. Wijeratna, Kamala: 'Youth and Culture—A Survey of youth attitudes to aspects of culture in Sri Lanka today', Paper presented at the Sixth National Convention on Women's Studies, March 1998, Colombo, Sri Lanka.
23. See *Sri Lankan Youth: Challenges and Responses*, S.T.Hettige and Marcus Mayer (eds.), Friederich Ebert Stiftung, July 2002, Sri Lanka.
24. '*Sri Lankan Youth...*', p.39.