Sharp Tongues
Discourses on violence in Udaheenagama, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

My thesis is concerned with the ways in which people from a rural community in Southern Sri Lanka speak about the atrocities of the civil war of the late nineteen-eighties. Idioms which are typically used to speak about domestic violence are re-deployed to refer to political violence. Such discourses are intentionally ambiguous, allowing people to avoid direct presentations of violence in order to safeguard their interlocutors from fear-related illnesses. I compared this discursive style to traditional ritual forms of domestic cleansing which play a role in removing the sickening effects of the surrounding soundscape of violence from the house. Likewise, the careful avoidance of the pronunciation of words that refer to violence prevents the intrusion of a sickening, violent reality into the domestic sphere. Such discursive forms of acoustic cleansing contribute to the post-war social re-organisation of the community into small-scale, bounded social units.

Ambiguous discourses on violence can easily be understood by close family members but leave members of the wider community in relative ignorance and uncertainty, thereby preventing the mobilisation of collective forms of action against enemies. Such discourses on violence thus play a role in the containment of widespread, modernist forms of revenge. These same discursive styles, however, facilitate the integration of violent individuals within the community and contribute to the perpetuation of a cycle of low-intensity violence because they do not lead to collective action against perpetrators.

Many women claim to have become fearless because of the atrocities they have witnessed. They do not suffer from fear-related illnesses, and opt out of many of the traditional cleansing strategies. Non-governmental mental health services for 'war trauma victims', now attract such fearless women and legitimise their position within the community. I explore the possible cultural impact of the discourse on trauma by looking at the way in which it plays a role in a local struggle between these fearless women on the one hand, and women who suffer from fear-related illnesses on the other. The outcome of this struggle is particularly important in view of the role that afflicted - as opposed to fearless - women play in the containment of the cycle of modernist violence.
For Nicholas and Chiara
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- ei
- ch
- dj
- t'
- d'
- n'
- l'
- ng
- nd
- nd'
- mb
- ng
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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

Once in a country there was a raksha', he was very foolish. People lived in houses with two stories. The people too were foolish, the raksha too. The raksha wife is very rich. She was brought to his house from a rich family. The raksha husband was poor, he got his wife because she was rich.

So now there was no rice for lunch. She said 'this man brought me here and said that we would have everything we need, see, there is not even a flower of a banana tree, there is not even a grain of rice in this house, there is nothing'. She asked him to bring food. 'In other homes, even poor households, the husband goes out and picks a handful of green leaves' she said. 'This man, of course, can't do anything like this' she said. 'It would be much better to chop off two hands and two legs and kill' she said. After that they just lived like that.

One day the husband was asleep. He is a real fool. The raksha wife took a knife, and went to lay down on the bed. He was sleeping beside her. She asked the raksha husband 'have you seen how comfortable it is when you just get a touch of the knife?'. 'Oh, no' he said, 'I haven't even seen a knife' he said. What a foolish man. 'I cook with the knife' she said. 'Just a bit, cut a little bit of my body and see' he said. After that, ha ha, she put the knife on the neck. She put it on the neck and cut the neck into two. After that blood was pouring and pouring. After that, what she did was, she dragged it and dropped it into the well.

Then somebody from another house came to fetch water. The piece of head was floating, the body parts were underneath. There was blood on the head. They took some water and went, they did not notice anything. Because they didn't see anything they took water and went home. After that when they were drinking the water, 'look', there were pieces of head. When they were looking (more closely) there was hair too. They went back to the well. And while they were throwing away the water and fetching water, (they said) 'look, one is dead'.

After that they went to several houses and checked. When they went to the houses and checked, they found nothing, not even in a single house. After that they went to the wife's parents house. It was only to that house that they should have gone. They had walked through the whole village. After that the police went to the wife's parents. They were not at home. Then they went to the wife's house. It was when they arrived that the blood was being cleared out. The house was full of blood. Afterwards, while they were looking they realised the raksha husband had died.

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1Dangerous spirit.
The rākṣa died and after having taken the rākṣa's head, they put it on the head of the wife. They put the rākṣa's face on the head of the wife. After that they brought the dress that he was wearing and made the wife dress up in it. After she got dressed they took her into custody. After having taken her into custody they kept beating her.

One day the bars of the prison were not strong enough. She removed the bar and went to the policemen with the bar in her hand and stabbed them to death. After that a police car, and even more police came and killed the lady. The lady died, every day killed and killed people like that. And finally, in the next birth too, she was reborn as a rākṣa. A rākṣa like that one, suffering from the same pain.

Bed time story about a dangerous wife, re-told by a nine year old girl.

1.1. The main field site: Udaheenagama.

Udaheenagama is a pseudonym for a conglomerate of five neighbourhoods in the Akuressa Division of the Matara District in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka (see maps 1 and 2). The Akuressa Division, much like many areas in the Southern Province, is a densely populated area, which some have called a rural slum. 'Villages' are largely defined as administrative units (Grama Niladari Wasama) and are usually comprised of two or three areas, each with its own name and identity which I have tentatively called 'neighbourhoods'. I thus conducted research in five such areas spread over three administrative units: the 'villages' of Ihalagama, Edanduwila and Galkanda (all pseudonyms). At the time of the last population census, in 1993, these three villages together had about three thousand inhabitants. The fieldwork area is demarcated more by geographical boundaries than by any sense of (kin-based) community. These are simply the neighbourhoods located between a forest and a main road. I chose the

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2 At the outset of the fieldwork period I had planned to do an in-depth study of only one neighbourhood. A neighbourhood with a population of about 500 to 700 people seemed large enough for this relatively short term project. Soon enough I came across interesting gossip about other neighbourhoods, or accounts of inter-neighbourhood violence. Moreover, our position as ethnographers within one neighbourhood had become untenable after only a month's fieldwork. There was a fierce competition for our attention which in the end made any kind of meaningful conversation impossible. I then opted for an "inter-neighbourhood" position, in which I was not seen to be closely associated with one neighbourhood or with one temple, but regularly moved from one neighbourhood to the other. I therefore ultimately worked in about five or six neighbourhoods. On the one hand, I am aware that because of this "inter-neighbourhood" position I have been treated with more caution and suspicion than if I had associated myself exclusively with one group. On the other hand taking up this marginal, and "in-between" position was the only way to get rid of the feeling of literally being the hostage of one interest group which would have compromised the project in a number of other ways.

Photo 1: Nine year old narrator with her younger brothers and sisters.
Map 1: Location of research area: Rural community in the Akuressa Division of the Matara District.
Map 2: Udaheenagama neighbourhoods on the hillsides and in the plains.
The altitude lines indicate which neighbourhoods are located on the steep slopes of the hills and form the "remote" parts of Sri Lankan society.
- - - - : Boundary of the division.
II : Temple.
◆ : Location of army camp during the civil war of the late eighties.
pseudonym Udaheenagama, which literally means the hill-garden-village, because I focused on the neighbourhoods on the slopes of steep hills; the last settlements along the road that led into the forest.

I carried out field research for a total of fifteen months. During a three month long pilot-study in 1996 I interviewed primary health care professionals from regional hospitals in the Urubokka Division, the Mulatiyana Division and the Akuressa Division of the Matara District. They put me in contact with ritual specialists who became my initial contacts in the villages. Finally, and for no other reasons than mere chance, a group of ritual specialists from the Bamarabokka neighbourhood in the Udaheenagama area became my main contacts. During more long-term fieldwork in 1997-1998 I thus worked in the Udaheenagama area but I did not live there. For reasons of personal safety I was forced to live in a coastal town, and became a commuter. Occasionally I would spend the night in one of the neighbourhoods and for the first six months I was convinced I would eventually be able to live in the village. Through experience of a high level of ongoing violence it gradually dawned on me that the more traditional form of participant observation would remain impossible.

I continued to commute to Udaheenagama together with assistants from this same coastal town. It had proved very difficult to find people who spoke English well enough to become language informants. In the Udaheenagama area nobody really spoke English. This is how members of an urban elite became field assistants and fellow commuters to an area which was very different from their own cultural world. Five young women, in their late teens and early twenties, who had just finished secondary school and were waiting to be admitted to university, helped with interviews, transcription, and language tuition. Together with my husband, also carrying out ethnographic fieldwork in the same area, we thus became a small team of anthropologists commuting to the field on an almost daily basis. Our assistants were very aware of the cultural and linguistic gap between them and the informants from Udaheenagama but were encouraged to replace an elite versus villager relationship with an anthropologist versus informant stance.

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4 Once I had realised I would not be able to live in Udaheenagama I briefly considered the option to change the fieldwork site and work in the coastal town where I stayed. By that time I had already begun to know many people in Udaheenagama and had carried out fieldwork there for six months. I decided it was too late to change the field work location and start anew in another community. This decision was re-inforced by the fact that all throughout the field work period the political situation was unstable and I frequently considered to go back home because of personal safety reasons. This gave a sense of urgency to the research and finally made me decide to keep working in Udaheenagama despite the obvious drawback of not being able to live there and carry out conventional "participant observation".
As the above mentioned bed time story suggests the Udaheenagama area is plagued by recurring cycles of violence. In 1971 and again in 1989 left wing activists (the JVP movement) organised an insurgency which resulted in a large scale civil war\(^5\). It is estimated that during the civil war of the late eighties about thirty thousand people disappeared across the island (Amnesty 1993). People were abducted and brutally killed by both the JVP and the Special Task Force (the STF) combating the JVP. In areas like Udaheenagama, people supporting the Sri Lankan Army and people supporting the JVP, victims and perpetrators or perpetrators and victims were living next to one another. In addition to this continuing tension between pro-JVP and pro-army neighbours the ongoing war against the LTTE in the North and East of the island forms another source of local violence. Young men decide to try their luck at the front but many desert. They roam around the countryside, unemployed and armed, for ever on the move to escape the raids that are organised to capture them and send them back to the front.

In order to contribute to an analysis of the ongoing cycle of violence in Southern Sri Lanka I opted to focus on the discourses on violence of members of the rural community of Udaheenagama. I explored the link between the ways in which people talk about violence and the local pattern of violent retribution and/or conflict avoidance. The main informants for this study of discourses on violence in Udaheenagama were women working as coolies on the tea plantations\(^6\). Many of them are the head of their household\(^7\), some of them are mothers of disappeared JVP activists, mothers or wives of soldiers, or mothers of young deserters. Some of them regularly fall ill and are helped by ritual specialists, others vociferously reject any form of traditional healing. The violence they lived (or still live) was horrific and part of the rationale for this study was to merely report these forms of violence which only seldom reach the international press. However extreme the violence was, though, one should also question why worse forms of violence did not occur. In the late eighties the Southern Province was a killing field, where death squads operated and where neighbours denounced and made disappear one another, but it was no 'Rwanda' or 'Kosovo'. In other words, there were powerful mechanisms of containment that operated within a social system that was already maimed or poisoned by the war.

The culture-specific aspects of violent interaction in Sri Lanka have been subject of debate amongst anthropologists (for example Kapferer 1988, 1995, 1997, Obeyesekere 1975,

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\(^5\) For a more in-depth description of the political context see appendix A.
\(^6\) For an overview of the occupational and socio-economic background of Udaheenagama people see figure 1.
\(^7\) About 15% of the households in the Udaheenagama area are single headed (see figure 2).
Administrative Units under a *Grama Niladari* ('village headman'):
- *Edanduwila Grama Niladari Wasama* (includes the neighbourhoods of *Edanduwila* and *Puwakdeniya*).
- *Ihalagama Grama Niladari Wasama* (includes the neighbourhoods of *Ihalagama, Kalubowatta* and *Bamarabokka*).
- *Galkanda Grama Niladari Wasama* (includes the neighbourhoods of *Heendolakanda* and *Galkanda*).

N: Total number of households surveyed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Edanduwila (N = approx. 250)</th>
<th>Ihalagama (N = approx. 300)</th>
<th>Galkanda (N = approx. 200)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main occupation of</td>
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<tr>
<td>chief occupant of</td>
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<tr>
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<td>- farmer:</td>
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<td>* % &lt; 2 acres:</td>
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<td>95%</td>
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<tr>
<td>worker:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- mason/ carpenter:</td>
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<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>- bricks/ cement:</td>
<td>86%</td>
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<td>- clay:</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electricity:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: Female headed households from Resource Survey of the Matara District Integrated Rural Development Project, Southern Provincial Council, June 1993:
Distribution of female heads of household by age, as percentage of the total number of female headed households.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>Edanduwila (N = approx. 250)</th>
<th>Ihalagama (N = approx. 300)</th>
<th>Galkanda (N = approx. 200)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 20-30y</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 30-40y</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 40-50y</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 50-60y</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 60-70y</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 70-80y</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 80-90y</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tambiah 1992, 1996). Below the surface of modernist institutions such as the state and army, the business community, drug cartels, US-trained death squads and international crime networks the power of ancient myths, sorcery practices and the mores of the Sinhala Buddhist clergy have been documented to play an important role in ongoing cycles of violence (Ibid.). The majority of the studies on violence in Sri Lanka however focus on urban riots/pogroms (e.g. Tambiah 1996, Roberts 1990, 1994), the role of the Buddhist clergy (e.g. Tambiah 1992) or the nationalist political elite (e.g. Kapferer 1988). I therefore decided to focus on the discourses on violence within a rural community and to explore the link between the local culture-specific discourses on violence in Udaheenagama, a local cycle of violence and the containment or limitation of violent processes. The emphasis of the analysis was thus not on how village everyday realities and discourses on violence might be informed by Sinhala Buddhist nationalist politics. I set out to record the ways in which people from a rural community like Udaheenagama talk about violence without presuming this would mirror the nationalist discursive strategies documented in the above-mentioned studies.

1.2. The global discourse on 'war trauma': reality and controversy.
Discourses on violence in Udaheenagama can no longer be fully described by exclusively focusing on the local context independent from global - predominantly Western - discourses on violence and its effects. 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder' (PTSD) has become an increasingly common term used in varying contexts. From an anthropological point of view this illness is intrinsically related to Euro-American ethno-psychologies and
interpretations of suffering (Young 1980, 1993, 1996). The framework provided by 'PTSD', however, has become a crucial working tool for the organisation of humanitarian aid and thus constitutes a certain 'reality' in non-Western cultural contexts. While contemporary wars take genocidal proportions and casualties are mainly civilian, large groups of people have temporarily lost most of their social and cultural resources. Some people in these situations of extreme deprivation seem to have 'given up', are socially withdrawn, or do not fit within any social or cultural framework except the one constituted by ongoing violence. It is at this point that the expertise of psychiatry and psychology to deal with 'traumatised' populations is being brought in by the organisers of humanitarian interventions.

Trauma specialists draw on a long tradition going back to the treatment of military casualties in the First World War, the rehabilitation of concentration camp survivors, and the attempts at reintegration of Vietnam Veterans into North American society. Through these experts the discourse on trauma and PTSD is spread across various war-torn societies. It is in the midst of these - more and more common - 'cultures' of extreme deprivation and dehumanisation that the gaze of the anthropologist and mental health professional cross and mutual questions emerge. One such urgent question is how trauma specialists could become more sensitive to cross-cultural issues. Another is how an anthropologist remains engaged and meaningfully active in the local context after violent upheaval and destruction has taken place. This is a moment when a brief flash of doubt might befall the anthropologist critical of the trauma paradigm. When confronted with the severity of the situation and the impossibility of traditional ethnographic practice some ethnographers momentarily forget the historical situatedness of the discourse on trauma, are forced to consider the extent to which community life is dominated by the attitudes of 'traumatised' individuals and attempt to mobilise the expertise of trauma specialists.

The question of the cross-cultural applicability of the notion of PTSD has been addressed repeatedly within the context of the mental health profession. Two main strategies emerged. The first one consisted of the design of culture-specific PTSD questionnaires so they could be used for the diagnosis of traumatic stress amongst refugee populations in the West (i.a. Boehnlein 1992, Eisenbruch 1990, 1991, 1992, Hinton 1993, Kroll 1989, Mollica 1987, 1992, Westermeyer 1989). A second strategy of questioning the relevance of the trauma discourse across cultures is more politically engaged (e.g. Bracken 1995, Summerfield 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1996, 1999) and - in informal contexts - has been referred to as the 'anti-trauma movement'. This anti-trauma discourse involves a radical
questioning of the consequences of the implementation of psycho-social projects based on the trauma-paradigm world-wide:

Those serious about the issues of torture and atrocity need to address them within a rigorous human rights framework, not merely confined to comfortable humanitarian responses which see survivors as victims needing individual medical or psychological help...Western governments seem to have used the humanitarian effort as a shield to hide their own mixed motives over serious engagement with the political players and issues...and to avoid 'difficult' questions...Too frequently these (difficult questions) relate to the values of the Western-led world order, in which geopolitical and business considerations far outweigh issues of basic rights and justice (Summerfield 1996:32).

From our perspective, the epidemiological statistics, comparative psychometric surveys, and high level discussion of political violence as a public health or clinical condition provide an inadequate basis to understand its sources, forms, and consequences (Kleinman 1996:186, my emphasis).

Humanitarian practices based on the notion of trauma are described by the anti-trauma discourse as dis-empowering the local world. The war victim becomes a patient or consumer of the services of foreign experts and is taught to present distress in a 'modernised' way, while local healers or health workers are made to feel ill-equipped, or become 'supervised' by NGO's and their donors (Ibid.: 17). In my opinion, one of the major contributions of this anti-trauma movement is its questioning of the underlying assumption of the trauma discourse that links ongoing cycles of violence with 'PTSD epidemics' (ISTSS 1996:A43). Predictions about future conflicts and wars world-wide are often based on estimations of 'untreated', or 'unresolved' trauma (Summerfield 1996:22). Post trauma morbidity, chronic PTSD, problems with the modulation of aggression and violent behaviour, are depicted as the main contributing factor to group processes leading to further violent upheavals (ISTSS 1996: A84).

The role of rage over ongoing injustice or the assault on culture and ethnicity, the effects of the disruption of the social (instead of mental) fabric on potentially violent individuals and groups are underplayed. The post war reality is not depicted as a situation where the majority of people adapt well, a minority withdraws from the social world, commit suicide or develop serious mental illness. It is seen as a situation were the majority are at risk of developing PTSD, going along with substance abuse and antisocial or violent behaviour, resulting in continuing cycles of violence. The anti-trauma movement challenges this way war is being handled as a mental health emergency and trauma work has become the
contemporary 'fashion' of Western donors (Summerfield 1996:11) channelling large financial transactions to war-torn societies.

1.3. Six nodal points in a global flow of knowledge.

Following on this brief summary of the ongoing debates concerning the cross-cultural use of the notion of PTSD I will present the rationale for the particular design of this project. First of all I would like to differentiate the different cultural contexts that constitute the total reality which usually is loosely referred to as 'the implementation of psycho-social projects based on the trauma paradigm world-wide', the stream of knowledge on PTSD. In doing so I am following Lyotard's conceptualisation (1979) of flows of knowledge, in this case for the description of the pattern of distribution of knowledge on PTSD. I distinguish six nodal points in this global communication circuit, six intersections where messages converge and are redistributed (Ibid.: 15, 90).

The first one is the academic context of trauma research itself. The second the professional organisations of trauma specialists. The third the people who practice in 'the donor countries' and organise training programmes for professionals from war-torn societies. The fourth is constituted by the professional elites working for national NGO's in the 'target countries', the fifth by rural health workers trained by these local NGO's. And the sixth are the survivors themselves who are, in the case of Sri Lanka, sometimes being trained as counsellors for trauma victims, or befrienders. I will now give a brief description of each of these nodal points, as well as indicate their relative importance for this project.

The first nodal point, the cultural context of the academic institutions fostering research on trauma, is determined by institutions and interested parties who provide funding for avant-garde knowledge on PTSD, predominantly on the neurobiology of this disease. I would like to pose some questions regarding its relation to what Lyotard has called the 'old poles of attraction' (Ibid.: 14): the nation state with its foreign policy, military establishment and intelligence services. The intimate historical link between PTSD research, military psychiatry and the maintenance of effective and functional armies leads to questions about the contemporary value of this body of knowledge on psychological breakdown, rehabilitation and above all prevention of civilian 'psychological casualties'. Questions emerge about PTSD-related 'finance-scapes' (Appadurai 1990: 298); financial transactions

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8 Or what Jameson has called the "political unconscious" while "taking a further step that Lyotard seemed unwilling to do in the present text". Jameson argues, not for the disappearance of the great master-narratives, but their passage underground, their continuous but now unconscious effectivity as a way of "thinking about" and acting in our current situation (Lyotard 1979: xii).
funding trauma research and their relation to contemporary Euro-American military/business alliances.

I do however not want to give the impression I am describing a uni-directional flow of knowledge from 'West' to 'East' or 'South'. Part of the history of PTSD is related to cold war related atrocities, of which the rehabilitation of Vietnam Veterans in the West has received most of the attention (Young 1996). While this Vietnam Administration related research apparatus is still running today, an important part of the research is being conducted in the Middle East, more specifically in Israel. Power struggles in the Middle East are an important factor in the finance-scape of trauma research, and maybe one of the obvious examples of how this flow of knowledge is moulded by the complexities of contemporary 'geopolitics' as conceptualised and enacted by elite populations (cf. Lyotard 1979: 14).

The second nodal point I defined are the professional organisations of trauma specialists, the Societies for Traumatic Stress Studies (further referred to as STSS). The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies was founded in the US in 1985 and currently includes about two thousand mental health professionals, clinicians as well as researchers from around the world (see for example figure 3). Today this organisation is conceptualised as the mother organisation of the European (1990°), Australian, Russian (1995°), and African (1997°) Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. The African STSS is an interesting case, and the current role of South Africa and South African trauma experts would make an interesting case study. In most situations however (e.g. Sri Lanka) the transfer of knowledge and practices related to PTSD passes a third nodal point, another set of organisations of which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) are two prominent examples. Experts from the STSS, working on behalf of UNHCR or the IRCT, are acting as advisors for the design of intervention programmes (e.g. DeMartino 1994) as well as training manuals for NGO workers (e.g. Buus 1988, Staehr 1993, Arcel 1995). The paradigms permeating the rehabilitation programmes for victims of war of NGO's or UN bodies are thus often directly provided by this professional community of trauma specialists (STSS).

The last three nodal points are located within the war-torn societies which receive humanitarian aid. The discourse on trauma going along with humanitarian financial transactions is being 'filtered' (Lyotard 1979: 17) and possibly reinterpreted and adapted at consecutive points. These cultural interfaces, the 'interstitia' where the trauma culture is
Figure 3: 'Countries' of origin of participants to the Second World Conference of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, Jerusalem, June 1996 and number of participants per country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Jerusalem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaza</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia (Moscow)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>348</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
being negotiated (Bhabha 1994: 25) form patches of cultural hybridity, spaces where notions of trauma and the concomitant financial flow are being translated into the local reality. Much like with other cultural streams coming from the West - such as party politics or mass consumption - one can suppose a 'creolisation' (Hannerz 1987) or culture-specific appropriation of practices related to the trauma discourses. An openness to foreign cultural influences need not involve an impoverishment or de-authentication of the local, and a continuity with the past is often maintained within an ever-continuing 'cultural work-in-progress' (Hannerz 1987:550,555, Friedman 1990:314).

I do not want to impose an essentialist logic (Bhabha 1994: 27) onto the trauma discourse by presenting a fixed hierarchy of nodal points, in which the notion of 'trauma' operative within the sub-culture of trauma research becomes the measuring stick for all other possible 'indigenised' or 'creole' interpretations. The discourse within these last three nodal points; the discourses of Sri Lankan mental health professionals who work for national mental health NGO's, rural health workers, and befrienders at the village level form a crucial aspect of a truly international mental health or trauma culture. 'Trauma' has become a master term (Appadurai 1990: 299) in this global cultural traffic of interpretations of suffering. In my opinion, it should not be seen as essentially connected with neither of these nodal points of the flow of knowledge and when I use 'trauma discourse' or 'international mental health culture' I do refer to the conglomerate of these differing nodal points.

The rationale of this research is to zoom in on one particular aspect of this total reality through ethnographic fieldwork, while being aware of the global forces at play by conducting interviews within some of the other contexts I briefly described above. Through a small scale intensive study of one particular case, which somehow resonates with other non-Western contexts where the trauma culture is under negotiation (e.g. South Africa, Mozambique, Rwanda), I hope to add ethnographically founded arguments to debates which roam in other sub-cultural contexts or nodal points of this global flow of knowledge. I intend to look at the controversy about the international trauma culture through a particular window, namely through an analysis of a community in Southern Sri Lanka where the trauma discourse and an indigenous healing culture co-exist.

This might seem an arbitrary entry-point, too specific and small-scale to be able to shed some light on the wider debate. However, despite suffering from a necessary arbitrariness,

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9 It is an attempt to construct a "single-text, multilocale ethnography" on the basis of a standard individual PhD type of research project as advocated in Marcus (1986: 91).
I opted for bringing the debate down to this level of reality. First of all it avoids unnecessary polarisation between a postulated essence of the trauma culture within the avant-garde of trauma research on the one hand and the essence of an ethnic healing culture to be found in detailed anthropological texts of ritual 'healing' on the other hand. A very real example of this polarisation is the trauma specialist's reading and interpretation of pre-war anthropological texts on the 'effectiveness' of indigenous healing. An avoidance of such polarisation also allows us to study the processes of what Bhabha (1994: 38) calls 'dialectical re-organisation, in which host and visiting healing cultures negotiate their identities in relation to one another, in the case of the arrival of the trauma discourse, often in situations of ongoing violence and cultural destabilisation.

The relative weight given to each of the six nodal points within this study is reflected by the allocation of research time. The first nodal point along the line, the context of PTSD research, I approached through literature research while I was working at the department of psychiatry at University of Louvain (Pillen 1994). Concerning the second nodal point I gathered data during the Fourth European Conference on Traumatic Stress, organised by the European Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (Paris, 7-11 May 1995) and during the Second World Conference of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (Jerusalem, 9-13 June 1996). The context of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims is only known to me through their journal 'Torture', their training manuals, and through interviews with mental health professionals in Sri Lanka who have been trained by them.

I conducted interviews with a variety of people involved in the trauma culture in Colombo, which took about one month of the total research time. On the basis of these interviews I selected one mental health NGO for closer analysis. Interviews with people who work in an outreach centre of this same NGO and interviews with people from Udaheenagama who went to training sessions organised by this NGO provided data to document two more nodal points in this global flow of knowledge on trauma. As I mentioned above though, the main field site was Udaheenagama where I spent the bulk of the 15 months of fieldwork. Traditional Sinhala Buddhist interpretations of suffering and ritual systems have been extensively documented in the ethnographic literature, which formed a point of reference for this study. Valuable background data were provided by the analyses of the popular relevance of the Buddhist notion of karma for the perception of self and suffering (e.g. Daniel 1983, Gombrich 1971, Keyes 1983), and studies of the role of various ritual specialists in the treatment of affliction (e.g. Wirz 1954, Obeyesekere 1970, 1981, 1984, Gombrich 1988, Kapferer 1983, 1997, Simpson 1984, Stirrat 1992). An analysis of the
theoretical and methodological differences in Obeyesekere's (1981) and Kapferer's (1997) writings on Sinhala Buddhist traditional healing practices (Pillen 1995) formed a starting point for my own ethnographic fieldwork in Udaheenagama.

1.4. A reverse flow of knowledge: The trauma discourse in the light of discourses on violence in Udaheenagama.

I referred to my intention to investigate the 'local implications' of the import of the trauma discourse in Udaheenagama, but what is at stake? In other words, what is the problem, what is so problematic about the diffusion of the trauma culture, or rather is it problematic? This meta research question could be elaborated upon in different domains. One obvious domain would be the issue of therapeutic efficacy; a major topic in medical anthropological research (e.g. Csordas 1994: 2 for overview, Dow 1989, Kleinman 1979, Last 1981, Moerman 1979, Turner 1967). The trauma discourse could be assessed according to its therapeutic 'effects' in comparison with indigenous healing methods. As de Sardan remarks - in his critical deconstruction of a research tradition following upon Levi-Strauss' 'Effectiveness of symbols' (1963a, 1963b) - 'symbolic' efficacy is the most frequently evoked topic on the frontiers of psychiatry, anthropology and psychoanalysis (de Sardan 1994: 21). The binary reality of local trauma discourse and traditional healing methods could lead to their comparison where 'therapeutic efficacy' becomes the measuring stick. 'Efficacy', the influence on the individual's or group's well-being, could thus be an analytic basis for the interpretation of case material.

Such a study would involve the follow up of patients as to the effect of the available 'treatment' on their initial complaints-symptoms-illness, or the surrounding group processes. This is a possible angle of research on the cultural impact of the trauma discourse but this is not what I propose to do in this project. de Sardan (1994: 20) quoting Last (1991: 59) points at the risks of taking the 'rhetoric of therapy' surrounding certain ritual practices for granted. He relates this 'therapeutisation' to contexts where animist beliefs are dominated by a world religion, or by the prestigious Western medical system and take on the identity of 'therapy' to survive. Translated into an idiom of post-structuralism, de Sardan is making queries about the supplement (cf. Lacan in Mitchell 1982: 144), 'the play of the supplement' in the reality of possession rites (Derrida quoted in Bhabha 1994: 55). In other words: what are healers (indigenous and international) about if not therapy? How would they be understood if not defined in comparison with Western therapeutic or psychotherapeutic systems?
Did a retreat out of a dialogue with the 'efficacy-of-therapy' literature mean that I went to
the field with only the 'play of the supplement' paradigm in mind, a vague openness to
possible local interpretations of the interface of the trauma discourse and traditional healing
rites? Or was there a platform on which to base concrete research questions, a speculation
about the content of this 'supplementary reality', which maybe is not essentially about
'therapy'? Since a basis for research was needed, I proposed it would be the Western notion
of memory, and more specifically bodily memory. In other words I proposed to interrogate
this hybrid healing culture with research questions concerning the construction of collective
memories. Maybe what is at stake regarding the import of the trauma discourse is its role
in the creation of particular types of collective memories, and their trans-generational
transmission? Therefore I proposed to focus on the memories of the war widows in
Udaheenagama, and how their participation in contemporary 'healing' practices constitutes
certain types of memories, fosters particular verbal and non-verbal continuities and
discontinuities with a past. I thus proposed to conduct the research in the light of the debate
on bodily memories in anthropology and psychiatry alike (see appendix B).

While I wrote the research proposal I was inspired by the research on collective memories
within material culture studies (e.g. Kuechler 1991, Rowlands 1993). Visits to healers or
NGO workers in particular places, the body during chronic illness, inter alia bodily feelings
of ghosts of deceased or disappeared relatives, could be investigated as a certain
'materiality' 'constitutive of a social memory' (Kuechler 1991: 42) as much as interactions
with 'material culture' in the stricter sense of the word. Thus instead of looking at the
cultural interface of two therapeutic systems, I would interrogate them as if types of
memory systems or 'memory environments' which lead to possibly differing collective
memories.

In a context of ongoing cycles of violence, political silence and terror the formation of
collective memories and their trans-generational transmission is precarious. Questions
emerged about the local conception of time, patterns of forgetting (Carsten 1995) or indeed
the meaning of a continuity with the past (Leach 1961: 11). In situations of severe political
repression remembering and forgetting take place in the context of various degrees of
public silence. Certain past events do not become encoded as a discrete mental reality but
are sedimented into the body, constitute bodily memories. Sometimes more clearly formed
memories lead a well protected private life or become so deeply buried within individuals
as to mingle with fantasy (Tully 1995: 1606). The private memories of terror and
disappearances then constitute a surreality sealed of from the public 'truths' and (contested)

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cannot depend on 'recollection' (Kuechler 1991: 7) and verbalisation, non-verbal means of establishing continuities and discontinuities with the past might be playing an important role. That is why I proposed to specifically focus on bodily memories (cf. Casey 1987: Chapter 8, Connerton 1989: Chapter 3, Bourdieu 1977) and on the ways in which this hybrid healing culture channels bodily memories, bodily relations to a past.

The trauma discourse as put into practice in the West is about therapy but equally about the construction of particular memories in collaboration with trauma specialists. PTSD is an embodied reality, the past is being relived through the body in the format of heightened general arousal, startle reactions, moments of re-experiencing of the traumatic event, nightmares, flashbacks, or avoidance of certain situations (DSM 1994). In other words it is in part the bodily memory of extreme events. Once interpreted within a therapeutic context these bodily experiences become consciously grasped as related to these earlier traumatic experiences. A culture-specific sense of time, an experience of the flow of time goes along with this, running from an etiologic event to the current symptoms. Young describes this specific kind of 'memory' as a product of psychiatric culture:

> The traumatic memory is a man-made object. It originates in the scientific and clinical discourses of the nineteenth century; before that time, there is unhappiness, despair, and disturbing recollections, but no traumatic memory, in the sense that we know it today (1996: 141).

Healing practices and research related to PTSD have created a particular kind of collective memory (Ibid.: 129). On one level large scale surveys, statistics on the epidemiology of PTSD, the large-scale financial transactions within trauma research are a material culture which forms an essential part of our collective memory of atrocities (e.g. PTSD research in ex-Yugoslavia or Chernobyl). On another level PTSD is experienced as a collective bodily memory related to a 'traumatic past' by groups of affected individuals. This is what Young calls 'the architecture of traumatic time' (1996: 118), the experience of bodily sensations within a very specific flow of time.

These general statements about memory and the architecture of time within the trauma culture informed my proposed research questions about the experience of time and 'memory' by people in Udaheenagama collaborating with the NGO services. I proposed to investigate how the particular way of dealing with bodily suffering - as PTSD, somatisation or bodily memory - is transmitted to them or takes a place in their lives alongside other types of relationships with a past. I wanted to question the relative importance of this imported discourse on time and memory within the lives of people in Udaheenagama. The
project was to focus on how Udaheenagama people live with notions of karma, bodily experiences related to ghosts of disappeared relatives, demonic possession, and the discourse on trauma. By attempting to give an overall picture on how these - what I tentatively described as - 'memory environments'\(^\text{10}\) are playing a role in the everyday lives in Udaheenagama I hoped to comment on the relative role and impact of the discourse on trauma as a memory environment (see Argenti-Pillen 2000 in Appendix F).

This research question about the implications of the import of the trauma discourse on the construction of collective memories does draw on the one hand on the anthropological literature on social memory and especially embodied memories, but on the other hand on research on 'memory' within the trauma literature itself (see Appendix B). It was but a research question and did not claim at shedding a light on the 'supplementary nature' of contemporary healing practices. The underlying working hypothesis that contemporary healing practices do play a role in the clandestine politics of remembering and forgetting remains a very Western ethnographic question, especially when realising how much this hypothesis relies on contemporary academic debates on 'memory'. Thus one could argue that again the play of the supplement is not being respected through a replacement of an 'effectiveness of therapy' argument by a collective memory framework, but it was but a working hypothesis needed to be able to start field work.

In the course of field work it became obvious that the methodology needed to explore bodily memories wasn't a realistic option within the Udaheenagama context (see next section). Moreover the body of data needed to explore the trans-generational transmission of memories and the construction of a collective memory seemed vast when confronted with the day to day difficulties of conducting fieldwork. For such an analysis I would have to collect data amongst the different generations and compared the discourses on violence within different age-groups. The notion of a 'discourse on violence' in Udaheenagama itself was already a rather complex given, and I thus decided to limit the topic of the thesis to the description of the particular characteristics of contemporary discourses on violence in Udaheenagama.

Based on these data, on the analysis of the discourses on violence collected amongst people in Udaheenagama, I then construct a 'reverse flow of knowledge'. I first outline the

\(^{10}\) The notion of karma, the experience of current suffering in the light of the effect of good or evil deeds in previous lives could be seen as an example of the establishment of a particular relation with the past, albeit the distant past of previous lives, hence my characterisation of karmic influence as a "memory environment". The relation with deceased or disappeared relatives through smells, sounds, bodily experiences such as pressure or pain could equally be seen as a type of memory environment.
strategies used to talk about violence and its effects in Udaheenagama and then, with these issues in mind, I approach the trauma discourse, more specifically the nodal points within the flow of knowledge on trauma located within the Sri Lankan context. Through this comparison I then speculate on what the long-term impact of the trauma discourse might be. The overall, principal research question of this study thus remains the same - what are the implications of the implementation of 'trauma counselling' in a non-Western context like Udaheenagama? - but the criteria on which to base such an assessment have changed over the course of the project. The criteria are no longer the efficacy of treatment of Western versus local, traditional healing techniques, nor the issues related to the construction of collective memories. The criteria are dictated by the values through which Udaheenagama people judge discourses on violence

For this type of analysis I was particularly inspired by studies of the relationship between discursive styles and socio-political organisation brought together in the edited volumes by Myers and Brenneis (1984) and Watson-Gegeo and White (1990). This research follows on Bloch's research paradigm for political anthropology, more specifically Bloch's emphasis on the 'significance of what kind of speech is involved in political interaction' (1975: 4). Research on political rhetoric and the tactics of coercion or persuasion of political orators (see Bloch - Paine debate in Paine 1981: 2-3) predominantly focuses on political meetings or, more generally, on institutionalised processes of joint discussion (Myers 1984: 3). Myers questioned the notion of 'politics' that underlies such ethnographic analyses and gave a critique of studies that simply identify politics with our own Western public domain and focus on large public meetings; the grand events which resemble prototypical Western political practices (Ibid.: 3). In the research program set out by Myers (1984) and Watson-Gegeo (1990) politics is more than decision making and coercion (Myers 1984:12) and they advocate a broadening of what is to be considered political talk (ibid.: 4).

My use of everyday small talk as an entry point to analyse forms of social organisation which emerged from the social debris of the civil war follows a similar strategy. I did not choose to analyse speeches made by important members of the community at weddings, funerals, meetings of the Funeral Aid Society, the Irrigation Society or the Youth Group. Instead I focused on the way in which violence is discursively addressed in everyday conversations and on the way in which these culture-specific discourses on violence lead to the reconstruction of a social and political world after a violent destruction of the social fabric took place.
Myers' (1984: 28) distinction between situations in which the polity can be taken for
granted and contexts in which the political order is problematic is particularly useful for my
analysis. In many situations the maintenance or creation of a political arena is an
achievement based on day-to-day performances and the political order is not pre-established
or formalised. Myers demonstrates how ethnographers operating in societies with
centralised, formal political authority tend to take the polity for granted, 'apparently
following the focus of their informants' (Ibid.: 24). For researchers working in non-state
societies, where egalitarian relationships predominate, discerning a political system is
precisely the problematic issue (ibid.: 25).

Concerning the situation of Udaheenagama the latter strategy seems the most appropriate.
In Udaheenagama the polity cannot be taken for granted and is problematic. The Sri
Lankan state can be described as a weak state; a state which only manages to play a limited
role in the post-war rehabilitation of the rural South. While aspects of the post-war social
re-organisation could be discerned in party political speeches, court hearings, reports of the
Commissions of Inquiry or activities of the government's psychiatric services their impact
on community life in Udaheenagama is limited. Under the surface of a weak state, its
overburdened services and master discourses about the civil war, Udaheenagama people
talk about violence and its effects. If one does not identify politics with formal political
structure (Ibid.: 25) one can question how everyday talk contributes to political
organisation, how specific modes of discourse lead to a specific conception of the
community, which is not necessarily the same as the image of village communities
projected by a predominantly Sinhala Buddhist Sri Lankan state.

Myers (1984: 28) argued that political talk goes beyond persuasion and display and that, at
heart, it 'compels specific visions of the social world through its own organisation'. I focus
on these 'specific visions of the social world' everyday discourses on violence in
Udaheenagama implicitly engender. I argue that - much like the extensive use of shaming
techniques and the evocation of dreadful disease sanctions provide an alternative to a weak
state's juridical procedures - the local discourses on violence play a role in the
reconstruction of a social fabric in the aftermath of the civil war. It is within this
perspective that I would like to compare local discourses on violence and the trauma
discourse. The discourse on trauma originated within a society characterised by a
'bourgeois public sphere' (see Benhabib 1998, Habermas 1962). I describe how discourses
on violence in Udaheenagama help to constitute a local, distinctly non-bourgeois communal
arena. My analysis of 'the trauma discourse in the light of discourses on violence in
Udaheenagama' thus involves looking at how the introduction of the trauma discourse
articulates with local forms of social organisation constituted by Udaheenagama discourses on violence.

1.5. Methodology.
The tradition or fashion that initially attracted me and helped me in the general design of the proposed study was 'critical phenomenology'. This term I first encountered in Good's text describing the history of medical anthropology (1994). Herein he advocates the development of a critical phenomenology 'that heightens our understanding of the realities of lived experience but takes into account larger social and historical processes' (63). He considers whether a critical view should merely represent the voices of the local informants or whether it should construct a critique that transcends them and is based on the anthropologist's study of global processes. If one would build a critical perspective upon the phenomenology of the local practices it would be difficult to decide whether 'the voices one is representing embed implicit critiques of their own as opposed to some false consciousness' (Csordas 1988: 420, Good 1994:63). Hence my proposal to study both the local context as well as other nodal points within the global discussion about war trauma.

I imagined a research strategy corresponding with the ideals of 'critical phenomenology' as follows. It would involve a combination of a detailed phenomenological analysis of contemporary healing practices, with an analysis of the international trauma discourse and its relations to the ethnographic locale. It would follow Good's proposition of a cross-fertilisation between the tradition of critical medical anthropology and phenomenology. What I considered as exemplary ethnographies - created by advocates of a phenomenological analysis of healing practices - document the experiences, emotions, and bodily states during healing encounters (e.g. Csordas 1994b, Kapferer 1997). I then questioned in which way one could describe these texts as critical and whether a concept of identity derived from the culture of phenomenology could lead to a critical perspective.

After a consideration of the ideas outlined in Bhabha's 'Interrogating identity' (1994), Good's programme for a critical phenomenology within medical anthropology seemed to entail a contradiction in terms. I suggest that there is a radical alterity between a phenomenological description of identity as demonstrated in the above mentioned ethnographies (e.g. Csordas 1994, Kapferer 1997) and a post-structuralist approach to identity which, in my opinion, has a more obvious and direct connection with critical perspectives. Bhabha questioned how exposition to a 'culture' of post-structuralist theory influences the experience of self and others (1994: 57). It thus remains to be seen whether an experience of identity influenced by post-structuralism remains a mere experience or
whether it could influence a methodology\textsuperscript{11} and eventually the critical qualities of the argument.

While trying to circumvent a purely visual image of identity as an inner depth\textsuperscript{12} or as a phenomenon playing itself out in different inter-subjective and social realities, Bhabha reflects on the intrinsic 'doubleness' (52) of post-modern identity, the supplementary nature of the subject (55). Self and other are mutually dependent and one's identity is constituted through identification with others, \textit{but} there is 'a strategy of ambivalence in the structure of identification' (60), it is always a mixture of identification and non-identification, it is double\textsuperscript{13}. This supplement is invisible, it is a 'difference that forms and deforms the \textit{image of identity}' (62, my emphasis), it is an 'attenuation' (54) of phenomenal identity. Bhabha thus argues that this secret art of invisibleness changes the very terms of our recognition of the person (47). This type of personhood resists classical dyadic power relations by virtue of telling the powerful 'even when you look you never really see me'\textsuperscript{14}.

This 'strategic motion' (55) caused by the oscillation between identification and non-identification with one's outward appearance blurs the images of modernist imaging techniques, especially the methodology linked to phenomenological theory. Merleau-Ponty (1962) asserted that 'the \textit{meaning} of a gesture thus understood (that is within the perspective of Merleau-Pontian phenomenology) is \textit{not} behind it, it is intermingled with the structure of the world outlined by the gesture' (186, my emphasis). The meaning of a gesture thus lies in the gesture itself instead of in the deeper reality behind the gesture, but what if the gesture wasn't meant and the person involved chose not to identify with the gesture?

A critical perspective is intrinsically embedded within such a post-modern conceptualisation of identity. A post-modern research strategy avoids pinning down the Other to a phenomenological self as observed by an outsider whom, if he/she wishes so,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Bhabha argued that "what is interrogated (by post-structuralist theorising) is not simply the image of the person, but the discursive and disciplinary space from which questions of identity are strategically and institutionally posed" (47).
\item \textsuperscript{12} The modernist language of identity seems to be as much invested with that dimension of depth, as the concept of "symbol"; a surface symbolic expression and the so-called deeper reality behind the symbol. Modern identity is characterised by the distinction between a surface appearance and an inner continuity of consciousness that can be visually perceived by looking inward towards the depths of one's personality. This is being contrasted by Bhabha with a post-modern experience of consciousness which I will further discuss in the main text.
\item \textsuperscript{13} The impasse of consciousness that seems to be the \textit{representative post-modernist experience} is a peculiar strategy of doubling (Bhabha 1994: 49, my emphasis).
\item \textsuperscript{14} In Bhabha's words: "The anti-dialectical movement of the subaltern instance subverts any \textit{binary} or sublatory \textit{ordering of power} and sign; it defers the object of the look - "as even now you look but never see me" - and endows it with a \textit{strategic motion} (55, my emphasis).
\end{itemize}
could add a critical perspective through an analysis of the wider political processes (e.g. a research strategy corresponding to 'critical phenomenology'). Post-structuralist theory does not take identification or internalisation for granted and fully recognises the possible supplementary nature of the protagonists. Bhabha hypothetically locates strategies of subversion and critique within this realm of the supplementary, within the freedom of non-identification, partial or ambivalent identification with the obvious (62, 65).

A post modern research strategy allows for a necessary distance towards the collected data. In concreto this means that while the ethnographer might observe local practices he or she might end up with a conglomerate of descriptions which do not really have the postulated relation with the identities lived by the informants. I think it is important to recognise this substratum of experience in order to locate the critical element within critical medical anthropological research. Documenting the wider political forces inherent in the trauma discourse is but one locale for a critical perspective. Describing the practices of people participating in the local manifestations of the trauma discourse might add material to the discussion, but, considering the local forms of non-identification with local realities seems a crucial level of a truly critical approach based on multi-layered criticism. These are some theoretical comments on Good's notion of critical phenomenology inspired by the doubt the idea of the supplement has installed in the observation of the phenomenal reality.

Converting these ideas into a methodology for field research proved difficult. Spencer (1990), also working in a Sinhala Buddhist village, commented on the 'pervasive spirit of irony' that permeates everyday life in the public sphere. The ever present possibility of concealed malice and irony makes the straightforward interpretation of public gestures problematic. 'Participant observation' by the 'innocent anthropologist' might thus be tricky. Although I tried to gather data based on bodily participation and engagement in the world of 'lived experience' of my informants this method failed.

In my research proposal I had advocated an 'embodiment method'; a minimum awareness of the culturally relevant bodily sensations, to be consciously cultivated by the researcher.

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15 "Internalisation" is another notion routinely used within descriptions of identity formation and which is intimately linked with a modernist conception of identity.

16 In Bhabha's words: "I have suggested here that a subversive political line is drawn in a certain poetics of "invisibility"... the evil eye and the missing person - all instances of the "subaltern" in the Derridean sense, and near enough to the sense that Gramsci gives to the concept... what is implicit in both concepts of the subaltern, as I read it, is a strategy of ambivalence in the structure of identification ...(59, my emphasis).

17 He argued that "public assertions of social position can never be unambiguously confirmed by the response of other villagers, such assertions are always threatened by the possibility of private irony" (165) and goes as far as labelling this all-pervading ironic attitude "a kind of institutionalised irony" (175).
Howes (1991a, 1991b, 1991c) and Classen (1993) argued that research exclusively based on auditory and visual interaction often maintains outmoded preconceptions, that have become increasingly unpopular in the field of explicit social theory, alive in the form of methods. An 'embodiment method' is thus an experimental methodological correlate to the proliferation of theoretical works referring to an anthropology of the body (cf. Csordas 1994, Blacking 1977). To consider own bodily and sensory experiences as data blurs the boundary between the observer and the observed, subject and object of the traditional empirical method. The observer indulges in an intimation of the subjectivity of the observed. Jackson (1989) describes 'radical empiricism' as working through all five – or more – senses and reflecting inwardly as well as observing outwardly.

There have been various tentative approaches that go beyond visual observation and meticulous description of the behaviour of informants (as in Bourdieu 1977), and rely on the researcher's own body and bodily memories (Cartry 1992, Sklar 1994). These involve close corporeal imitation of everyday practices, and are as such not new but explicates a previous unconscious method of participation and establishment of 'rapport' between ethnographer and informant (Jackson 1989). However, what is open for experiment, in my opinion, is the explicit use of the researcher's bodily memories, first of all in the experience of a given context, but as well in the description and interpretation of it. These bodily memories were to be cultivated in the early stages of fieldwork through an active engagement with, for example, the daily histories of sounds, smells, and bodily postures. Later on these remembered bodily states should have enabled me to make qualitative distinctions between different situations or rather make links between contexts.

For reasons of personal safety I continued to commute to Udaheenagama and it thus remained impossible to participate in everyday activities such as plucking tea, cooking or other household activities. I started off by visiting people in their homes and, more often than not, they talked generously. In the beginning, these conversations took the format of language learning, and I started to record people's conversations in order to understand them better. While I had thought this would be a methodology for the preliminary stages of fieldwork, this method never really changed and most people became used to the tape-recorder. Within already difficult fieldwork circumstances I readily took what informants offered me and what seemed important to them. I thus focused on the things Udaheenagama people chose to tell me, and the embodiment method or experiential method gradually faded into the background. I did however participate in domestic cleansing rituals, pilgrimages, visits to the temple, trips to soothsayers and puberty parties but this

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was far removed from the full participant observation and embodiment methods I had envisaged.

Traditional participant observation was also difficult because of the following reason. The frequent occurrence of non-identification with outward appearance - institutionalised irony in Spencer's words (1990: 175, see footnote 14) - would have made my reliance on the imitation of the outward, public appearances of people as a method of approximation of local experiential reality dubious. My movement back and forth between corporeal, empathic techniques and more verbal methods of consultation used to question the adequacy of my experience led to so many contradictions that I decided primarily to depend upon interviews rather than a more experiential method. My movement away from an embodiment method and an emphasis on bodily memories in the field subsequently brought about a re-orientation of my theoretical position. As I discussed in the previous section I moved away from the literature on embodiment and bodily memories and was particularly inspired by, amongst others, the works of Myers (1984) and Watson-Gegeo (1990) upon my return from the field.

During the first six months I visited households together with S. Akkaa, my principal field assistant. After that I visited people on my own more often and my assistant conducted surveys on the basis of structured interviews, the results of which are presented in chapter three18. During the later stages of fieldwork S. Akkaa participated fully in the development of the ideas for the ongoing research, and conducted much more open-ended and unstructured interviews.

Seldom did we meet people on their own, and I rarely conducted an interview in the classical sense of the word. The 'speech events' I recorded commonly occurred inside a house or on the porch. On average five to ten people were present at any given moment, including members of the same nuclear family, neighbours or friends. It took me half a day or a full day to visit one household and people would continue their household activities while choosing to join in the 'conversation' every now and again. Such 'conversations' typically started with me asking a few questions, but often the conversation would carry on along a path that I had not expected and I would be left to overhear things. Sometimes, however, I had the impression that certain conversations were staged, set out to convey a message to me without addressing me directly.

18 See maps 3, 4 and 5, and figures 6, 7, 8 and 9.
Unlike in the West, 'conversation' is not primarily defined by visual contact, by people speaking to one another while looking at one another. This major cultural difference is reflected in my impression, mentioned above, that I seldom conducted an interview, but rather took part in 'conversations' in which many people participated in an *ad hoc* way. These 'conversations' were characterised by a highly fluid and amorphous body of participants, including people shouting comments from neighbouring houses. In local terms, contrary to my impressions, such exchanges were not considered entropic or compromised in any way by the increasing physical distanciation of their contributors. Individual interlocutors rapidly moved amongst different conversations that were going on simultaneously while continuing their household work. Now I would argue that it was the lack of eye contact and visually contained speech events which were unsettling for a Western interlocutor. The standard methods of 'conversation analysis' (see e.g. Atkinson & Heritage 1984, Garfinkel 1967 discussed in Fairclough 1992) would thus have to be substantially modified in order to cover Udaheenagama conversations.

What caught my attention from the very start was that a word-for-word translation of the recorded speech events did not generate much understanding on my part. I had to familiarise myself with the complex ways in which Udaheenagama people quote one another, use euphemisms, and refer to people and events in circumspect and ambiguous ways in order to begin to understand the 'conversations'19. An increasing proportion of the fieldwork thus became dedicated to linguistic work and a close analysis of the transcripts of these conversations. For the organisation of this linguistic work I was helped by the work of Brewster (1976), Briggs (1986) and Larson (1984). In the end, it was to be this linguistic work that would form the basis for this ethnography on Udaheenagama discourses on violence.

The thesis is very much constructed around the transcripts of interviews or taped conversations. In the following chapters I use extended excerpts of transcripts in order to represent the complexities of local voices as closely as possible. I put into practice a discourse analysis which is very much inspired by Besnier's (1994) and Fairclough's (1992, 1995) critique of Foucaultian approaches to discourse analysis. Besnier (1994: 3) argues that studies carried out within the Foucaultian paradigm tend to document solely the ways

19Learning a language seems as much about understanding the unsaid as the said. White (1990) in a chapter which is very useful from a methodological point of view argued that "the full meaning and effect of what is said depends upon much that is unsaid - relying upon culturally patterned inferences to fill in unstated propositions" (54). The poverty of word-for-word translation (91) thus leads the researcher to predominantly focus on such "culturally patterned inferences", especially when trying to understand sensitive conflict discourses.
in which institutional discourses are very much alive in everyday contexts which are not obviously dominated by the institutions in question. In ethnographies inspired by Foucault's writing (ibid.: 3), the analysis of the ways in which discourses-from-above permeate into everyday existences is thus given priority, at the expense of a focus on the ways in which local, everyday discourses might depart from these institutional discourses.

Because I opted for a non-Foucaultian strategy, I consequently did not choose to document the ways in which discourses on violence of the Sri Lankan political elite, state and military establishment are transposed into the village reality of Udaheenagama. Instead I documented the local discourses on violence in Udaheenagama and interpreted them in relation to the local social reality rather than in reference to the institutionalised discourses of the national elites. By means of this refutation of a Foucaultian project design I remained open to the ways in which Udaheenagama people might opt out of these institutionalised discourses on violence rather than reproduce or appropriate them.

For the presentation and analysis of the data I was inspired by Fairclough's (1992, 1995) work. Unlike many other people critical of Foucault, Fairclough links the weaknesses in Foucault's work - the lack of focus on resistance and change and the focus on power and domination - to Foucault's methodology (1992: 56) and provides an alternative approach: textually oriented critical discourse analysis (hereafter TODA). He starts off with questions on how to apply Foucault and argues that one cannot simply operationalise his insights into actual field methods (ibid.: 38). He calls Foucault's work abstract compared to TODA and lacking in analyses of specific spoken or written language texts:

A major contrast between Foucault and TODA is that Foucault's analysis of discourse does not include discursive and linguistic analysis of real texts. Yet the inclusion of such an analysis may be a means of overcoming certain weaknesses which commentators have found in Foucault's work... The issue is rather whether analysis should include actual instances of discourse... The relevant weaknesses in Foucault's work have to do with conceptions of power and resistance, and questions of struggle and change. Foucault is charged with exaggerating the extent to which the majority of people are manipulated by power... These problems seem to be connected with the absence of a concept of practice in Foucault's analyses... (the absence of) real instances of people doing or saying or writing things (ibid.: 56-57).

In contrast TODA pays attention to the detail of particular cases in order to avoid the schematism and one-sidedness of a Foucaultian approach (ibid.: 61). Fairclough's main controversy with Foucault concerns the issue whether specific instances should be analysed or not (ibid.: 56), whether an analysis of real spoken or written language use should be
included. In contrast to Foucault's method TODA pays attention to the detailed properties of written text or extended samples of spoken conversations converted into text (ibid.: 8). Pieces of spoken texts become objects of analysis.

Fairclough's proposals for TODA also include a critique of mainstream conversation analysis and urge socio-linguists to engage more with the forms of socio-political organisation that surround and are constituted by discourses:

Sociolinguistics is criticised for merely establishing correlations between language and society rather than looking for deeper causal relations, including the effects of language upon society: 'language serves to confirm and consolidate the organisations which shape it' (Fowler 1979 in Fairclough 1992: 26, my emphasis).

There is a need to bring together critical discourse analysis of discursive events with ethnographic analysis of social structures and settings, in the search for what some have called a critical ethnography... The view of language as social semiotic incorporates an orientation to mapping relations between language (texts) and social structures and relations (Fairclough 1995: 9-10).

Language use is thus considered a form of social practice (Fairclough 1992: 63). Discourse analysis thereby becomes a form of social analysis (ibid.: 5) and reveals the ways in which discourse contributes both to the reproduction and transformation of society (ibid.: 36). Transposed to the project in Udaheenagama this means I used the methodology of TODA to present Udaheenagama discourses on violence and link differing Udaheenagama discursive styles with post-war forms of social re-organisation.
PART I. THE WILD IN UDAHEENAGAMA.

The people from Udaheenagama suffer many types of violence. Local enmity, conflicts and violence can be classified by a Western observer under several categories. Families from Udaheenagama send soldiers to the front in the North and East of the country and are thus involved in 'inter-ethnic violence' against the Tamil minority. During the civil war of 1988-1991 the violence occurred amongst the Sinhalese themselves as left-wing, 'communist' insurgents (the JVP) tried to overthrow the government and were brutally repressed by the army and a Special Task Force. The villagers in Udaheenagama played a role in this 'insurgency' and 'counter-insurgency' violence. Party political conflict between pro-government and pro-opposition factions, inter-caste rivalry and criminality form the basis of 'public and political violence'. Finally 'domestic violence' often related to alcohol and substance abuse, or family feuds such as marriage and land disputes co-constitute a violent reality in Udaheenagama.

In this first part I describe the cycle of violence in Udaheenagama. The Western distinctions between 'inter-ethnic violence', 'insurgency and counter-insurgency violence', 'public and political violence', and 'domestic violence' however are not really adequate to describe the local, Udaheenagama understandings of this violent reality. I therefore use this classification only as a heuristic device and guideline for the presentation of the material. I will further problematize this Western categorisation throughout the thesis. In a context where a 'bourgeois public sphere' (as in Habermas 1962, also see Benhabib 1998) and the 'polis' (see Myers 1984, Watson-Gegeo 1990) cannot be taken for granted notions of ethnic, political, public or domestic violence are problematic. I therefore start with an analysis of 'the wild', a concept under which many different types of violence are subsumed, in order to describe the cycle of violence and a parallel cycle of containment of violence in Udaheenagama.
CHAPTER TWO.

A life-time under the gaze of the wild.

*Come in! Have some tea with a piece of Nirvana!*
Invitation by a ninety seven year old grandmother.

*I will be at ease only after having bought a bus.*
Remark of a young woman residing in a psychiatric ward.

Introduction

In this chapter I describe a conglomerate of expressions which are used by Udaheenagama people to talk about violence. This ethnography does not begin with a presentation of the social organisation or the history of violence of Udaheenagama. Only in the next chapter I intend to present these socio-historical circumstances in detail - as they were portrayed by people of the neighbourhoods under study. For the presentation of this local history of violence I rely heavily on transcripts of interviews and I thus first need to clarify the often ambiguous expressions Udaheenagama people use to hint at a violent reality.

Some terms within this conglomerate of expressions (e.g. *aaruudha*, *aveesa*) have commonly been translated as 'possession trance' and became the central concepts of ethnographic analyses of Sinhala Buddhist ecstatic religion and spirit possession. These terms have however been extirpated from a network of interrelated expressions. The meaning and uses of this group of expressions cannot be solely relegated to the realm of religion, illness or ritual healing. Many ethnographic analyses have highlighted the discourse on spirit religion or the discourse on mental illness but do not take the discourse on violence which these *same* expressions engender very seriously. The violent reality in which 'culture-bound-syndromes' or 'healing rites' occur is then portrayed by means of a gloss description and functions as the background against which possession states are depicted¹. Reading such ethnographic texts can easily lead to a comforting (and comfortable) derealisation in which the reader does not realise the extent to which the thus described reality is dominated by violence.

¹ See de Sardan (1992), who argues that what anthropologists have commonly approached as "African magico-religious notions" do not have a great deal in common with current Western concepts of "religion" (matters of faith, of conversion, of dogma) nor with current Western perceptions of "magic" (matters of the occult, out of the ordinary). He identifies the translation tools and translation procedures as "the crux of the problem" (13,14). Differences become exacerbated, an "overdramatised", "exoticised" and "occultised" picture (15) is created by the anthropologist, in a quest that has more to do with protecting the sense of identity (5) of a much criticised discipline than with genuine curiosity and inquiry. Likewise Kapferer (1997) describes sorcery and anti-sorcery practices in Southern Sri Lanka as mundane; they objectify the very real experience of relations of power and domination amongst human beings and are not so much mystical.
Exaggerated attention to the more 'exotic' cultural manifestations such as 'culture-bound-syndromes', 'ecstatic religion' or 'exorcism' which often form the main focus of the anthropological endeavour in Sri Lanka create a false sense of difference and distinctiveness between 'us' and 'them'. The more spectacular and rare forms of suffering are filtered from the everyday experiences and then become central within the anthropological text. This way of looking at things has, in my interpretation, produced a type of anaesthesia in which the reader is given the impression to be very different from these cultural Others and is protected from too close an identification with the informants.

I thus deliberately avoided ready-made translations of local expressions and did not set out using clear-cut anthropological descriptions such as 'women becoming possessed by the yaksha: evil supernatural beings at the bottom of the cosmic hierarchy who roam in forests and near rivers'. However I needed a paradigm on the basis of which I would try to understand the above-mentioned conglomerate of expressions. In view of the importance given to the role of the gaze in Sinhalese culture I used the gaze as the central notion for a very descriptive and necessarily interpretative type of translation.

'Being seen by others', or in other words 'being chaperoned or escorted', is central to the ideal of Sinhalese culture approximated in the everyday practices of Udaheenagama. Women and men alike tend to seek company when embarking on a journey into the public sphere. Women go to bathe in the river in little groups. Company is always arranged for

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2 In my opinion this effect is made worse in "ethnopsychiatric" research in which the informant is looked upon by the gaze of a psychiatrist combined with the gaze of an anthropologist (see Blue 1992: 397-484 for overview). The distance already presupposed in the discourse of the psychiatrist, in which there is often an institutionalised distance between the researcher and the represented, the psychiatrist and the mentally ill might make identification between ethnographer and informants even more difficult. Moreover ethnopsychiatric studies tend to present the suffering and extra-ordinary destiny of a few people within a culture, again leaving the ordinary, everyday living circumstances of the community in which such "culture-bound syndromes" might occur largely out of focus for the reader. When reading an ethnopsychiatric text one can feel twice as comfortable. First of all because one reads about the mentally ill who are by definition radically different from oneself. Secondly, the exoticised nature of some of those descriptions (cf. de Sardan 1992) creates another protective barrier against excessive and potentially painful identification.

3 In contemporary Sri Lanka this professional tendency towards anaesthesia and derealisation takes up an extra dimension. The relatively few Sri Lankan critics of the war against the LTTE in the North East (e.g. Iqbal Aththas in the Sunday Times, Roy Denish in the Sunday Leader) have frequently pointed at the middle-class strategy of radical differentiation, derealisation and anaesthesia. Large sections of the urban elite have created themselves as radically different from the "rural poor", are often ignorant of village realities and seem largely insensitive to war casualties as long as there are no "middle-class casualties". The circulation of such texts within the intellectual elites might bolster their sense of difference and distance from an exoticised other and eventually function as an additional anaesthetic.

4 For a critique of this translation see Scott 1994. Scott however bases his critique on historical, religious arguments.
the anthropologist even for long and time-consuming journeys on unpopular paths. People eagerly envelop themselves with the gaze of family members and friends on bus rides to town. One needs to find a place in the midst of a multiplicity of gazes: the protective (and judgmental) gazes of family members, the seductive gazes of potential lovers, the jealous and murderous gazes of enemies, the gazes of dead relatives, or more generally the gaze of the 'public' enforcing a Sinhala Buddhist ethos. This last gaze is challenged by the much talked about gaze of the wild, the gaze of unsocialized (non-human or human) beings who operate outside the norms of Sinhala Buddhist culture. Unlike in most of contemporary Euro-American popular culture these various gazes and their effects are explicitly present in Udaheenagama village discourse.

For example, a woman's ephemeral escape from the gaze of the public is called 'the moral mistake of being alone' (tanikam doosha). A momentous absence from the public gaze might lead to a dramatic drop in a woman's moral status. This does not necessarily mean that she was physically alone and had the chance to engage in activities prohibited by Sinhala Buddhist norms. She could, nevertheless, have a brief flash of unsocialized reverie at a moment when her attention was not fully commanded by her chaperones. At such moments she is said to be especially vulnerable to what I translate here as the 'gaze of the

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5 This is a gloss translation of samaadjaya, literally "society". Throughout the thesis I problematize the use of the notion "public" for a description of Udaheenagama and in later chapters I will avoid using the term "public".

6 These unsocialized beings are either yaksha (wild spirits) or preeta (spirits of the dead) and people can be afflicted by the gaze (disht'iya) of either of them.

7 I do not include Heidegger's, Sartre's, Fanon's, or Lacan's analyses of the gaze or the look within the notion of Western popular culture. Moreover I will not use their theories and vocabulary to describe the notion of the gaze as used in Udaheenagama discourses. If I would consider using such Western theoretical frameworks on the dynamics of the gaze I would first like to explore in which ways the existentialist notion of the gaze was influenced by Max Muller's India: What can it teach us? (1883). This type of exploration goes beyond the scope of a thesis in anthropology. I thus a-priori avoid using these Western philosophies of the gaze because I would not like to inadvertently get caught up in this circular movement of ideas: from the East to orientalist analyses to Western philosophy then re-applied in a Buddhist context. The gaze will nevertheless be the central notion of my descriptive translation of many of the concepts presented in this chapter. I will however stay as closely as possible to a local definition of the gaze as disht'iya or beilma.

8 Doosha is commonly translated as "moral fault or mistake", a gloss translation of tanikama would be "a state of being alone". For extensive descriptions of tanikam doosha see Obeyesekere 1981, Kapferer 1983, Scott 1994: 60-66. Obeyesekere translates tanikam doosha as "illness caused by "aloneness"" (1981:54). Kapferer defines tanikama as "mental and physical "aloneness" a symptom and precondition of demonic attack", and tanikam doosha as "illness arising out of boredom" (1983:378). Scott (1994:282) describes tanikama as "condition or state of mental apprehension that makes one vulnerable to the disturbing look of the yakku", and tanikam doosha as "the ill effects that result from being in a state of vulnerability to the malign eyesight of yakku". Here I give a slightly different translation, as an "absence of the gaze of the public" which is a possible interpretation - based on the importance given to the role of the gaze in Sinhala culture - of the more general translation "aloneness sickness".

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Photo 2: Grand mother bathing in a stream - the traditional place of the wild.
A gaze of beings that embody the antitheses to Sinhala Buddhist civilisation, such as excessive materialism, illicit love, or violence. At such a time, the forces of social control, enacted and experienced as the normative gaze of the public are replaced by a gaze that reinforces the norms of the wild and unsocialized enemies of Sinhala culture. People might choose momentarily to revel in this gaze and collude with the enemy, either through illicit and anti-social activities or through an imagined life beyond the control of contemporary society's norms and rules.

While in the discourse of rituals specialists this gaze of the wild can be ritually removed and the afflicted person can be healed, in the eyes of women such rituals are often an unfinished form of negotiation. During the ritual they might whisper to each other 'you see the gaze of the wild hasn't really gone yet', while the ritual specialist has actually just finished removing the gaze of the wild with the appropriate techniques of tradition. After such a ritual some women will argue that it didn't work, that the afflicted is still under the influence of the gaze of the wild. When looking back upon their lives, some will say they never got rid of this gaze of the wild and argue that they have spend a life-time under the gaze of the wild.

It has been well documented (e.g. Lewis 1989) that oppressed groups, for whom socialisation into mainstream society commonly leads to inhumane and tortured forms of existence, tend episodically to collude with the enemy; however this enemy is defined by that particular society, as 'barbarians', 'communists' or 'non-Buddhist yaksha'. They might engage in revolutionary discourse or more cautiously embody the habits of the enemy. In the latter case they temporarily behave like enemies, be it human or supernatural, or more commonly a combination of both. For example in Sri Lanka possessed women are said to behave like yaksha. Yaksha are commonly described as the evil spirits of the forest, but also as the original inhabitants of the island who were the human enemies of the conquering Sinhalese Buddhist warriors in ancient times. In this discourse ancient human enemies and spirits conceptualised together as yaksha lead the marginalised Sinhalese to unsociable forms of behaviour.

In local terms (what is commonly translated as) possession or trance (aaveesa, aaruudha) is dependent on firmly clenched fists or teeth (dat putuvelaa) which can not be opened by force. At least that is the criterion lay bystanders routinely use to assess whether a person

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9 For more comprehensive accounts of dishi'ya in Sinhalese culture, and more generally of ditthi (Pali) or drsti (Sanskrit) in the Indian subcontinent see Babb 1981, and Scott 1994: chapter 2, esp. note 4 p. 256).

10 Ritual specialists use the iigaha (Isvara's (Shiva's) sword) to asses whether a person is suffering from aaruudha (a trance) caused by a yaksha. If the afflicted person calms down when this sword is placed on her
is suffering from a genuine *aaruddha* (possession trance). In women's narratives about such experiences, the notion of *aaruddha* is usually accompanied by a series of other terms, referring to states experienced in conjunction with episodic trance states. These thus named states encompass the experiences of family conflict, domestic violence or political violence. An understanding of these local expressions was a necessary research tool to begin an analysis of violence and its representation in Udaheenagama. I therefore start this ethnography with a description of this local terminology which refers to experiences of conflict and violence.

2.1. *Inna beirikama*: 'Can't stay here'.

'*Inna beiriyoo!* is a common feature of women's laments. In its most plain translation this means 'can't live', 'can't be', 'can't stay'\(^1\). At moments of extreme suffering this little phrase says much to the people who know the sufferer's situation well, while concealing awkward truths for the outsider\(^2\). To me its full weight only slowly revealed itself. As I soon realised, learning Sinhala has less to do with being taught the referential meaning of words, than with problematizing the possible local, contextualised meanings of words that are otherwise easy to translate. *Inna beiriyoo* is one such example. It would echo through the neighbourhood when somebody was breaking down. If such laments were loud and socially unacceptable bystanders would say the person was suffering from an altered state of consciousness, was struck by the gaze of a wild spirit, or was talking nonsense. Sometimes such a person does speak with the voice of a spirit, or articulates the spirit's demands, but this is only one form of communication at such moments of unbearable pain. Such situations are commonly described by the ritual specialist, the anthropologist and the sufferer's family as an altered state of consciousness or possession state, as one tends to focus on the climax and most striking features of such events. But the lamenting voice often fluctuates between representing the spirit's position, and taking up a human position. It is this human discourse, at the edge of the discourse of the spirits that I would like to explore, first by looking at *inna beirikama* (a state in which, by definition, one cannot live).

One night, at four am, when a ritual was danced in Galkanda, the sound of the drumming had stopped and a sudden piercing noise awoke those who had gone to sleep. A middle aged widow, suffering from *disht'iya* (the gaze of the wild) and for whom the ritual was being performed suddenly started screaming. She hit the floor wildly, twisted and turned,

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\(^{1}\) *Inna*: to be, to live, *beiei* or *beiri*: cannot.

\(^{2}\) See section 5.2. for a description of this strategy of communication.
but this time she did not forward the wishes of the spirits to the eager audience. Instead she
spoke to her daughter, who died about fifteen years ago, and her mother:

[1] Huu, huu, huu... you see, I can't (bear it), you see, I am coming also, I am
coming also my daughter, huu, huu, huu, I am coming also daughter, I can't
(bear it) my dearest friend, I can't stay (inna beiriyoo), you see I am suffering
from sorrow, even my mother doesn't recognise this, 7 funerals! [expression of
despair] I am suffering from sorrow, my mother, 7 funerals!, mother doesn't see
I am suffering from sorrow, you see, mother!, mother!, I can't stay!, I can't stay!
(inna beiriyoo)...

People often told me they suffered from inna beirikama. This would frequently be
mentioned together with complaints about chronic headaches, chronic stomach aches, lack
of appetite (kanna beirikama)\textsuperscript{13} and lack of bodily strength (eingat'a pan'a neiei). During
crisis situations women would lie on the floor for hours, speechless and motionless while
every now and again they would whisper words like 'mother', 'can't stay', 'can't'. All too
often this situation of inna beirikama went along with periodic attempts to flee away from
home. If young and middle aged women attempt to flee they are usually violently
restrained by a group of family members. As such a struggling woman is physically
controlled or hit, she might hit back and scream, sometimes 'inna beiei', 'can't stay'. An
elderly woman from Bamarabokka, who has tried to run away from home many times
explains:

[2] Even now they don't let me sleep, the bloodthirsty yaksha comes and eats all
this [moves her hands over her whole body], eats, pulls me down, I can't stay
here (inna beiei), after a protective thread was tied around my arm it stopped,
now it has been a month since we tied the thread, after that I had no dreams,
now it is difficult to organise a ritual, I have no income now, ... , what is there
to be done?, now there is no point in me dancing a ritual, now I am old, 95, so
how many days more? [laughs].

While she wondered 'how many days more?' her family members explained how she tends
to suffer from reduced consciousness (sihiya aduyi), the gaze of the wild (disht'iya) and
how she then packs her bags and attempts to leave the house. 'Yes', she adds, 'I once even
tried to flee through the window'. Her situation is rather unusual since she still suffers from
such problems at the age of 95. Other elderly ladies would simply pack their bags and
leave in a fury, only to arrive in another household of their extended family, where their
sudden arrival would sometimes go unnoticed and only surprised the anthropologist.

\textsuperscript{13} This can be translated as "a lack of appetite" but also often includes "a refusal of food", which is a
statement of superiority and disdain vis-à-vis disliked family members (see section 2.2).
Young men tend to suffer from more life-threatening *inna beirikama*. They are sometimes given the freedom to try to start a life in a different household of the extended family or in the army, where their life-expectancy is limited. Despite this possibility of escape many of them commit suicide\(^\text{14}\), 'because of anger and *inna beirikama*' people would usually say. A father from Puvakden'iya whose son had committed suicide a few days earlier and who regretted he had not managed to convince his son to join the army in time explained:

[3] (He) can eat and drink at any time he wants, we keep the food on top of the table, he sleeps and eats whenever he wants, even if there is no food for me he leaves often after having eaten\(^\text{15}\), he went to work in a shop in Akuressa, he ran away from that place, after having beaten up a child over there [laughs], then we kept him in Galle, in the house of our aunt, he even left that place and came back, he can't stay in any place (*kaybavat inna beinee*),... when you tell him things, he doesn't listen at all, it is the age, nineteen is the age of bad times, it happened just as he was getting to the end of his nineteenth year [that he committed suicide], at that age you must take care of your children.

This young man's movements were relatively unrestrained, compared to the aborted flights of many young and middle aged women. After drinking poison he survived for 2 weeks, and even though young men's restlessness is usually attributed to planetary influences his restlessness and violence were somehow connected to the gaze of the wild and *inna beirikama* by a young woman in his neighbourhood:

[4] He was running around here and there that day of course, it could be a *disht'iya*, and there must be the pain of drinking poison also, he had run here and there, had gone to hit the children, just like the *disht'iya*\(^\text{16}\), so when you have drunk poison you are confused, you are confused because of the fear of imminent death,... it is said that until he died he didn't have any other illness,... he suddenly drank poison, when he was unable to stay (*inna beiri*) he suddenly drank poison.

Udaheenagama people tend to move around a lot. I would label Udaheenagama society as restless and the household units it is made of as volatile and rapidly changing. Unhappy teenage boys and young men try their luck elsewhere, and are often on the move between

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\(^{15}\) The father speaks of his dead son in the present tense. The present tense is often used where English speakers would expect a past tense.

\(^{16}\) Here she makes a quite explicit connection between the gaze of the wild (the *disht'iya*) and violent human behaviour.
households of the extended family, moving between village, provincial town or the Colombo suburbs. Soldiers who 'couldn't stay' in the army are living the hectic life of deserters constantly moving from one household to the other within their villages, in search of temporary safety from punitive police raids. Elderly ladies are restless too. Young working women move back and forth between the village and the free trade zones or the Middle East. Others are meant to stay at home, society cannot afford them to be on the move even if they 'can't stay' either. A mother from upper Puvakden'iya, the head of her household explains:

[5] They have thrown stones at a house17, can't live in this place (inna beiei), it is a great sorrow when somebody gets drunk and shouts, there are young men living here who are drunk, there is a place where they sell liquor [worried and tearful], when our men go there it is a great trouble, sorrow, as soon as they get some free time they go there, [my husband] did not use to do this, but after he came to live in this village he started to do this, the police often come and arrest two or three people, after having been released they start again, it goes on like that.

But few people are very explicit about this; after all it is shameful. Such critical comments are an extremely rare occurrence within the public sphere, saturated as it is by a Sinhala Buddhist nationalist ethos. So it took me a long time to start to see the extent of the general malaise. As the examples have shown, the 'state of not being able to stay' cross-cuts gender lines and age groups. Although I cannot provide firm statistics, my data suggest that it affects men and women, young and old to a similar extent. It also affects wild spirits as well as humans. Far from being the source of 'pure evil' it is often assumed to be in the literature, the gaze of the wild (disht'iya) sometimes even avoids certain people because of their cruelty. The gaze of the wild is said to be 'unable to stay' (inna beirikama) with such people. A young ritual specialist from Galkanda explains:

[6] Even the disht'i [the gazes of the wild] are afraid, now if we [the ritual specialists] would take a torch, none of the disht'iya would be summoned, those (disht'i) are very scared, that is what happens, the yaksha does not hit a drunken person, they don't look, the disht'i are scared, if people say some person behaves like a yaksha18 [is violent] the disht'i shiver and tremble, (the disht'i) tremble away from the places in which they used to stay,..., they can't stay.

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17 This remark is deliberately vague and I never got to know more details about this incident (see section 5.2 for a description of this cautious type of communication).
18 The wild spirits particularly avoid yaksha-like people (see section 6.2).
Photo 3: Young ritual specialist: 'Even the wild spirits are afraid'.
2.2. *Penanna beiei*: 'Can't bear to look (at my family members), can't stand the sight of them'.

Similarly, in situations of family conflict or domestic violence people themselves stop looking at the people that surround them, they don't return their gazes. They then participate less in the visual social referencing that is constantly going on within a group. Victimisation is experienced at the ocular level by being gazed upon without daring or wanting to gaze for oneself. *Penanna beiei*, 'can't look', the same words are used by people who have lost their appetite and can't stand the sight of food. They are disgusted. In fact, not being able to look at food and at family members often goes hand in hand; refusal of food also being an expression of disdain and disgust towards the person who offered the food. In everyday life one's field of vision might become reduced, or narrowed down in order not to see certain things, to combat *inna beirikama* ('can't stay') and to be able to 'stay' and 'live' within the household. Such victims of oppressive gazes withdraw from the everyday, moment to moment socialisation brought about by noticing human gazes and responding to the gaze of human others. Inevitably, in situations of withdrawal, the protective and judgmental gazes of kin and the gaze of the public lose some of their powers. It is thus not surprising that people who complain about severe and prolonged *penanna beiei* ('can't look') are said to suffer from *disht'iya*, a predominance of the gaze of the wild. More faithfully to local discourse one could say that *disht'iya* and *penanna beiei* go hand in hand, and when *penanna beiei* reaches extreme proportions, it is understood to be caused by the gaze of the wild. For example, a ritual specialist explained what happened to a middle-aged widow from Pein'igahakanda:

[7] The *disht'iya* fell on her, she did not stay at home, it is because she dislikes staying at home, after we tied a protective thread [around her arm] it got better.

And the widow added:

[8] In those days I saw dreams, I suffered less after the offerings were given, I saw various nonsensical things in my dreams, it happens that I can't stand the sight (*penanna beiei*) of the people in the house, I can't stay at home (*inna beirikama*).

A young man struggling to make a living despite the ongoing political victimisation of people who supported the insurgents in 1988-1991 described a similar situation:

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19 See Yalman (1969) for a description of the meaning of refusing and accepting cooked food (90-92).
When the gaze of dead relatives is there, nothing you do is successful, illnesses, troubles emerge, you can't stand each other (penanne beiei), so you clear away the dishti'ya by making offerings, this house had the dishti'ya of our dead mother,..., she loved this daughter immensely, so mother died while being sad about leaving her daughter, when mother died, the dishti'ya has stricken the daughter,..., the soothsayer said that our mother has come, it is also said that there is a dishti'ya of a person who died during the dreadful times [the civil war], so how can we know?, later when we searched and looked, there had been a person who got killed on that side of the paddy field during the eighties, he too is someone who has visited this house,..., all these people had become spirits and had turned their gaze on us, there was a lot of trouble, these two [my two sons] could not stand the sight of each other (penanna beiei), the son and father would fight, or the two sons would fight; it happens when the gaze of the dead is there, on the last day of my mother's life she had asked about her daughter, she died thinking about her daughter, the other one was killed by the army or something like that [this is a cautious way of saying that he was a JVP insurgent].

2.3. Dishti'ya veihenavaa, aaruudha, or aaveesa: People covered and closed off by the gaze of the wild.

In situations of extreme suffering a person does not look at anybody anymore and just stares into the void, speechless, motionless and stiff, sickened by the dishti'ya. The dishti'ya is understood to have fallen upon somebody (dishti'ya veit'enavaa) or is covering and 'closing' a person (dishti'ya veihenavaa). The notion of closure might reveal something about the experience of suffering from dishti'ya in such a radical way. People do not elaborate upon this experience; they usually can hardly remember anything at all, and just mention 'being closed off by the gaze of the wild'. I thus rely on the recitations of a ritual specialist for a more explicit description of this experience. While tying a protective thread around the arm of a motionless woman in an attempt to remove this obnoxious gaze he chanted and described the experience of opening up a person closed off by the gaze of the wild:

[10] It is like:
as if the tight bark (potta) of a tree tightens itself around the tree, and is finally so tight and dry as to disappear without a trace,
as if the old leaves have fallen off the Naa tree and the Boo tree and the new leaves are budding,
as if the mud on top of a rock has dried out and disappears,
as if you remove the skin of an aralu fruit, a nelli fruit, or an arecanut,
as if the desiccated skins of those fruits disappear,
as if you undress a woman, take off her blouse and put it away,

Veihenavaa is the involutive form of vahanavaa, to close.
Photo 4: Ritual specialist and motionless woman covered by the gaze of the wild.
as if you remove the railings of a bridge,
as if you peel off the skin (potta) of the siyambala fruit,
as if you climbed down into the lake of Amaa, into the water of life, the
sweetest water, bathed and emerged anew,
as if you build a wall and then destroy it,
as if a frog escapes from the mouth of a cobra,
as if you shoot an arrow with a golden bow and the illnesses of the great and
ancient city of Vishala disappeared,
as if you brought a thousand Brahmins and performed a gigantic ritual,
as if the skin of the king of the snakes had matured and was falling off.

These metaphors, the tight bark of a tree, the desiccated skin of fruits, the used skin of
snakes evoke a 'dry, fragile skin' (e.g. kora potta) of people who suffer. A withdrawn
person who literally has lost touch with people or rather was made to lose touch might
experience a skin that can be metaphorically described as a 'dry, fragile skin'. Oily skin is
associated with strong and intense relationships; for example the fragrance of the oily skin
of a baby inhaled by his parents, the oily skin of flirting teenagers, or young people's
hands being taken and sniffed at by the elderly to inhale and to imbue themselves with the
fragrance of oily skins. It is as if people experiencing this closure by the gaze of the wild
suffer from an enclosure in a dry, unattractive, and as it were untouchable skin. Of course
this is not a sudden occurrence as if somebody would suddenly 'become possessed by a
spirit'. It rather goes hand in hand with the above mentioned penanna beiei and inna
beirikama. Only when it reaches extreme proportions and people look back on it, does the
dish'tiya start to be mentioned. This is however but one possible course of events, and
more often than not, much more violent situations also play a part in causing this closure by
the gaze of the wild.

2.4. Hita bayayif kalpanaava neiei, vikaara or anang manang: A terrified heart, an
emptied mind and the confusion of the terrified.
When seeing a person lying on the floor, motionless, stiff and voiceless, for long hours or
sometimes for days at a time, a very painful doubt might befall the anthropologist: 'What is
this person going through?' and more to the point: 'What happened to her or him?' A way

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21 To gossip about a flirtatious boy one can say: "eyaa harima telee, eyaat'a telee veid'i": literally "he is very
oily, he has too much oil".
22 Note how similar this is to the preoccupation with desiccating ailments described in Osella and Osella's
ethnography of a rural community in Kerala (1996). Such ailments are caused by a lack of cooling and
lubricating fluid within the body: "sneham". Snehham can also be translated as affection, love, tenderness
(ibid.: 38). Osella and Osella used the following metaphors to describe the role of sneham and the
desiccating ailments caused by the lack of sneham: "Sneham, characteristically passed by those in intimate
relationships, allows for an unrestricted flow or healthy circulation, "greasing" the persons who are points of
articulation, avoiding the development of arthritic tightness or blockages which might break social
articulation" (ibid.: 52).
out, at least for the researcher, is to participate in a translated version of the local discourse that gives meaning and makes understandable such situations of unbearable pain. After putting the local terminology through a cultural-specific translation into English\textsuperscript{23} I could have thought the following: 'A possessed woman is lying there, she might even be mentally ill, soon enough a healing ritual will be organised and the demons will be exorcised'. The only doubt that would then remain concerns the efficacy of such a ritual, but this might be dismissed as a problem for later. Sometimes though such (anthropological) thoughts and rationalisations did not assuage my doubts and the awful feelings of unease that such situations bring about. I thus describe moments in which this anthropological jargon would cross my mind, situations in which I would have welcomed this type of anaesthesia but sooner or later doubt would settle in and the initial comfort of the above mentioned derealisation and anaesthesia would fade.

The discourse about people afflicted by the \textit{disht'iya} of the \textit{yaksha} explains how the Buddha only allowed the \textit{yaksha} to throw their gaze on the human world at certain times of the day (cf. Kapferer 1983, Scott 1994). The gaze of the wild is allowed to be there at midday, six o'clock in the evening, midnight, and six o'clock in the morning. That is when most people are said to have fallen ill, or when people are said to start suffering from \textit{disht'iya} and enter an altered state of consciousness (\textit{aaruudha, aaveesa}). This is most clearly marked during major rituals that last up to thirty hours. During these performances the afflicted, entranced person is encouraged to tremble, dance, or speak in tongues around these specific times. The narratives about a woman's illness prior to a ritual often also mention these specific times. Some narratives are straightforward and coherent, for example the sick person has started speaking like a wild spirit at midnight, she/ he was screaming and hitting people, just like a \textit{yaksha}.

But there were also very hesitant narratives that made me uneasy, and started to make me aware of the human discourse on the edge of the discourse about spirits, of the ambiguity inherent in the discourse about the \textit{yaksha}\textsuperscript{24}. This ambiguity, the constant possibility of fluctuation between discourse about the yaksha and human discourse tends to get lost during the translation process. A young man from Heendolakanda recalled his mother's illness in the following way:

\textsuperscript{23} For an elaborate analysis of the problems of "culture-specific translations" in relation to the Sinhala Yaktovil ritual see Scott 1994: chapters 4 and 5.
\textsuperscript{24} A similar issue was raised by Humprey (1999) when she argued that 'it was impossible to tell whether they were talking about traditional shamanic spirits or the unkind, cruel thoughts of living people, the evil powers which so oppressed Nadia on the bus' (9).
She tried to run away, we had to prevent her from doing so, it wasn't easy, then she called and invited the yaksha*, she was calling each yaksha by his name, she was talking in this way, and she was also talking a lot of nonsense,..., if we would come close to her, she would chase us away, if we didn't leave immediately she hit us,..., then she was slamming her hands on the bed, didn't let anybody sleep.

Saying that a person was talking 'nonsense' (vikaara, anang manang) is a standard way of not having to quote that person, of ignoring and annihilating what was said or of conveying that the speaker simply wasn't making sense. Moreover, in my interpretation, this piece of narrative is again an example of human discourse that operates at the edge of the discourse about the spirits. This woman does not entirely take up the identity of a yaksha, as she calls and invites the yaksha (see transcript *) she does not transgress the boundaries of a human identity. She maintains a human position and yet is engaged in socially unacceptable behaviour (vikaara gatiya: most commonly translated as 'behaviour that doesn't make any sense'). While holding on to her human identity, she creates a human discourse tangential to the discourse about the spirits. She plays with the ambiguity which the discourse on the gaze of the wild encompasses and easily moves back and forth between a human position with its human discourse and the identity of a yaksha which brings about the discourse on wild spirits.

To clarify further how this human discourse at the edge of the discourse about the spirits operates I present another narrative. This narrative relied more heavily on a less ambiguous discourse of disht'iya and aaruudha ('spirit possession') yet lead me to that same unease, doubt and worry. An angry grandfather from lower Puvakden'iya spoke to me about his teenage granddaughter who was working in a textile factory in the free trade zone. She first fell ill when she was in seclusion during her puberty ritual, at the age of thirteen. Her mother tended not to speak to anybody, her face was scarred from having been burnt. The neighbours simply said she had poured acid over herself. The teenage girl's inebriated father lay unconscious on the bed, as the grandfather explained:

From time to time, at twelve or six or times like that, she tries to leave, we need several people to restrain her, and we can't communicate with her then, she doesn't recognise us, can't move her hands and legs, her teeth get locked as if with a key, you can't separate the teeth, you must put a spoon in her mouth and open it like that, then she can't speak anymore.

Some narratives manage to remain in the strictly 'cosmological' jargon of a nevertheless potentially ambiguous discourse, others don't quite manage and slip into what could be interpreted as descriptions of domestic violence. After a while the idiom of disht'iya,
*aaruudha* or spirit possession lost most of its power to assuage my worries. Motionless bodies on the floor started to look more like the results of violent encounters, bodies recoiled onto themselves to prevent further abuse. I felt impelled to consider whether such states were the consequences of *inna beirikama* ('can't stay') and attempts to flee (though this particular person, unlike young men, had been unable to get away).

The discourse regarding wild spirits leaves some room to explicitly refer to violence and fear though. The discourse stresses how sudden terror or a startle reaction (*hita bayayi, geisma*) leads to the gaze of the wild falling upon people, 'covering' and immobilising them. A person gets terrified by the sight of 'the wild', and as 'the wild' looks back its gaze affects the person. Or, more correctly, it all happens in one moment, the moment of being face to face with the wild leads to *baya* and *disht'iya*, terror and being affected by the gaze of the wild. The traditional forms of fear and terror are caused by seeing a snake or other large reptile, or by a branch suddenly falling off a tree. Those are the most commonly cited causes of fear, both in local explanatory discourses and in the anthropological literature (Kapferer 1983, Obeyesekere 1984, Wirz 1954).

Another type of fear that people mention is the terror caused by of humans (*manusha bayayi*). All agree this is much more difficult to cure, than fear caused by an animal or a *yaksha*. Terror brought about by a human is much more violent than one caused by a yaksha (*yakkunge baya*). Though this fear of humans will also lead to the gaze of the wild affecting you, the illness resulting from this will be much more severe. Some will even argue you cannot do anything about it, the rituals won't work. Narratives of assaults in the public sphere are what commonly comes to women's minds when asked about 'terror [caused] by humans': 'somebody jumped on me'; 'suddenly somebody appeared in front of me'.

A situation of being terrified by close family members which I assume could be part of the above mentioned domestic situations is not given a separate status within this discourse. In such instances the suffering person is given a more pro-active role, in other words is said

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25 I must say that one healer from lower Puvakden'iya, who is specialised in treating children, did make an explicit link between children's fear of abusive parents, "terror [caused] by humans" (*manussa baya*) and children's illnesses. He is a ritual specialist from the cultivator caste and takes up a very marginal position within the group of ritual specialists I worked with. He only works in the neighbourhood of Puvakden'iya itself. As he is specialised in treating young children his frame of reference for diagnosis and treatment is different from the other healers who treat both adults and children. Those other (both male and female) ritual specialists would generally link children's troubles with the gaze of the wild (*disht'iya*) affecting their family members or the whole household and do not use the category of "terror [caused] by humans" to explain children's malaise.
to be suffering from *inna beirikama* ('can't stay') or *penanna beiei* ('can't stand the sight of them'), or is not taken seriously at all and is said to suffer from nonsensical behaviour (*vikaara gatiya*), an emptied mind (*kalpanaava neiei*) and diminished consciousness (*sihi aduyi*) caused by the *yaksha*. The enemy within the nuclear family is left out of focus within the discourse on 'terror [caused] by *yaksha*', unlike what happens in narratives of assault where the 'fear of a human' is made explicit.

The 'terrified hearts' (*hita bayayi*) caused by what I would classify as political or public violent events were not clearly attributed to 'terror [caused] by humans' either. A middle aged woman from Puvakden'iya narrates how she feared for her son's life after a large bomb exploded in central Colombo:

[13a] It was the 15th (of October) around six in the evening, there had been that bomb blast, and our son lives in Colombo, because of that I was very scared, it was pouring rain that afternoon, and because of that scare I was thinking and thinking, a friend of my daughter arrived and screamed loudly and stepped into the house, I didn't expect anybody that afternoon, so I thought she was bringing bad news,... , I could see her coming, even before I saw her I was already very scared, but when I was looking at her I got a sudden fright, her hair was lose and she was wearing a black T-shirt, I didn't recognise her immediately, so my legs started trembling,... , then suddenly around six o'clock I suddenly couldn't move my neck, and my head became stiff,... , my body was trembling and trembling as if being hit, couldn't move my neck, then I vomited and went to the toilet, my legs were stiffened, my hands and feet were trembling,...

At the time of the ritual which was subsequently held, this woman's sixteen year old daughter described this very same situation in the following way. In the midst of the turmoil of the preparations for the ritual and surrounded by peers and family members she chose to summarise her mother's illness history and the narrative loses much of its ambiguity:

[13b] Mother has been very tired lately, when she is tired she vomits, didn't eat or drink, needed support to go to the toilet, she had a pain in her neck, she vomited and had diarrhoea, her illness gets worse at midnight, she shouts at midnight, she is suffering from the *disht'iya* of the great cemetery *yaksha*.

This woman made a spectacular recovery after the ritual; she was well for the rest of the year. Her condition was not attributed to a *manusha baya*, a 'fear of humans' though. In her family's narrative the Colombo bomb blast was never mentioned, nor was her daughter's scary friend, whom the mother thought was bringing bad news about her son. It is very rare for a woman to visit another household with lose hair, so maybe she was also panicking and
thereby frightening her friend's mother. Even in the mother's narrative the non-human qualities of this girl are brought to the foreground, lose hair and black clothes, the characteristics featuring prominently in descriptions of the yaksha. Her fear was relegated to the world of the yaksha and so was the remedy.

Another example of terror and illness that could have been attributed entirely to what we would call 'cruel humans' but wasn't is narrated by a young man from lower Puvakden'iya. He ended up in very much the same state as some of the women mentioned above:

[14] I don't remember very well, I wasn't very conscious in those days, ... I only regained consciousness at three o'clock in the morning when almost half the ritual had been performed, during the ritual I was in a trance state (aaveesa), they made me dance,... it is said that I did nonsensical things (vikaara), it is said that I didn't move, I just stayed in one place and I did odd things (anang manang),... it was during the civil war, people had been killed that night, I had closed my shop, and I was coming home on my bicycle, they [the army] were burning and burning [His wife clarifies: They were burning a heap of dead bodies]26, I had been on my bicycle, but I must have left it there, I had somehow come back home but it was as if I couldn't make sense (vikaaren vagee), I had come home without being conscious of it, I reached the house, entered and fell down,... after I was cured I went to Kataragama and made a vow, after that every year we [the whole family] went, every year on the first of January we go to Kataragama,... yes that was the first time I ever got terrified.

I had first learned to understand vikaara and anang manang as the 'nonsensical behaviour and speech of possessed women', 'nonsense' being the standard translation of these words. Family members use to summarise the possibly violent confrontations at times 'when a suffering person's consciousness is reduced' as vikaara or anang manang. But, as this example shows us, one could equally translate these concepts as the confusion and mindless acts so typical of the panic of the terrified. Such words, vikaara and anang manang contain and reflect two discourses, on the one hand the discourse of the relatively unaffected people and/or perpetrators and on the other hand the discourse of the victim. It depends upon which position the translator chooses within this field of contesting discourses whether these words mean 'the nonsense of the possessed' or 'the confusion of the terrified'. The second translation leads one to highlight the terror of domestic violence that might go along with 'can't stay' (inna beirikama), 'can't stand the sight of them' (penanna beiei), and 'terrified heart' (hita bayayi), which all eventually might lead to frequent encounters with

26 If it were not for his wife's explication of her husband's discourse I would not have realised what he was talking about. This is another example of a deliberately vague discourse, a communicative strategy I will address in section 5.2.
'the gaze of the wild' *(disht'iya)* and a final closure by this gaze *(disht'iya veihenavaa, aaruudha, aaveesa)*.

I used the exceptional example of this young successful shopkeeper suffering from a reduced state of consciousness to introduce this dimension of *anang manang* and *vikaara* (nonsense/terror). His state was described with the same idioms commonly used for troublesome women. The enemy was denied his/her humanity and the world of the *yaksha* was evoked. This happens very rarely to young men, and most commonly women's suffering within the domestic sphere manifests itself as an altered state of consciousness, a closure by the gaze of the wild. But from time to time women's reactions to political violence are also described in this same way (*anang manang, vikaara, aaveesa*), and in such narratives the connection between a woman's reduced consciousness, terror and self-defence is made more obvious for the outsider. A woman from Heendolakanda in her mid-twenties was frightened by a gun fight between members of two different neighbourhoods, who also belong to separate castes and political parties. Many small scale rituals were performed for this young woman. A week later she finally regained consciousness and explained:

[15] [about previous fear and terror] When my mind gets terrified I get it, I was chatting in the courtyard [of my parental home] and at once I fell down, I didn't know, I don't remember anything,... after I came to my husband's house I fell ill again, there, on that road, some people got shot, at about midnight, it is after that that my heart got terrified, my husband, the father of my children got ready to go out, I kept talking to him, telling him not to go, I was near him trying to convince him, after that I fell down, it was night, the sound of shootings, we had gone to a *pirit* ritual and had come back, along the path way up the hill, they were already having an argument on the road, we had to pass by them quickly, it wasn't a long time after we had come back, that we heard the gunshots, my heart felt terrified, when it gets dark I am terrified to go from our little hut to the kitchen,... , when it is dark I am even too terrified to step outside the house, I always fear of the same thing, when it gets dark I see two or three people approaching, carrying guns.

[her neighbour adds]: they did a ritual for her but after the ritual specialist left she started to scream again 'mother, chase them, chase them away', she was screaming and disappeared under the bed, 'chase that person away' she would scream, so we went to get the ritual specialist again.

The human enemies in these narratives about public/ political violence are brought into focus to a certain extent. At least they are briefly mentioned, while they are entirely absent from descriptions of domestic situations that lead to reduced consciousness. There the human enemy within the nuclear family is entirely left out of focus, he/she is never
mentioned. In all three instances though - domestic, public or political violence - the enemy tends to become dehumanised fairly quickly however close his or her relationship with the victim might be. In the act of terrifying somebody the enemy immediately loses his human qualities (manussa kamak) and his affiliation to the human world of Sinhala Buddhists. A slightly eccentric ritual specialist made this explicit to me, by taking the argument about terror and the gaze of the wild a step further. I asked him how 'terror caused by humans' can be treated, since many women had told me that this is a difficult matter. He answered:

[16] In fact it is the same, when you are scared of a human, the gaze of the wild falls upon you, the gaze of a wild-human (manussa disht'iya) doesn't fall upon you, the gaze of a wild-human simply doesn't exist, when a human frightens you, your heart startles, and an altered state of consciousness caused by a wild being, a yaksha (yaksha aaruudha) befalls you.

Indeed, it had to be explained to me that a 'wild-human' is a contradiction in terms. When terrified by a human, people are said to be struck by the gaze of the wild. At the moment of being threatened or attacked by a human, one often does not discern many human qualities in the perpetrator (manussa kamak neiei). During this moment of looking, being looked at and looking back, although the victim might initially see a human (manussa baya), it is only the wild that looks back at its victim (yaksha disht'iya). So it is not surprising that in many discourses 'terror caused by humans' is simply not mentioned, since it is the wild that looks at its victim and eventually the victim only sees a wild being. Both this ritual specialist and most women agree that the suffering from the gaze of the wild caused by a 'terror caused by humans' is of a slightly different nature compared to 'being terrified by a yaksha', in the sense that the suffering related to 'terror [caused] by humans' is more difficult to alleviate.

I postulate that the notion of 'terror caused by humans' (manussa bayayi) plays a role in a process of discursive change. For lack of historical background material on manussa bayayi, this is but a hypothesis and 'terror caused by humans' is an element of the discourse on violence which would be worthwhile to follow up in the future. To come up with the notion of 'terror caused by humans' the discourse on the wild has gone through a process of disambiguation, a move away from the ambiguous notion of disht'iya, which somehow both encompasses wild humans and non-humans. In most instances though, 'terror caused by humans' is not evoked and the potentially ambiguous yaksha bayayi (fear of yaksha) is still the dominant way to talk about terror and its effects. It is therefore important to retain the ambiguous quality of the discourse on disht'iya when translating it into English. It is more
than a discourse about spirit possession and ecstatic religion and it is therefore crucial to pay attention to its ambiguous nature in order to be able to use this terminology as a research tool for a study of violence.

2.5. *Disht'iya karanavaa: To summon the gaze of the wild.*

The final part of this chapter again explores the border-zone between discourses about humans and the discourse about spirits. Here I do not limit the analysis to a description of the ambiguous discourse on *disht'iya* but I relate this discursive ambiguity to ambiguous practices: everyday domestic and public forms of violence in ritual contexts. In this instance the ambiguity is not limited to the level of discourse but articulates itself at the level of practice being constituted by the permeability and mutual interpenetration of ritual violence and interpersonal violence. The pieces of transcript I used in the previous sections of this chapter were mainly reflecting everyday life or the small scale rituals that are important on an everyday basis. In this part I venture into the domain of the well-known large-scale *tovil* 'healing rituals' or 'possession rites'; domestic cleansing rituals. They have been endowed with many interpretations (e.g. Kapferer 1983, 1997, Obeyesekere 1969, 1970, Scott 1994, Wirz 1954) and their healing powers have been well documented. If I warily return to them once again, it is for the specific purpose of highlighting the permeability of the boundary between everyday forms of domestic and public violence and the violence of ritual practice.

de Sardan (1994) criticised the fact that the therapeutic effect of rites labelled as 'healing rites' is often taken for granted by researchers and is not seen as varying from one historical period to the next (23). In some cases the notion 'ritual therapy' might have become an anachronism. The discourse on curing patients through *tovil* rituals, though, is widely accepted in Udaheenagama and is the dominant discourse. But other discourses portray a life-time of suffering from the gaze of the wild, and do not endow those rituals with so much 'therapeutic value'. Women state with some reserve only 'it is said that those rituals remove the gaze of the wild and make a patient healthy'. I take this to mean they evoked the dominant discourse but did not completely identify with it27. In bringing this discourse to the foreground I follow in the footsteps of Nabokov (1997), the Nabokov-Lewis discussion (1998), and Seizer (1997) who all pay attention not to the therapeutic, but to the oppressive role of such ritual events. The central research questions are then not whether these rituals have therapeutic efficacy or not, or from which theoretical-anthropological perspective therapeutic efficacy is best explained. Rather, the task is to identify the local conflicting discourses and to find out how the discourse on 'therapy' has become the

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27 See more comments on this strategy of quoting others in section 7.4.
dominant one in this specific local context (see research strategy advocated in de Sardan 1994).

An alternative has been to label such rites under the wider category of ritual 'rebounding violence' (Bloch 1992: chapter 3) or as 'clandestine, ecstatic religion' (Lewis 1989: 80). This method of analysis might be too narrowly cosmological though. In Bloch's or Lewis's models ritual practices are made meaningful for a Western audience by heavily relying on one discourse, a religious one. We are shown how these practices 'make sense' within a local cosmology and religious logic. In other words, as readers, we are convinced that this violence is a highly controlled and culturally specific type of violence, and that it becomes meaningful and understandable (at an intellectual level) through an analysis of local cosmological discourse and its links with local political practices. We are made to forget that these violent events might have 'very real' effects on the participants that cannot be fully comprehended or accounted for through such methods of analysis\(^{28}\) (cf. Whitehouse's 1996 critique of Bloch 1992\(^{29}\)).

Those, what I provisionally call 'very real' effects might be meaningful to local people or are understood by anthropologists as meaningful to local social life (cf. Whitehouse 1996, Kapferer 1998 on the revitalisation of the habitus) or they might not make sense to everybody. In this latter instance it could thus be argued that ritual violence is not more meaningful then for example domestic violence and its (real) effects. To explore this last possibility I describe the particular content that is given to ritual violence during the Sinhala tovil ritual. I especially focus on the various forms of violence that co-constitute 'ritual' violence, some of which are socially unacceptable, shameful and meaningless within the dominant Sinhala Buddhist discourse on ritual practice.

**Intimidation and surrender to the enemy.**
An immobile, gaze-less and voiceless person closed off by the gaze of the wild (*disht'iya veihenavaa*) is seen as having surrendered to it and ceased to fight back. A human victim who takes part in such a tovil ritual, only partially surrenders to the enemy and is ultimately made to remain in touch with the world of humane beings and Sinhala Buddhist culture. Instead substitutes take over the victim's role of fulfilling the perpetrator's wishes. For

\(^{28}\) For example Bloch concludes that rebounding violence effects an "ideological transformation" (1992:43).

\(^{29}\) "One gains the impression that an equally satisfactory result could be achieved in the *embahi* ceremony by symbolically killing the novices *without actually frightening them*. I will try to show that this is not the case" (original emphasis, Whitehouse 1996:706). Indeed one is given the impression that the cosmological logic presented to us by Bloch (1992) is the same reality *that makes people engage* in the ritual locally. As Whitehouse argues, this ritual reality cannot be reduced to its cosmological logic or ideological effects, but one has to pay attention to the very real effects of the frights and terrors the participants are subjected to.
example, in the *Mahasohona tovil* ritual the human victim is substituted by a corpse-like ritual specialist in a coffin, who is substituted by a murdered human effigy, which is substituted by a cock, which is substituted by food, cigarettes and alcohol. All of them take part in this chain of surrender to the enemy.

First of all the human victim is to be intimidated by the ritual specialist, who assures the victim's passivity and surrender is as complete as possible. As a ritual specialist once put it in an interview:

[17] The sick person is like our child, if they disobey us, we punish them with a number of punishments, the great king of the *Yaksha*, *Vesamuni* ordered us to administer any of these punishments: we can beat, we can burn, we can give a heated, red-hot iron into both of her hands, we can make her dance on burning coal, on a heap of burning coconut shells... we accept full responsibility for the sick person, the sick person is given to us until the cured person is given back to the family in the morning, we order them not to ask us anything, whatever happens to the victim, we take care of everything, the family is not allowed to cry, to shout, to accuse us of beating the sick person [laughs] or making her dance*, sometimes we even take her on top of the flower hut, the violent ones we make climb on top of the flower hut, [laughs], sometimes we make them dance with big and heavy grinding stones or rocks... we start working with the sick person after we received permission to do so from the heads of the household, they describe the details of the illness to us, we start this job by getting permission from the heads of the household to work in the way we want to, so they can't do anything until they get their family member back from us in the morning, they can't request anything, if we beat and burn the sick person, you cannot ask us anything, until we give her back in the morning, if the family objects to these things, we tell them 'if you don't like it, you better get her cured yourself in the way you want, we can't do it'.

An anthropologist who operates within the discourse of spirit possession and who witnesses such types of beating and burning might assume that such things are not 'really' being done to the sick person, but to the 'spirit possessing the person'. In many cultural contexts mad people are said to be treated badly for this reason. On the other hand the cosmological argument of 'rebounding violence' suggests this is a necessary attack on human vitality; a step organised for people to be able to communicate with the spirits (Mauss in Bloch 1992:28). However the question remains how human aggressor and human victim experience such things although they might 'know' that they are involved in a struggle with spiritual forces, or in a quest to establish close contact with the spirits. I quote this ritual specialist because he explains himself by using two different discourses. On the one hand he uses the discourse about *Vesamuni* the king of the *yaksha*, who has power over these
spirits and who can give ritual specialists the authority to punish the spirits. On the other hand the everyday discourse of raising children, and punishing (abusing, torturing?) a human being. Again the boundary between the official cosmological discourse and everyday human discourses is permeable and unsteady.

Women who have gone through such rituals also stress that they have to be made to suffer from severe terror and intimidation in order for the ritual to work. What women in Udaheenagama most often mention in descriptions of their own ritual, the ritual in which they were the afflicted person, is the attack by the Veid'i Sanni Yaksha around four or five o'clock in the morning. A ritual specialist is dressed up as one of the Sanni Yaksha characters, the Veid'i Sanni (see Obeyesekere 1969:203). This creature embodies the Vedda, the ancient inhabitants of the island, who are known to the Sinhala Buddhists as hunters and killers of animals. He carries a bow and arrow, wears a pitch black mask and is covered in leaves. This wild being finally jumps onto the afflicted person in an attempt to devour her/him. This is an event that features prominently in the narratives. By then most women will have regained consciousness and can remember things, while the earlier parts of the ritual that started at dusk are not said to be remembered at all or only very vaguely. During such earlier stages women tend not to startle at all when threatened by fire or by the dancers. But as they slowly regain consciousness they do startle and show signs of fear. A mother from lower Puvakden'iya gave a very detailed account of such an experience:

[18] It is said that they frighten you to capture the dishti'ya, but I don't know, they frightened me also, I remember being scared, in the early morning, that one that has leaves bound around his waist frightened me, it was about four o'clock, it is said that it isn't good if you don't get frightened, he caught the cock, did this and that, and made a few jokes, then he secretly plucked a feather from the cock, burned it and brought it to me*, he told me to take it with both hands [laughs], I didn't catch it, I was scared, and I knew he wanted to frighten me, then I eventually closed both eyes a little bit, and reached for the feather, and he jumped on me, 'haw!', so I startled and got frightened, he didn't really give the feather to me, when I tried to reach for it he jumped on me, although you get frightened at that moment, it doesn't make you fall ill, it is said that they frighten you at that moment to take the fear away from your body**.

With people wavering in and out of an altered state of consciousness throughout such all-night rituals, some of these frightening events are bound to be experienced in this way. Ritual specialists say this event is necessary to remove the gaze of the wild (e.g. 'baya nokara askaranna beiei ee dishti'ya'). The narrative follows the standard line of discourse when it relates how a burned feather is used as a trick (see transcript *). This feather, just plucked from the cock is somewhat bloody, and after being burned it is especially enticing
Photo 5: *Yaksha* interacting with afflicted woman, just before jumping onto her.
to the *yaksha*, who are attracted to such smelly, meaty and generally disgusting types of food. So, the discourse of ritual specialists argues, this feather is an ideal instrument to trick a *yaksha* or a human person consumed by and closed of by the gaze of the wild, the *disht'iya*. But after this scene, in which the preparation of the feather is described, the narrative takes a slightly different turn. It continues to describe a human person getting frightened, and the discourse typically used by ritual specialists is left behind. Frightening and keeping under control the *disht'iya* becomes the frightening of a woman, clearing out the *disht'iya* becomes getting rid of her fears (see transcript **). An unambiguous cosmological discourse gradually gets lost and becomes an everyday personal and 'human' discourse about one person frightening another person.

Traditional types of ritual violence and less official forms not only affect the human victim. The objects and the animals that are sacrificed and are lead to the world of the *yaksha* instead of this human being also undergo the same lot. What happens to them during the ritual, the violence they undergo is a subject of debate in contemporary Udaheenagama. For an outside observer traditional ritual violence and violence that evokes and enacts everyday domestic and public violence happen simultaneously and seem to constitute one ritual event. Subsequently, during interviews, ritual specialists and the young men involved made a very clear distinction between the violence that belongs and does not belong to the traditional ritual. The violence reminiscent of domestic violence is dismissed as the 'nonsense' and jokes of the drunk (*vikaara, boruva*)\(^{30}\). In other words it does not make sense; it is not meaningful. But more often than not people would prefer not to talk about it, and would try to convince me such things never happened.

One such object that functions as a substitute (*billa*) to be offered to the wild *yaksha* instead of the sick person is a human effigy (*pambaya*). This effigy is made to look like the sick person, most commonly it is a miniature version of a woman. After being treated in turns as a little girl and a sexual object by the young men, 'she' is killed, and the young men then turn to pretending to mourn her death. The wailing and laughter that goes along with this mockery and ridicule of the expression of sadness of the bereaved during 'real' funerary rites accompany the effigy to her coffin. The ritual specialist who earlier had taken in the dangerous role of lying in the coffin, is then replaced by this effigy. Like a corpse, in her coffin, 'she' is then taken to the cemetery, where 'she' is burned as if 'she' were a corpse. The *yaksha* are tricked into thinking this is a real human sacrifice. The violence this effigy undergoes is one of the (locally) contested and shameful episodes of the ritual. I quote

\(^{30}\) In section 6.2. I will address *boruva* in detail.
Photo 6: Young men with effigy: mock mourning in the afflicted person's bedroom.
from my field notes of a *Mahasohona tovil* ritual held in Puvakden'iya. This episode of the ritual occurred at about ten p.m.:

[19] The son of the sick person arrives with the effigy. It looks like a girl. She wears a skirt and has long black hair made of an old umbrella. Her face is made of young banana tree branches and her body is made of old banana leaves, with tiny breasts and a slightly protruding belly. Yet, she is held by an inebriated young man, who treats her like a toddler. He tells her: 'you have such a difficult time, it is so tough for you'. Then he cradles her in his arms like a baby, and slaps her in the face. But he tells her: 'hit me in the face too!', he takes her lifeless arm and makes her hit him, he screams 'lets hit, lets hit', and beats her up. She then becomes a baby that has to be put to sleep and he rocks her in his arms, murmuring, 'oh, baby, baby'. Next to the coffin an old bag is put on the floor, the man then places her on the bag as if putting a child to bed. She lies next to the coffin, in the vicinity of a hearth. On the fire an egg and some rice are fried in a human skull. She is then prepared to be taken inside the house, to the sick person's bedroom. Some other men put a small offering tray on top of her and a torch is stuck into this tray. She is brought inside and the mock crying starts, 'ayoooooo!', 'mother!', 'ayoooooo!'. The young male mourners make jokes and laugh. There is a call and response game going on between the mourners outside next to the coffin, preparing a morbid meal in the skull, and the mourners inside preparing a mock corpse. They lift her skirt, insert the torch in her mouth and between her legs, pretend to finger her and finally beat her up. She ends up crushed against the wall, the young banana tree leaves making up her face badly damaged. The audience's laughter and gayness nevertheless dominates the atmosphere. She finally is put into the coffin and carried away to the cemetery near the river to be burned.

I was particularly struck by the close link between the intimate care and the abuse that is brought about in the beginning, when the effigy is cajoled and beaten at the same time. This event was relatively uncontested during this ritual event itself, but in other similar situations people from the audience would not let such things happen (during a similar ritual in the Galkanda neighbourhood at eleven p.m.):

[20] Five men are crouched around the effigy, their heads down. A mixture of mock crying and drunken laughter emerges. Then they start pushing each other around, trying to avoid the burning torch stuck into the effigy's mouth. They try to throw themselves onto the effigy, and while they compete to do this, they start a fight. As the fight takes in more and more space, the audience is pressed against the walls and is forced outside the room, thereby invading the sick person's space on the porch of the house. Some fall onto her. The sick person's elder sister enters the room and beats her thirty year old son, one of the mock mourners, on the head. The atmosphere becomes more subdued, and the effigy is brought to her coffin.
Photo 7: Coffin with effigy and other offerings in the forest near the river.
Ritual specialists themselves argue this has nothing to do with the tradition (*saastara*), these things are just carried out by drunken youths. When they were young, death, *Maruva*, a masked figure enacting death would come and decapitate the effigy. One ritual specialist gets particularly upset when he talks about this. He is the same person I will quote later when describing the lullabies sung for another sacrificial victim, a cock. I summarised his narrative:

[21] Before it was different, why?, that is the way in which the country has changed, we still do our work, we [the ritual specialists] didn't change our ways, it is the younger generation, they don't have respect, foolish guys, it is them who do such things, it started about 15 years ago, before that the killing of the effigy wouldn't be done in this way, this generation doesn't even trust their parents, they ask 'where does my mother live?', 'who is my father?', 'was there a Buddha?', so who will give them the answers?, they don't trust anybody.

It was acceptable to raise the issue of the violence perpetrated on the effigy during interviews. The ritual violence the cock undergoes, the cock being another substitute (*billa*) for the human being under threat was, in my experience, very similar. This could not be discussed with the people involved, though, so I add this example only hesitantly. The ritual specialist, who was so critical of the younger generation in the previous quote performs the following act during a *tovil* ritual at about six in the morning. He was dressed up as *Veidi Sanni Yaksha* and, while evoking the native hunters that populated the island before the arrival of the Sinhala he molested and cajoled the cock:

[22] He grabs the [live] cock and pretends to beat it heavily. Finally he installs it on his lap, opens its cloaca and pretends to finger it. Then he rocks it like a baby and sings it a lullaby while he lovingly caresses it on the head, sometimes addressing it as 'son', sometimes as 'sick woman' [for whom the ritual is held]. He rocks it like a baby and sings: 'You don't get love from father - you don't get love from mother - sleep well, my son - do you feel alone just like I do? - come on my chicken son - fall asleep in my arms - yes, my chicken son in father's arms - when you were born your mother died - how will I ever be able to commemorate your birthday? - one day your mother was here my son - ah now we have to catch the thief - the fox took your mother to the forest - so, my chicken son - in father's arms - sleep my chicken son, my sick woman.

Other types of violence also re-surface at moments of these (ritual?) forms of violence. Some are reminiscent of the political violence of the civil war. During one of the rituals a burning cigarette was put in the mouth of the murdered effigy. This might have been just a joke, though a story about a political murder made me question this. One of the young men
of that neighbourhood had been killed by the army during the civil war of 1988-1991. The soldiers knew the cadaver would soon be discovered by the villagers. They inserted a burning cigarette in the cadaver's mouth, which was still smoking when his family members discovered him. Maybe this link between the form of the ritual murder of the effigy and this particular 'political' murder is an over interpretation, but maybe it isn't. Another event made me aware of the possibility of such links, but this one almost resulted in the breakdown of the ritual. It occurred at about three o'clock in the morning, during a ritual performed for an old lady from upper Puvakdeniya, when the coffin with the effigy had to be brought to a cemetery. My assistant took some notes on this tense dialogue:

[23] A ritual specialist: Where should we put this coffin now?
Another ritual specialist: On the edge of a stream.
A grandmother: You can take it across the land of elder brother and put it in the graveyard.
Soldier on vacation from duty in Jaffna: Shall I tell you what to do? Go and keep it in front of my house [the form of the imperatives are normally only used to address animals and lower beings, the soldier then starts to pick up the coffin on his own] We should put some tires on it and burn it [the classical way in which people were killed and burned during the civil war].
Ritual specialist: Since I arrived here I didn't like the way you spoke, I will tell you straight into your face, since you arrived here you insulted us, by constantly asking who is doing this and who is doing that [during the preparation of the ritual space], I am telling the truth here.
Soldier: OK we will deal with that problem later [a serious threat as it comes from a soldier with access to weapons, which infuriates the ritual specialist].
Ritual specialist: The problem is the same whether we consider it now or later, I am also ready for anything [also a serious threat], you there [uses a pronoun normally only used for animals], since I arrived here I didn't like your speech.

The ritual was stopped and this fight went on for about an hour. Is wasn't very clear whether the ritual specialists would agree to resume the ritual. One of the grandmothers of the household scolded everybody, both the ritual specialists and the soldier. She loudly expressed her disappointment about the ritual not being performed in the proper way. It was she who eventually managed to calm down both parties and made the continuation of the ritual possible.

There are other links between political and ritual violence. During such ritual events it is not only the sick human victim, the effigy and the cock that are exposed to danger and violence. This aspect of somehow 'surrendering to the enemy' seems almost like a communal act. During the civil war these all-night rituals were officially forbidden, but were still performed occasionally despite the fear. At such moments the community would
be particularly vulnerable to army raids. The army regularly came to arrest insurgents during the ritual performances, or the insurgents came to threaten the villagers during such events. Nowadays all-night events such as funerals, puberty parties, or tovil rituals are still moments of risk for the community. Police or army raids, searching to arrest deserters or political opponents still make use of such public gatherings. Inebriated men can then easily become sitting ducks for their enemies. Nevertheless participants continue to take such risks. There seems to be a resemblance between the corpse-like body of the sick female victim subjected to ritual types of frights and terrors and the unconscious bodies of the inebriated men. That night these scattered shadows on the dark floor at the outskirts of the ritual space might have to surrender to an enemy too.

Thus far I have mainly focused on how the participants surrender and are made to surrender to the enemy. This aspect of the cycle of ritual (or ritualised?) violence is reflected in the immobile, rigid and voiceless body of the female victim, the ritual specialist lying in the coffin, the abused human effigy, the (symbolically) sodomised cock, and the unconscious and inebriated male audience. But these same actors take up the role of 'the enemy' at other times. The ritual specialist terrifies the sick person and abuses the cock, the drunk young men kill the human effigy. In the next section I describe more fully this other, parallel and simultaneous wave of violence in which the actors embody an enemy.

**Becoming violent.**

As I understand it, these two waves of violence cannot be put in a clear-cut chronological order. During such night-long rituals each of the key participants, the female victim, the ritual specialist or the male audience take part in this cycle and go through moments of utterly surrendering to the enemy and other moments of violent behaviour and conquest of the others. The most obvious examples would be the unsocialized behaviour of ritual specialists and male audience during such ritual events, which could be seen as an embodiment of the antithesis to Sinhala Buddhist civilisation. But surprising as it might seem the afflicted person herself often goes through such phases herself, and it is important to recognise these also. In this following observation (7.30 till 8.30 p.m., during a night-long tovil ritual in the Galkanda neighbourhood) both violent actions and surrender are present in a rapid succession:

[24] She slowly started trembling and shivering again, hit her stomach, wailed, and then looked up as if looking at something/ somebody hovering above her head. The people around her told me that 'she was very afraid and was going through a difficult moment'. Then she showed her elder sister with her hand that she wanted to drink something. It was her elder sister who stayed
extremely close to her during the whole ritual event. A cup of very hot tea was brought, but it was her younger brother who tried to give it to her [she previously complained to me about him being violent and rough], and her father was trying to get nearer to her too. She suddenly and violently hit the cup of boiling hot tea out of his hand, the hot water poured over his bare arms. She then started hitting in the air and lay down again - trembling. After that her sister made her drink a glass of water, which she accepted. She then started shaking vigorously, and tore open her blouse. She ended up in a motionless position on the floor, and seemed not to notice anything at all anymore. A quarter of an hour later she was sitting up again, and seemed to be actually watching the dancers. She sat up against the wall, her blouse completely open, showing her breasts. Her sister then attempted to close the blouse with a safety pin. Her younger brother and father objected vehemently and insisted her blouse remained open. They hit the elder sister on the head and a vehement, quite uncoordinated, fight ensued. A few minutes later when the men were not looking the elder sister managed to start closing the blouse again, but the men intervened and a chaotic pushing and pulling ensued. The afflicted person who was stuck in a blouse which was pulled at by so many upset people seemed resigned and completely uninvolved. Finally the sister managed to close the blouse, as the men's attention was caught by something else.

The moment in which she burns her younger brother and her father with a hot cup of tea, occurs during a major ritual. But similar acts occur at other times. A woman suffering from 'can't stay', *inna heirikama* might attempt to flee and when she is stopped from doing so, she might fight back heavily. Or she might refuse food and drinks in provocative manners comparable to the above-mentioned example\(^\text{31}\). The descriptions of such 'moments of reduced consciousness' by family members sometimes very much resemble descriptions of a loud domestic fight. At the moment itself, and certainly for the youngest of the family, such events might not be distinguishable from domestic violence, as the discourse of ritual tradition might not have been mobilised yet to make sense of such scenes.

At such moments, what I routinely called the 'afflicted person' or the 'victim' takes an initiative as an aggressor. That is certainly how such moments are described by family members of the afflicted. In descriptions of such episodes they position themselves as victims when describing their kinswoman's suffering from *disht'iya*, the gaze of the wild. Indeed, as they look at their afflicted relative they might not recognise many human and familiar qualities in her/his behaviour. Young children might get frightened, adults might be hit or burnt, and relegate these acts to a non-human. In this moment of alienation and distancing within the family group, the person we usually call the victim or the sick person,

\(^{31}\) For a description of the refusal of food as a statement of superiority see Yalman (1969: 90).
becomes her own families' dehumanised enemy. In this context the notion of victim and aggressor are very much reversible positions.

This aspect of 'possession trance' goes beyond 'speaking with the voice of a wild spirit' who articulates his demands vis-à-vis family members. In most instances I observed this articulation of demands was extremely brief, took the form of an exhausted whisper ('can't', 'want to dance a ritual' or 'want to dance more') rather than an elaborated discourse. At such moments it is often the ritual specialist who does most of the talking. A collusion with a violent enemy (as in Lewis 1989) is less dependent on the traditional religious images than one might expect, certainly in comparison with other cultures (e.g. Boddy 1989:275-301, Stoller 1994,1995). There is a clear-cut pantheon of institutionalised Yaksha, spirits of the wild (e.g. Mahasohona, Kalu Kumaara, Riri Yaksha, Suuniyam), in which each has its own character and style of affliction (see Kapferer 1983). Nevertheless for the afflicted these distinctions seem to play a limited role, women often say they are suffering from all or many of them together, or simply call them 'the dishtiyd'.

A last type of (ritual?) violence I want to discuss here is of a communal nature. I am indebted to Bloch's emphasis (1992) on what he calls 'the second phase in the phenomenon of rebounding violence' for this interpretation. Such all-night rituals are indeed a form of communal feasting. What Bloch called the 'reproductive form of rebounding violence' (61) in which the group consolidates itself vis-à-vis enemies through a gigantic meal and feast. The 'expansionist violence against neighbours' that is described by Bloch as part of rebounding ritual violence (61, 6) appears to be double-edged within the Udaheenagama context. The community of participants take up the role of perpetrators in various and contradictory ways. Here I will only briefly mention these practices, and it is only in chapter 3 and 4 I will elaborate on their role in inter-neighbourhood relations.

There are three practices that I would try to highlight in particular. First of all, during the preparation of the ritual, men from the afflicted family have to procure a human skull. In order to be able to do this awkward job they usually first drink a substantial amount of liquor. They then go and dig up a cadaver at the cemetery of neighbouring people, decapitate it and bring back the head (lit. 'the skull of the cadaver'). Nowadays stories of

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32 Such an example of an elaborate dialogue between an afflicted woman and a ritual specialists is highlighted by virtue of being the main transcript in Scott's book (1994: 74-106). But judging from my experience of seeing about ten such rituals, such instances are rare. It appears as if the longest and most interesting dialogues taken from a very large number of rituals; fifty or even a hundred witnessed by the anthropologist are selected for publication. It makes the rituals in which such dialogues do not take in such a prominent position fade into the background.
such (small) 'expeditions' are probably as important as the occasional acts themselves, which have been made illegal by the Sri Lankan state. These acts could be seen as a moment of expansionist violence, but unlike Bloch's examples of the second phase of rebounding violence they take place during the preparation of the ritual, even before Bloch's first phase of 'rebounding violence' has occurred.

Secondly, at the time of the ritual itself, an expansionist soundscape is created that invades several of the nearby neighbourhoods. This soundscape of drumming and chanting, poses a threat to neighbouring people as it arouses the gaze of the wild (disht'iya eivissenavaa). The neighbour's women who are chronically afflicted by a gaze of the wild, might respond to this call of the enemy and might get closed off by the gaze of the wild (disht'iya veihenavaa), closed off from their family members, who in turn might have to organise a loud, all-night performance.

Thirdly, and this is a more controversial point, this aggressive expansionism of the participants is often turned inwards, and afflicts the members of one's own group. Excessive feasting, eating, drinking and smoking does not only lead to abuse of the human effigy, the afflicted person or the cock, but also afflicts the more vulnerable members of the audience. I have described above how one of the young drunk men addresses the human effigy and puts her to sleep while beating and cajoling her. This is part of a continuum of similar acts in which children are at risk of being 'teased' by drunken men. I quote from my field notes taken at 2 am during a ritual organised for a middle-aged widow from upper Puvakden'iya:

[25] A soldier who had come home from the front the day before approached a boisterous five year old boy playing near his mother who was feeding a baby. The soldier suddenly grabbed the neck of the child and lifted him up in the air by holding him by the neckbone. The child was held in the air for minutes. The child's mother was startled but didn't say anything. Once he was put down the boy was so shocked it took him a while to start crying and delve into his mother's lap. The soldier then briefly moved away so the mother got the chance to express her outrage to some bystanders. But soon enough the soldier came

33 I use the term expeditions here to stress the similarity between this Udaheenagama practice ("skull hunting") and "head hunting expeditions" in Sulawesi, Indonesia (e.g. George 1995). Such "expeditions" are one more component of the awkwardness of the public sphere, or the "spaces in between contexts" (see chapter 6) in Udaheenagama.
34 I describe this expansionist soundscape in section 4.3.
35 For descriptions of expansionist soundscapes as a "noisy triumph" and political strategy see Roberts 1990, 1994.
36 I must add that had she not been so outraged I would probably not have used this example, since it then would have solely depended on my judgements of what is unacceptable or abusive.
back, this time with a cup of very hot tea. The child leaned against his mother, but was offered the cup of tea in a 'caring way': 'little one, have some tea'. The hot cup was then forced upon him. The child froze and pressed himself against his mother. Both of them looked down at the floor, their gazes averted from the danger. The young child became engulfed with the facetiously kind urges from the soldier to have some tea. The hot cup was pushed against the child's chin. The mother and child both as if frozen waited till it was all over. But afterwards, once the danger was averted the mother started complaining to her friends again, describing in detail how a hot cup of tea was forced upon her son. By then the child was playing again, and was so noisy and boisterous as to annoy the soldier. He was then threatened with a beating, but this time he was not terrified enough to return to his mother's lap and continued to play.

Usually though, children and vulnerable women stay inside the house or on the porch during such rituals (see figure 4). They can watch the performance through the open windows and doors, but stay away from the tumultuous male crowd and the 'gaze of the wild' that roams outside. They nevertheless are very aware of the danger that such all-night rituals might entail for them. The communal collusion with the enemy and antithesis to Sinhala Buddhist norms put into practice during such ritual events might easily turn upon them. What could have become 'communal expansionist violence' (in Bloch's model) is here embodied in the sense of omnipotence of the inebriated and occasionally explodes within its own community. Women and children argue they stay inside because of the disht'iya and again the ambiguous nature of such a statement becomes clear. They stay away from the gaze of the wild summoned by the ritual specialist and the 'ritual' violence. These violent practices are again ambiguous in the sense that it is not easy to draw a clear line between traditional ritual violence and everyday forms of domestic or public violence; human forms of wildness.
Photo 8: Women watching the ritual from inside the house.
Legend:

- #: Place where ten year old child was beaten up by one of the young men.
- ayala and kattirika: offering trays
- bahirava pidenna: offering trays for the bahirava spirits
- baliya: clay sculpture of a yaksha
- billa: the cock - sacrificial substitute
- Buddhugee: literally the Buddha's house, place where the offerings to the Buddha are made
- irimudun tattuva: offerings for the irimudun yaksha
- kad'aturaava: white sheet separating and protecting the afflicted woman and the women and children inside the house from the gaze of the wild
- mal madua: literally flower shed, large construction part of the 'decorations' (seirasilla) of the ritual space
- preeta tattuva: offerings for the spirits of the deceased
- Suuniyam vidiya: literally the road for the yaksha Suuniyam, construction on which the offerings for Suuniyam are made
1/ Tovil ritual in Galkanda, August 1997.
Discussion.
Finding a strategy to start studying a topic such as discourses on violence in a community like Udaheenagama was not easy. Moreover I intended to begin my study with an assessment of the local history of violence. This meant getting an impression of the events of the civil war of 1988-1991 in Udaheenagama as well as an assessment of the level of ongoing public and domestic violence. The notion of 'violence' and its effects is certainly not a local category and I was thus looking out for an approximation, a set of local concepts which partially overlap with this Western research question. I thus set out talking to people about health, illness and healing rituals with the hope of coming across some comments on violence, fear or terror. The conglomerate of expressions I described in this chapter are the result of this strategy of research.

Once I had learned the local terminology for talking about illness, fear and healing and I started using these terms in a rather straightforward way I felt this caused unease amongst informants. I had pigeonholed those expressions and matched them with ready-made
translations. If I would for example speak about the disht'iya, I was assuming I spoke about 'spirit possession'. Udaheenagama people made me feel as if my professional identification and way of talking about the 'extra-ordinary' and the 'supernatural' was much too literal for them. To have any meaningful conversation with lay people the everyday, ordinary conceptions related to the gaze of the wild I outlined in this chapter had to be understood first. Moreover I soon saw the ambiguous character of many of the above-mentioned expressions, which fluctuate between the discourse of spirit religion and a discourse on interpersonal violence. It is by means of this vocabulary that I managed to start discerning the local history of violence which I outline in the next chapter.

This conglomerate of expressions forms the basis for an (albeit ambiguous) discourse on violence but also for a discourse on enemies. The gaze of the wild makes people collude with a particular enemy and sometimes behave violently. The ethnographic literature has provided many examples in which very particular enemies and forms of violence play a role in this dynamic. Oppressed women or men behave like hostile neighbouring tribes (Boddy 1989, Stoller 1989,1994), hunters (Bloch 1992, Devisch 1995, Whitehouse 1996), the colonial or neo-colonial oppressor (Argenti 1998, Comaroff 1985, Stoller 1994, Taussig 1993), anarchists, masters of slaves, domineering and aggressive men, or lower caste people (examples quoted in Lewis 1989: 89,92,94,102,112). Such people collude with a very specific enemy. If we give our ethnographic imagination free rein we could think of a few similar hypothetical situations: Nancy Reagan suddenly behaving like a communist (whatever that might mean in the American collective imagination) and after a few beatings she is referred to the presidential psychiatrist who sends her to a self-help group, Churchill's wife suddenly suffering from attacks of uncontrollable Hitler salutes while shrieking 'zieh Heil', or Baroness Thatcher's husband behaving like an active and respected member of Amnesty International.

37 Most of the research on this phenomenon is done within the disciplines of psychoanalysis, psychology and psychiatry (e.g. Herman 1992, Erlich 1997). Cast in the language of dissociation theory and psychoanalysis these studies elucidate the ways in which an abused person creates a passive victim self, which passively undergoes the violence and an aggressor self, which eventually becomes and behaves like the aggressor. These insights have filtered through into some of the anthropological literature. Harrison (1993: chapter 6) uses the term "dissociation" to describe the aggression of head-hunters, and Whitehouse (1996) explicitly refers to the non-anthropological discourses on "identification with the oppressor". A more introductory overview of the possible relevance of these insights for anthropological research was provided by Castillo (1994a-b). One could argue that Udaheenagama women's oscillation between a passive, immobile self and violent behaviour is the result of severe childhood abuse and dissociation. I do not want to enter this debate in this ethnography. What is most relevant, from the perspective of an anthropological analysis, is the kind of enemy Udaheenagama women embody or choose to embody.
Unfortunately, one can but imagine these clear-cut examples and when considering one's own data it is often not immediately clear who the enemy is. The same underlying logic, though, in which suffering people suddenly behave like 'an enemy' of his or her society seems to apply to the Udaheenagama situation. People are said to suddenly behave like yaksha but the question is what role model is involved for the lay women: the behaviour of the institutionalised yaksha of the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon (e.g. Riiri Yaksha, Mahasohona, Kalu Kumaara, Suuniyam), ancient non-Buddhist enemies or more contemporary enemies?

The data presented in this chapter lead me to conclude that the momentary embodiment of violence seems closer to the lived everyday experience of being aggressed than to the ready made images of religious doctrine and spirit religion. 'Becoming violent' is not so tightly tied up with very specific cultural, 'religious' images of the (institutionalised) yaksha as one might expect but remains very close to everyday lived experiences and the lived immediacy and self-explanatory nature of a domestic crisis situation. With this I mean the chain of events defined by inna beirikama (can't stay), penanna beiei (can't stand the sight of my family members)), disht'iya veihenavaa (being closed off by the gaze of the wild), hita bayayi (a terrified heart), vikaara gatiya (the confusion of the terrified) and disht'iya karanavaa (to summon the gaze of the wild during domestic cleansing rituals) I described in the above sections.

In contrast to the political enemies embodied by the oppressed in many cultures (e.g. Lewis 1989, Boddy 1989) the way in which Udaheenagama people embody an enemy does not seem to be influenced by the habits of Tamil, Indian, Dutch, Portuguese, British aggressors, the Special Task Force or the JVP. The model upon which contemporary Udaheenagama women base their wild behaviour or discourse on the 'gaze of the wild' and 'becoming wild' is a situation of domestic conflict and violence (e.g. screams, beatings, drunken brawls) and a 'domestic enemy'. Ritual specialists superimpose the discourse on yaksha disht'iya upon this situation, but afflicted women only participate in this discourse in ambiguous ways.

It is this conglomerate of expressions - which I described as intimately related and deduced from situations of domestic conflict and violence - which form the basis for discourses on a variety of forms of violence in the public sphere. As I have shown in this chapter, for example, a bomb blast in Colombo, the army's burning of a heap of corpses or a gun fight are all analysed and expressed by means of this same discursive strategy. In other words, at a discursive level the effects of many forms of violence are addressed as instances of domestic violence. The effects of political violence are expressed by relying upon the same
semiotic pool, the same body of terms which are used to deal with intimate, domestic enemies, which cannot be named and who will continue to live nearby. With exception of the way in which enemies are treated in the discourse on 'fear of humans', many types of enemies are pooled together into an ambiguous discourse on the gaze of the wild.
CHAPTER THREE.
The gaze of the wild in five neighbourhoods.

[1] Mother (M): How does the *yaksha* look?
Five year old son (S): Quite big. It has two big teeth.
M: Which colour?
S: Black.
M: Hair?
S: Long.
M: Which colour?
S: Black.
M: Where does it live?
S: In the forest, at night it lives outside.
M: Can it speak?
S: It can.
M: How is it dressed?
S: It is just naked [everybody laughs], if some being [human or animal] is in the garden the *yaksha* will kill him and eat him.
M: If you have done something wrong what will the *yaksha* do?
S: It will swallow (me): 'Oveieik, Oveieik' (gobble, gobble) it will say.
M: What does it have in its hand?
S: A very big sword.
M: And what about its nails?
S: Long, they grew down to its feet.
M: If it hits you with those, do you get wounded?
S: You die!
M: And if it comes to our house?
S: I will hit and hit and kill it.
M: You can't kill it, can you?
S: Yes, I can, it has two tiny legs, it can easily slip and fall over.
M: Is it big?
S: Yes, enormous! Even larger than the sky!

**Introduction: Moments of dehumanisation.**

As I have shown in the previous chapter idioms related to domestic conflict and violence are used to talk about more public or political forms of violence. For the purpose of the analysis I extracted the discourse on the 'gaze of the wild' out of its social and political context. In this chapter I re-contextualise this discourse within each of the five neighbourhoods under study and attempt to re-construct the local history of violence. I question in which ways the application of idioms typically used for domestic violence to a context of more large-scale forms of violence affects the cycle of violence and its containment.
Photo 9: Mural, Mahamoodara temple, Galle (painted in 1930's).
Photo 10: The emergence of *Veid'i Sanni Yaksha* during a domestic cleansing ritual.
Once I established the ambiguous nature of the discourse on the 'gaze of the wild' I could start questioning the various contemporary contents that are given to the 'gaze of the wild' in each neighbourhood. There is an inevitable methodological problem. I had to rely on an ambiguous discourse to gather information about violence. For example, I managed to identify the households in which somebody was suffering from life-long disht'iya (see maps 3, 4, and 5 for an impression of the common nature of this condition) but did not obtain evidence on, for example, domestic violence. However the identification of households that continuously struggle with the disht'iya was a much needed preliminary step to begin the study.

On the basis of people's use of the above-described idioms I would deduce whether a family was suffering from severe conflicts and/or violence but I could not be sure what type of violence people referred to in this ambiguous way. Most often it wasn't made clear to me whether 'the gaze of the wild' had made itself present in domestic conflicts about poverty and alcoholism-related problems, land rights, and marriage arrangements or in conflicts between victims and perpetrators of the civil war. I thus embarked on a tortuous research route which only led me to a few glimpses of the local history of violence in each neighbourhood. In this chapter I thus do not present a summary of the socio-historical background data I gathered in a matter of fact way. I give an image of the way in which that information slowly emerged.

The ambiguous discourse about 'the gaze of the wild' brings about a dehumanisation of the enemy. The victim admits that he/she does not discern many human qualities in an enemy and was not faced with a Sinhala Buddhist but a non-human yaksha. Talk about the gaze of the wild is more than an expression of personal suffering or a discourse geared towards healers. Illnesses are a cherished topic of conversation and comments on the disht'iya form as it were a constant murmur that pervades the neighbourhood. In this sense dehumanisation is not only a component of personal laments but takes up a role in a communal discourse about enemies and above all dehumanised enemies.

In analyses of cycles of violence the notion of dehumanisation plays a major role. The moment of the killing or maiming of an enemy is argued to go hand in hand with a moment in which the enemy is dehumanised, be it in Sri Lanka or in other violent contexts. The perpetrator suddenly perceives and experiences individuals or whole groups of people as not having many human qualities, as being radically different from oneself. Atrocities and
wide-scale human rights abuses become thinkable and bearable for the perpetrator. This is the common face that is given to 'dehumanisation of the enemy' within the literature.1

At the same time dehumanisation also plays a positive role in the rehabilitation of communities during the aftermath of complex forms of violence. The future generation is to be taught what is human and inhuman in a world in which the boundaries between humanity and inhumanity have been blurred; a world in which apparently 'humane' neighbours and acquaintances have been involved in inhuman acts2. In the process of the local re-definition of what is normal and abnormal, human and non-human, dehumanisation of certain groups or individuals inevitably plays a role. Dehumanisation can thus not solely be described in negative terms.

Descriptions of collective violence as a re-enactment of exorcism or possession rites in which a dehumanised enemy is expelled or annihilated are common within the anthropological literature. The data supporting such conclusions are often collected amongst urbanised or middle class people. These ethnographers, for example, cite the speeches of politicians or refer to cartoons in the national media which allude to exorcism and the demonic (non-human) nature of the enemy (e.g. Das 1998, Kapferer quoted in Das 1998, Kapferer 1988). There might be an experiential correlation between large scale communal riots and 'exorcism' for the political elites but this does not necessarily mean that at the village level processes of dehumanisation operate in the same ways.

As a starting point for investigation I did not assume that the dehumanising strategies of middle-class, urban Sinhala Buddhist nationalists are exactly mirrored by village-based Sinhala Buddhists. By re-inserting the discourse on the gaze of the wild into its local context I intend to describe the processes of dehumanisation that occur within the socio-political context of the Udaheenagama area and analyse them on the basis of the local characteristics of the cycle of violence.

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2 Krohn-Hansen's analysis (1994) resonates very much with what I came across in Udaheenagama. He explains: 'In societies of extreme fear and violence, what for the most part appears elsewhere to be an elitist problem is radically expanded into an everyday problem and a force among the masses; what are normally ontological and epistemological topics among a minority of intellectual experts are more than 'just' an intellectual problem. A culture of extreme fear implies that ontological thought is an everyday activity for the crowd. Questions about what distinguishes human from animal, truth from lies, or civilising development from savage underdevelopment becomes habitual' (p. 376).
1. **Heendolakanda (and Pein'igahakanda)**

*Heendolakanda*, 'the mountain of gardens and rivers' is a neighbourhood in the forest and wastelands at the edge of the forest reserve (see map 2). People from Puvakden'iya or Edanduwila describe it as a neighbourhood where many people suffer from *disht'iya* and fall ill, an area very much troubled by the *yaksha*. In this area I conducted a snowball survey, in which I got to know the members of the *Obeyesekere* family, one single kin-based group who are in the majority within the area (see figure 7). Compared to the other neighbourhoods, there has been less emigration. It was therefore possible to construct a more detailed picture of the extended family, since most adults and the elderly of this family still live on 'the mountain of gardens and rivers'.

Apart from a few exceptions most of the Heendolakanda people are 'green', that is to say they vote for the United National Party (hereafter UNP). The UNP was in power from 1977 until 1994. This group supported the government and the army during the civil war of 1988-1991, but is now part of the opposition against the current People's Alliance (hereafter PA) government which seized power in 1994. Despite this change in their party-political position the people from *Heendolakanda* pre-dominantly support the army and send soldiers to the front in the North and East. The people living higher up the mountain; the people of *Pein'igahakanda* (see map 2 and 3) are said to have supported the JVP insurgents during the civil war and are now supporting the PA government. During the civil war people from *Heendolakanda* and *Pein'igahakanda* fought each other. These party political divisions are not simply ideological but are super-imposed upon much more fundamental differences. Although most people in *Heendolakanda* nowadays work as casual labourers (*kuli veid'a*), and there are few genuine economic differences between them and the people from *Pein'igahakanda*, the people from *Heendolakanda* are from a higher caste, the cultivator caste and once were landed people. The Pein'igahakanda people are from the jaggery-makers caste, landless people who used to live from slash and bum cultivation in the forested areas. They are known to other castes as warriors and fierce people, and the people from the jaggery makers caste (from other areas) have built up quite a reputation as soldiers within the Sri Lankan national army. These people who live at the top of the mountain in Pein'igahakanda, have to use the Pein'igahakanda path through the Heendolakanda neighbourhood (a steep 2 hour climb or descent) to reach the shops, schools and the main bus route. Conversely the police or army visiting the Pein'igahakanda people have to pass through Heendolakanda to reach them (see map 4). Another sign of the closeness of both communities is that in recent days young people fall in love across caste and political boundaries. This makes for a very tense situation in which differences and grudges have to be managed within a situation of relatively close day-to-day interaction.
Map 3: Survey area in Galkanda and Heendolakanda neighbourhoods (snowball survey): 21 households (1-17 and I-III).
Life-long *disht'iya*.

What caught my attention was that a number of women of the *Obeyesekere* family from Heendolakanda suffered from a life-time involvement with the gaze of the wild (*yaksha disht'iya*). Although they had undergone many rituals to clear out this malevolent gaze, they argued these remedies hadn't worked and they were still suffering from *yaksha disht'iya*. In each of the four generations of the *Obeyesekere* family which I was able to document, a few women were said to be in this condition (see figure 7). They spoke of the gaze of the wild as a daily ailment, a continuous (*digat'ama*) form of suffering which lasts for life (*djiiviteet'ama*). 'Some people still suffered from it while they were dying' (*disht'iya meirenakama eingee tibunaa*). A sixty-three year old grandmother (from household 10) explains how her mother, elder sister and daughter all suffer from life-long *disht'iya*:

[2] They organised rituals for my elder sister also, my elder sister was closed of by the gaze of the wild, just like my daughter, what I am suffering from is the 'moral mistake of having been alone' (*tanikam doosha*), but it is my elder sister who resembles a mad person, she has been ill for a very long time, even now she is ill, she has a love-charm in her stomach, somebody made her eat it ... some people when they become mad and you administer some small remedies or organise a *tovil* ritual they become better, isn't it?, but our elder sister never becomes better, while she was a very young girl somebody gave her a love-charm to eat, since then she hasn't been better, the *disht'iya* which fell on those things she has in her stomach is still there..., she suffers from the *disht'iya* of Mahasohonaa (the great *yaksha* of the cemetery) and the *disht'iya* of Kalu Kumaara (the black prince), those are stuck to her body (*eingat'a pattiyang velaa*), she has it for life, you cannot remove it and save her (*galavanna beihei*), it has been like that for forty-five or fifty years, after she got married they kept having to organise small rituals and *tovil* rituals... our mother suffered in the same way, even while she was dying she was suffering from the gaze of the wild, about every year there was a *tovil* ritual organised for her.

The old ladies' elder sister (living in household 1a, see map 3) herself explains that even now she sometimes suddenly falls ill. Her children argue it happens when there are quarrels in the family, when she hears the sound of drums or when one of her children is travelling to Colombo and she is worried. In this household's discourse life-long *disht'iya* does not feature that prominently, and the love-charm is not mentioned at all (it probably cannot be mentioned within household 1a, in the presence of the afflicted person's

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1 A life-time engagement with the gaze of deities (*deviyange disht'iya*) has been well-documented within the literature (e.g. Obeyesekere 1981). This gaze of the deities, though, leads a person to take up a job as soothsayer or diviner, while the gaze of the wild (*yaksha disht'iya*) does not lead to a new profession and income.

4 I explain this in section 4.1.
Figure 5: Legend to kinship diagrams.

- Woman
- Man
- Married
- Separated
- Siblings
- 1-10 conflicts
- Person suffering from life-long or long-term dish't'iya
- Number of children
- Household, gedara (in diagram of Kilituva indicated by means of household numbers)
- Deceased
- JVP insurgent killed by the army
- Person killed by JVP insurgents
- Person severely wounded by JVP insurgents
- Shaman
- Apprenticed to shaman
- Soldier
- Committed suicide
Figure 7: Kinship diagram of Heendolakanda neighbourhood (legend see figure 6).

Conflicts:
1. Major public violence: Disembowelment and shooting, men from household 8 and friends against Pein’igahakanda people: revenge for the rape of the daughter of a friend.
2a. Marriage dispute: Husband objects to youngest son’s marriage, diviner in Pein’igahakanda mediated.
2b. Marriage dispute: Husband objected to daughter’s marriage with man from Pein’igahakanda, they never saw her again, diviner in Pein’igahakanda still mediates.
4. Marriage dispute and sorcery: Sorcery spell because she arranged a marriage. Because of this a man’s son could not get married to his beloved and he used sorcery.
5. Land dispute and sorcery: between son and father.
7. Land dispute: with neighbours.
8. Marriage dispute: Girl’s family does not approve of marriage, because his 2 brothers were killed by the JVP in 80’s.
9. Social ostracism: People avoid any contact with this relatively wealthy man.
10. Marriage dispute and sorcery: Mrs. Obeyesekere suffering from sorcery committed by her daughter in law’s mother who objects to her daughter’s marriage, police involved, diviner and ritual specialist try to mediate.
husband). Such prolonged forms of disht'iya are often associated with sorcery spells (kodivina) and love charms (i.a. diipu deyak, vashii gurukam) but sorcery and love charms are a delicate topic and cannot be mentioned in many contexts.

I thus turned to interviewing many people within the extended family to bring together the different perspectives on the people affected by life-long disht'iya and to construct an (inevitably fragmented) image of their sufferings. It is precisely around those people and their life-long suffering that sorcery accusations and stories about (dehumanised?) enemies coalesce and take form. A research question was how the people from Pein'igahakanda, the despised next-door neighbourhood featured within this ambiguous discourse on the disht'iya.

A bond with the wild organised by an intimate enemy.

I did not mention sorcery in the previous chapter, even though it is obviously known to cause the most recalcitrant forms of life-long suffering from disht'iya. The gaze of the wild is sometimes sent by enemies within the extended family; a (sickening) bond between a victim and the wild has been ordered by such an intimate enemy (anavina, kodivina: 'sorcery'). Sorcery is typically perpetrated by people who know the victim well. The discourse on sorcery amongst lay people is very much a hidden, shameful and contested discourse5, a discourse parallel to the more everyday notions of 'can't stay', 'can't stand the sight of them', and 'being closed off by the gaze of the wild'. I did not want to take this discourse on sorcery out of context by giving it a primary and central position within my description in the previous chapter, but opted for maintaining its problematic nature and giving the reader an impression of the way in which it usually remains hidden in the background of the above described conglomerate of expressions to talk about the wild. Some of the marriage or land disputes that have afflicted the Obeyesekere family or still smoulder within this kin-group (see figure 7) go along with sorcery accusations in which close members of the extended family or from the Heendolakanda group have been accused of sorcery and are held responsible for life-long disht'iya.

Conflicts with the people from Pein'igahakanda however have never directly become part of this dynamic of sorcery spells and sorcery accusations. On the contrary, women from Heendolakanda stress how sorcery and sorcery accusations are a very localised phenomenon. But they do make an (albeit unexpected) connection between family strife, sorcery and inter-neighbourhood violence: sorcery as a type of containment of major

5 See chapter on reported speech (chapter 7) for a discussion of the form in which dangerous utterances, amongst which sorcery accusations are commonly formulated.
outbreaks of violence. Here, for example, three women from Heendolakanda talk about an attack by people from Pein'igahakanda:

[3] W1: If something happens to a person at Pein'igahakanda the whole generation 'comes' [to fight]. We can't fight/ hit the people from Pein'igahakanda, even women are carrying weapons. Not like in our neighbourhood, there they are very united.
W2: In our neighbourhood people are against each other/oppose each other [i.a. sorcery spells and accusations]. There they are very friendly to each other.
W1: They say it is Valli Mahattayaa who fired the gun.
W2: No they say it is Chuut'iya.
W3: They say it is Valli Mahattayaa who cut them, now how many has he cut and killed? even in that area? But nobody says so. They are united. It is said that they all have guns. No one says so. The people from that neighbourhood are united.
W2: In our neighbourhood it is not like that.
W1: Here if one house 'has' [guns], they will say that this one 'has' and will help capture him.

The conflict between the people from Heendolakanda and Pein'igahakanda largely determined the atmosphere in the neighbourhood of Heendolakanda and terrified people on a regular basis. The conflict particularly affected the women who suffered from life-long disht'iya. They were most likely to fall ill when terrified. And, as I described in the previous chapter, a gunfight between Pein'igahakanda and Heendolakanda men made a young woman, who wasn't known to suffer from life-long disht'iya, suffer an acute attack of disht'iya (see transcript 15). This made me postulate that many such incidents of inter-neighbourhood strife and political violence between pro-JVP and pro-government factions could easily constitute a life-time of disht'iya-related ailments.

What emerges from this analysis of enmity in Heendolakanda is that the relation between Pein'igahakanda and Heendolakanda enemies is mediated through a local, intimate enemy which is held responsible for a victim's contact with the wild. In other words, when a woman is suffering from disht'iya a member of the extended family is commonly accused of sorcery. The ambiguous discourse on disht'iya leaves the Pein'igahakanda enemy in the background and leads to a discourse of sorcery accusations. Intimate enmity based on local fissures related to family strife about land and marriages (see figure 7) forms the basis for such accusations. Enmity is organised in a triadic way, in which the victim, a local enemy and the wild are involved and interconnected.

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6 In this dialogue there is certainly also an element of 'poisonous mouth', see section 4.2.
During anti-sorcery or cleansing rituals (tovil rituals) revenge is taken and the enemy is ensorcelled; a bond between the enemy and the wild is established. In local terms the disht'iya is returned to sender (pit'in yanavaa). Within this triad of enmity however, the wild is not sent back to for example Pein'igahakanda, but is addressed to a local enemy, the person who is accused of sorcery. The disht'iya is thus not expelled from the local neighbourhood but is sent to a household within Heendolakanda. This is the way in which conflict and violence become localised by means of a localising strategy in which the disht'iya including less local forms of wildness remains encapsulated within the local community.

**A tip, the Special Task Force and a fishbone.**

In the above exchange [3] the women allude to the connection between local conflict within the neighbourhood, in which sorcery and life-long disht'iya often play a role, and tips (ottuva) people give to the police or the army. The women argue that within the neighbourhood of Heendolakanda people are known to betray one another. Members of the community who possess guns are denounced to the police and disarmed. These tips, according to these three gossiping women, keep the arms race and gun related violence at bay. They thus construct their own group as being less dangerous and violent towards outsiders by virtue of internal strife and conflict; betrayal and tips. Small everyday forms of interpersonal violence are constructed by them as a buffer against major outbreaks of violence in which fire-arms and a higher level of communal organisation (i.a. solidarity and complicity) are involved.

If one thing is more prominent and central to contemporary life in Udaheenagama than sorcery it seems to be tips (ottuva): the practice of informing enemies. In my interpretation, this 'ottuva-culture' goes along with the ethos of sorcery accusations. Intimate knowledge of the enemy needed to cast a sorcery spell or cut a sorcery spell is also vital when passing on tips to the enemies. As much as sorcery is a very localised phenomenon, in which perpetrator and victim live in the same neighbourhood (in the case of Heendolakanda in the same extended family), ottuva also has a very limited and localised efficacy. The efficacy of sorcery spells diminishes as distance between perpetrator and victim increases but so does the efficacy of tips, which become more vague, inaccurate and ineffective as the social distance between the perpetrator and the betrayed increases. It is easier to successfully betray a person you know well. For example two middle aged (W1-W2) and one younger woman (W3) in Heendolakanda (household 7 and 6) spoke almost proudly of

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7 For example, the exact name of person, name of the house, where the person is sleeping, on a bed or on the floor.
one such betrayal, in which a promiscuous, next-door neighbour, Padmavatthi (household 5) was betrayed by her husband and tortured by the army during the civil war of 1988-1991:

[4] W1: She [our neighbour] didn't get a tovil ritual, but illnesses of course she had [loud laughter], there is no point in talking about these illnesses [more laughter], she has been ill (asaniipa) but we can't tell you [loud laughter, they keep on giggling] ..., this is a long story, we can't tell you [laugh].
W2: I am ashamed to tell you those things, there is nobody else like that in this whole village.
W1: There is nobody who has done something so respectable in this whole village [ irony] [laughter] ... So respectable! [laughter]
W2: The deed was so respectable.
W1: She did things that nobody would do. That is why. [laughs] [long pause] She hasn't done anything [respectable] that would make her able to walk on the road dressed in clothes [she won't be able to walk along the streets in a respectable manner] [laughs].
W2: If it had happened to me, I would have died.
W1: That is true, if it were someone like us, we would not be able to face others again. [laughter].
W2: I went to see her one day, but my husband told me not to go and see her anymore.
W1: [laughs].
W2: She is slightly mad, isn't she?
W1: She just fakes to be mad! (boru pissa) [laughter].
W2: We went to look.
W3: Why? Because it was nearby.
W2: She danced beautifully [irony]. We went to see the dance.
W1: She danced after having eloped with her lover, she was married to someone, but she left with someone else.
W2: Yes [laughs] [long pause].
W1: [to me] She must have told you that she has been ill, didn't she?
Me: Yes, she told me.
W2: So she wasn't ill, was she?
W1: She wasn't ill. This is how she got it. It was only after coming home that she danced, before that she had gone to Edanduwila town [see map 2], she had climbed on the guy's shoulders [her lover] with a leg on each side.
W2: It was the soldiers who told them to do so.
W1: Yes, the soldiers had beaten them, they got a good beating from the soldiers [laughs] [long pause]. Now she even goes back shopping in Edanduwila, I don't know how she manages [laughs] [unclear sentence]. The army was there then [there was an army camp in Edanduwila in 1988-1991] [long pause] it is said that the army was on both sides of them, beating them, this man [her lover] [uses a term normally used to refer to animals] walked and carried this woman on his shoulders in the middle of [Edanduwila] town, it is after this that brother [her husband] brought her home in a state of madness.
W2: Like that it was //
W3: She had been mad before she left [with her lover] hadn't she?
W1: Not really.
W3: So?
W1: It was only after she had gone there [to Edanduwila], and after having been brought back that she was in a state of madness and an altered state of consciousness (pissuwa, aaruudha), she pretended to be mad, because people went to see her and she was ashamed. [laughter],
W2: Though she was told [by her husband] to come home, she hadn't come, she went along the path of that man [her lover]. Later she was punished [by the army], they caught her, beat her and displayed her in town.

As I realised this was malicious gossip I took it to heart to go and see Padmavatthi herself to whom it all happened. She complained about a fishbone stuck in her throat for a few years now. This fishbone caused sharp pains and stopped her from swallowing food properly, as a result of which she was only able to swallow certain types of food. She went through numerous and long hospitalisations at government hospitals in both Galle and Colombo, but the doctors couldn't find the fishbone. The ritual specialist said she was suffering from 'the moral mistake of being alone' (tanikam doosha) but she wasn't so sure herself.

According to Padmavatthi something far worse and dangerous was going on: the gaze of the wild possibly sent by an enemy or a sorcerer was afflicting her. They tried to find out whether the disht'iya and a sorcery spell were present but Padmavatthi never mentioned the outcome of the ritual specialist's efforts at divination. She thus suspected she suffered from a prolonged exposure to the gaze of the wild which had been incompletely diagnosed or treated. The conflict, which goes back ten years, and in which the army was involved,

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8 The first visit, which was often crucial in determining which discourse would be chosen for all the subsequent meetings, was far from an 'ideal situation'. I wasn't the only visitor and three conversations went on at the same time. First of all Padmavatthi's extremely drunk husband tried to tell me how hard he had to work to support his family, while Padmavatthi constantly reproved, telling him not to try to talk to me while he was so drunk. At the same time her husband's younger brother had come to visit them from a town near the coast. He was slightly inebriated and had come with a request for Padmavatthi. His wife had died and he was left with four children, so he tried to convince her to adopt two of them. She refused resolutely. A fierce and drunken brawl ensued and since I was frightened I just hid in the background, waiting for the customary 'tea and cake' to be over, and ready to leave as soon as possible. Most of the subsequent visits were not essentially different, but I realised that it would be quite odd only to base the study on the easily accessible households. After that I made frequent short visits in which I brought sweets from town, to alleviate the pain of the 'fishbone stuck in Padmavatthi's throat', her major complaint. I mention this context in which 'the discourse of sorcery and disht'iya' was elicited in order to compare it and contrast it with the previously mentioned context; the dialogue in which three women had a chat and were obviously enjoying themselves.

9 This type of divination is done by bringing limes in the proximity of the afflicted person, her house or her garden, then by cutting the limes and putting them in a bucket of water. If the gaze of the wild or a sorcery spell was there, it would have been attracted to the lime and made the lime heavier. So if one of the halves of the lime sinks it means the disht'iya or sorcery are involved.
simmered on at the local level in the form of ambiguous evocations of the 'gaze of the wild' by *Padmavatthi* and the threat of possible future sorcery accusations.

Enmity was again constructed in a triadic way between a victim, a local enemy and the wild. This time however two parallel triads were involved: on the one hand *Padmavatthi*, the *disht'iya*, and a sorcerer, on the other hand, *Padmavatthi*, the Special Task Force and the person who gave a tip to the army (her husband). The possible link between the gaze of the wild and the Special Task Force's presence and army camp¹⁰ in Udaheenagama appeared to me only after comparing conversations with *Padmavatthi* and her neighbours' narrative. I re-constructed it here by juxtaposing two discourses, elicited in two different contexts: households 6, 7 and household 5 (see map 3). During the civil war, the traditional triad between a victim, the *disht'iya* and a local enemy who sent the *disht'iya* to his victim by means of sorcery was thus paralleled by the triad of a victim, the Special Task Force and a local enemy who sent the Special Task Force to punish his victim.

**A glimpse of the past.**

In other narratives about less tense situations the link between the gaze of the wild, which pervades *Heendolakanda*, and the communities' enemies is made more explicit. A ninety seven year old woman (household 8) once spoke to me about a more dated type of enemy by relying heavily upon the same set of idioms normally used to describe personal suffering: 'can't stand the sight (of my family members)', and 'yaksha *disht'iya*'. She reflected upon a concern that was more relevant for a previous generation living in *Heendolakanda*:

> [5] There are Rod'iis [vagrants of the lowest caste], we can't stand the sight of them, we chase them away, hit them with stones, very bad people, they [uses the animal form of they] were everywhere, in caves or in haunted houses or anywhere they might have lived, we don't know,... when people are walking along a path in the forest those Rod'i assault them, we don't have anything to do with those Rod'i, with those *yaksha*.

The problems typical of the *Heendolakanda* neighbourhood are not only a contemporary phenomenon. For a long time it had the characteristics of a marginal area in which scores could be settled and about which fearful rumours circulated within the more 'central' neighbourhoods of the *Udaheenagama* area. I will end this presentation of *Heendolakanda* with a view of an 'outsider', a young woman from *Lower Puvakden'iya* from the same caste

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¹⁰ This camp was organised in one of the village schools near the main road at Edanduwila (see map 2), and people were known to be tortured and made to 'disappear' there.
as the people from *Heendolakanda* (the cultivator's caste). In her description of the reputation of the scary path to *Pein'igahakanda* (see map 3) she links up the *tovil* rituals performed for women suffering from *disht'iya* (*disht'iya karanavaa* see previous chapter), and the danger of this dark forest path at night. It has the reputation of being a place where people from other neighbourhoods (not only from *Heendolakanda-Pein'igahakanda*) take revenge and settle scores:

[6] We - of course - don't go to that area. If they perform a *tovil* ritual in that area, and one of our people is going to see it, people will follow him and take revenge. It is in that area that things like that happen. Not everybody is like that, there are good ones also. But if you go to the *Pein'igahakanda* and *Heendolakanda* area late at night, they will hide somewhere [in the forest] and then suddenly kill or beat you. So things like that happen, therefore we - of course - don't have friendships with people in places like that. Not only amongst them, but also amongst ourselves, there are people like that. But not everybody is like that.

This young woman was torn between the discourse on 'Pein'igahakanda and *Heendolakanda* being inhabited by wild people' and the realisation that in fact, there were many killers in her own neighbourhood also.

2. *Galkanda*

This is also a pre-dominantly cultivator caste (*goyigama*) neighbourhood, but is it less homogeneous in both kinship and party-political terms than Heendolakanda. Next-door neighbours are less closely related and households supporting the government (PA) and the opposition (UNP) live in each others' vicinity. The Galkanda neighbourhood is less isolated and people have easy access to the temple and the main road. The women I talked with during a snowball survey I carried out in the beginning of fieldwork all work as labourers in the tea plantations, owned by the monks, or by one of the local, lay landowners.

**Life-long disht'iya.**

Life-long affliction by the gaze of the wild, which can be traced back up to four generations (much like in Heendolakanda) is what strikes the outsider first (see figure 8). The women I interviewed in *Galkanda*, though, made the inter-generational transmission of life-long *disht'iya* very explicit. A middle-aged lady, head of household II explained:

\*Ambiguous statement (compare with transcript 13a in chapter 2), 'they' could stand for human enemies, but also evokes the traditional image of the *yaksha*, as beings hiding in the forest and attacking people when they for example go to bathe in a river in the forest.\*
Conflicts:
1. Killed through *sorcery*.
4. Killed through *sorcery* by shaman at age of 14.
W: The illness started before puberty. I had a stomach ache every day. My stomach was swollen. I couldn't eat. I stayed at the government hospital for more than a month for this stomach ache. In those days we didn't know you yet.

S. Akkaa: Did it get better after you attained puberty?
W: It never got better. Even after I got married, even while I was expecting a baby, I suffered from this stomach ache a lot. Even now I can't sleep at night. All these [touche... points at the things inside] come upwards and tighten my chest. But what happened after they performed a tovil ritual for me is that the madness-like things have gone. That is all. I don't scream in my dreams at night anymore. But even yesterday I had a terrible stomach-ache. This bad luck (agun'a) affected the children [7 babies died]. They say it is because of the dish'tiya on my body. It must have affected the children.

S. Akkaa: Are there a lot of people with the dish'tiya on their body for a lifetime?
W: Yes, for example my mother. Twenty four tovil rituals were performed for her. She was sick everyday, even now it is still the same, she is always really sick,... It is that illness that came to my body also. [whispers:] My mother also sometimes behaves as if she is mad, even now it happens sometimes. Even when she was very young she was ill and tovil rituals were performed for her.

Her mother, a 95 year old lady from household III later explained:

[8] When I was about twelve, I had eaten some fried chicken, and that dish'tiya fell onto my body. It is from then onwards that I fall ill regularly. They say\textsuperscript{12} they can't make it go away, even though tovil rituals are danced. They say that even now I have it,... I have it continuously (digat'ama).

Disassociation of perpetrator and his family.
In the survey area in Galkanda (see map 3, household I, II, III, all three female-headed households) a so-called 'peace of the graveyard' had been established (cf. Gramsci 1971: 185). Three unnatural deaths, the sudden death of a fourteen year old teenage girl, the untimely death of a ritual specialist, and the suicide of a girl in her early twenties had all been attributed to local conflicts, sorcery, revenge and malicious intentions by close family members/ next-door neighbours. The hate and suspicions were vividly remembered on one occasion when I met one of the surviving women (from household II) alone:

[9] What I have now is a stomach ache, I can't eat. Sometimes my whole stomach is blown up with air (bad'a pipenoo). That is all. Time after time my body feels lifeless,... [whispered] My daughter also died because of poisoning.

\textsuperscript{12} See chapter 7 on reported speech for an analysis of this way of speaking about oneself.
She died suddenly. She hadn't been ill. It was eight or nine o'clock in the evening when life was going away,... It is her 'thing'\(^{13}\) (eyaage meeva eka) that I have now. She had not attained puberty yet, it was about to happen. The 'one that stays here now'\(^{14}\) [my son, Maat'in] was here. He was here when she died. It was his older sister. He was very small. He did not understand or realise anything. After his sister died he was taken to a nearby house. I think that it was to 'this place itself' that he was taken [the next-door neighbour's house]\(^{15}\). He too started to swell (idimun'aa). I kept him at the government hospital for two or three months. He was swollen all over and pale/ white\(^{16}\)... My daughter was not angry at all. She loved her mother a lot. Near to the moment of her death, as life went, she cried a lot: 'my sweet mother', she held onto my shoulders and hugged me. When a young person dies, the deceased spirits (preeta) have more effect. The person her/himself comes and calls. They come because they died with desire/love. Daughter died with love for me. That is why she comes and calls me. 'Mother let's go' she says, 'mother is suffering' she says. That is all she says, nothing else. She comes and sits here, just like you are sitting here now, and stays nearby,... She comes only to me, not to the others. Why? Because I have the dish'tiya\(^{17}\) onto my body,... It is because of them [the neighbours, the household of her elder brother] that all this happened. [whispered, almost inaudible] We were not getting on with them at that time. They were angry those days // [abruptly interrupts herself and continues in a loud voice:] I always have a headache, I can't stand it anymore. Even the headache that started yesterday is still there. I get it everyday in the evening,... [whispered again] My elder brother of course did not do any good work. He ensorcelled people as much as he could, even at night, in this area he practised sorcery. He did a great job for all the people in the area [irony]. In those days people were even afraid to come to his house! Even you would have been afraid to go there! That is why he died an untimely and sudden death. Because he harmed/ tortured (vaadee)\(^{18}\) others,... On his way back from casting a sorcery spell somewhere he died. The sorcery spell he cast onto somebody else hit back at him instead. Don't write this down! Why? If they [the neighbours] happen to see your book, they will say that we have told you. If they would see your book they would be angry again. We don't need those things now. He [elder brother] is not here anymore, 'it doesn't matter anymore, it is enough if we do what is important to the people who live now' (eeva veid'ak neieiapat'a deing inna kaand'geveid'a karagattamaeiti). His wife [now her best friend] does

\(^{13}\) See chapter 5 for an analysis of the use of euphemism.

\(^{14}\) See chapter 5 for a discussion of naming and context-specific 'namelessness'.

\(^{15}\) Innuendo insinuates that this house is very much on her mind, but she doesn't mention yet why. Such terms of address are typically of covert expressions of hate and suspicions (see chapter 5).

\(^{16}\) She brings closely together a description of how her own body feels 'lifeless' (eingat'a pan'a neiei, pan'a: life-force), even to this day and how life left (pan'a yanavaa) her daughter's body several years ago. In my interpretation I would also be inclined to link her swollen and bloated stomach (bad'a pipenoo) and the swellings and paleness her son was suffering from (id'munnaa, sudivelaa) immediately after the death of her daughter as homologues to the swelling and paleness her daughter or dead people in general suffer from.

\(^{17}\) Unclear whether she referred to yaksha dish'tiya or to the preta dish'tiya itself here.

\(^{18}\) On the use of vaadee see chapter 5.
not need to pity me. She helps me with everything. Even if I fall ill she runs and comes to visit me at night. There is no need to talk about the dead, is there, _noonā_?

I quote this lady at length because I came across similar feelings during many other interviews with women. I would describe such mixed feelings as the hatred and suspicion of a bygone era, blended with the emotion that goes along with the death of the main enemy and the feeling of resignation that accompanies the decision to focus on the present rather than the past. 'It doesn't matter anymore, it is enough if we do what matters to the people who live now', even if those people are members of the household of a dead enemy.

According to my data, male, deceased enemies, such as this sorcerer, are easily dissociated and considered separate from their household. Though the household ('_gedara_') is very much seen as a unity, a political, economic and moral unity, when it comes to accusing an enemy of one's misfortunes one single person is often picked out and blamed. More often than not this is the head of the household. The triadic organisation of enmity I described in the previous section leads to an individualisation of enmity in which one particular person becomes the main focus of hatred and revenge. Sorcery accusations and practices from one household to another concern and afflict the whole household only to a certain degree. One single person will be afflicted more severely ('the sick person') or will be perceived as the protagonist of sorcery practices. A fissure and distinction is established between an enemy and an enemy's household, a leader and his followers, while after this leader's death the followers are not perceived to be so much of a threat. I come back to this below in my description of the _Puvakden'iya_ neighbourhood, since an analysis of this pattern of enmity as practised amongst close neighbours seems even more crucial when it is applied to the (political) enemies of the civil war.

The extreme sorrow this mother in _Galkanda_ underwent at the death of her teenage daughter went hand in hand with the intense rage and anger so typical of strife between very close family members. Her elder brother, by virtue of living next-door, and being a member of the same extended family, was a source of anger and jealousy of an intensity and daily relevance that, in my understanding, could not have been maintained by a more distant enemy. Intense mourning and intimate enmity went hand in hand. At his death, though, his widow became her best friend. When the sorcerer's widow's daughter

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19 See Tambiah 1975.
20 Generally speaking all members of one household tend to have the same party-political affiliation, form one economic entity and when the _dishti'ya_ (of _preta_ or _yaksha_) or a bad planetary influence (_graha apala_) afflicts a person this generally has some effects on all members of the household, the house and the garden.
committed suicide last year both women had lost a beloved daughter and were united in their sorrow. They regularly helped each other during the preparation of ritual events, a sign of trust (of being *vishvaasa kenek*): ritual events to make offerings to the spirits of the teenager, the sorcerer and the suicide victim. Women who work in the tea plantations tend to walk to the plantation and pluck tea in groups of two or three. These two women became work partners. But ongoing fear, insecurity and a realisation of the precariousness of their situation continued to dominate the atmosphere within these three female headed households (household I, II, III). There was no powerful male family member to protect them. At night they were often scared when they heard the slightest noise. All three female heads of households suffer from long-term *disht'iya*, the gaze of the wild. A sign of difference remained visible on the inside wall of their houses though. In one household the President's picture featured prominently; a sign of being pro-SLFP. In the other houses her image was conspicuously absent, a sign of support for the opposition.

3. Upper and lower *Puvakden'iya*

The descriptions of the two previous neighbourhoods are based on interviews with people I got to know during the initial stages of fieldwork, during a snowball type survey. I soon became worried that contacts were being set up for me along kinship or party political lines, and that I only got to know people relatively interested in speaking about rituals and 'the gaze of the wild'. Therefore I decided to organise a random survey in two of the other neighbourhoods I was used to visiting: *Puvakden'iya* and *Bamarabokka*. The survey carried out in *Puvakden'iya* covers an area demarcated by two paths on the slope of the hill (see map 4).

In this cultivator-caste neighbourhood the families of the killers and victims of the civil war live in close proximity to each other. What in middle-class discourse is described as the struggle between 'communist JVP insurgents', 'terrorists' or 'thugs' on the one hand and 'counter-insurgency forces' of the Sri Lankan army (the Special Task Force) on the other is described in the local discourse as a struggle between 'the small government of the JVP' and the families of soldiers. The contemporary representations of the civil war by people of the *Puvakden'iya* neighbourhood are constructed around very concrete, war-specific local struggles. I would find it difficult to describe this discourse as party-political in the

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1 I had initially planned to carry out similar random surveys in *Heendolakanda* and *Pein'igahakanda*. This didn't materialise for lack of time.

2 See map 4: men from household 23, 22, 2b, were involved in the killings in household 30 and 32, households 21, 25 and 18 were involved in a failed attempt at murder of a man in household 23. Also see figure 9.

3 This term (*podi aan'd'iva*) is also used by the victims of the JVP.
Map 4: Survey area in Puvakden'iya neighbourhood (random survey): 33 households (1-28 and I-XI), 157 people (legend see map 3).

Upper Puvakden'iya

Lower Puvakden'iya

River & road

Abandoned

Paddy
Photo 11: Photos of a disappeared husband killed by the JVP and an advertisement for the Sri Lankan army in a widow's house.
Figure 9: Kinship diagram - Puvakden’iya neighbourhood (legend see figure 6).

- Part 1:
conventional sense. The struggle for arms and the practice of giving tip-offs to the Special Task Forces (STF) form the core of the justifications for threats, abductions and murder. Within this discourse all families who had sent soldiers to the Sri Lankan army (whether this be the Special Task Force or simply the units fighting the Tamils in the North and East) were seen to be collaborating with the Special Task Force, giving tip-offs about the whereabouts of local JVP youths and they were therefore targeted for punitive action by the JVP. They also became the targets for the extortion of weapons since they were seen to have easy access to weapons via their soldier-children. Other families who also were in the possession of (often home-made) guns, but were not clearly affiliated with the army were equally a target for extortion of weapons. Victims of the JVP, conversely, could give tip-offs to the STF, who would then make local JVP youths disappear. Nowadays, almost ten years after the latest civil war, widows or parents of the disappeared live in close proximity to the widows or parents of the killers who in the majority of cases also disappeared (see map 4).

Relative lack of fear of local perpetrators amongst women and children.

Amongst the survivors, fear of the families of the erstwhile perpetrators who live nearby is remarkably absent. A young woman from household 23 (see map 4) used the same path as her husband's murderers on a daily basis. From the porch of her hut, you could hear the daily noises and voices within the perpetrator's household. She told me she was not afraid though. They only wanted to kill her husband, not her or her five children. A widow from household 32 was not afraid either, she confidently told me that all the local young men (allegedly) involved in her husband's disappearance had been killed by the army. She evoked a 'peace of the graveyard' but, as I pointed out before in my description of the Galkanda neighbourhood, she left the families of the young male perpetrators out of the picture. Their continuing 'presence amongst the living beings' did not arouse anxiety or fear. Her husband disappeared, and so did his abductors, but the chain of violence seems to have ended there.

However massive and out of control the political violence of the 1989-1991 civil war appears at first sight, compared to other war time situations (e.g. Rwanda, Uganda, Peru), a remarkable type of restraint seems to have been exercised at the village level. Women and children were threatened and maltreated, but not killed. The similarity with women's and children's relation with the disht'iya, the wild during violence-ridden tovil rituals is striking. As the illustration of the spatial organisation during such rituals shows (see chapter 2, figure 4) women and children remain inside the house, away from 'the disht'iya' which roams outside. At certain times during the ritual the space of the disht'iya and the space of
Photo 12: A mother with her husband who allegedly killed many people in the neighbourhood.
the afflicted person, women and children are separated by a white curtain (**kad'aturaava**) that breaks the space into two (**kad'anavaa**: to break, **kad'aturaava**: the curtain that breaks, cuts). It seems that during the civil war a similar very powerful symbolic 'kad'aturaava' protected women and children from the wildness of war. The struggle was fought man-to-man, and once the young men involved had 'disappeared' the fear and threats dissipated. The households of perpetrators, which often included middle-aged men, or brothers of the perpetrators, who would be very capable of fighting, were given a certain independence from the actual perpetrators of the 1989-1991 era. Young politically active men were dealt with separately, after having been isolated from their households. This is similar to the 'individualisation of enmity' I described in the section on Galkanda to a certain extent. Hate and anger towards such households remains but the fear has subsided, fear had largely been related to an individual and it subsided when this individual had disappeared.

This does not mean that fear doesn't linger on in **Puvakden'iya**. Many women suffer from a 'terrified heart' (**hit'a bay ayi**) and long-term **disht'iya** (see map 4 and figure 9). On top of the hill, relatively inaccessible to the police, stood an illicit brewery. Women regularly complained about violent inebriated men making the hill paths unsafe, the scary nightly noises of drunken brawls, or the sounds of 'domestic' violence.

'O**ur people must follow the example of the Tamil people**'...

In an analysis of the contemporary meaning of the notion of the wild and the strategies of dehumanisation of the enemy in **Udaheenagama** the Tamil enemy, the prime enemy of the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist middle class and political elite needs to be taken into consideration. On the basis of the previous analyses of the way in which **Heendolakanda** people deal with a group of enemies from **Pein'igahakanda** and the way in which **Puvakden'iya** people deal with the perpetrators of the civil war one can anticipate that the notion of a group of remote enemies such as 'Tamils' is a problematic notion in the **Udaheenagama** context. In the vein of the previous strategies of 'individualisation' of the enemy and 'localisation' of hatred and revenge the concept of a Tamil enemy is not central in **Udaheenagama** life, despite the fact that this community sends a considerable number of soldiers to the front.

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4 A situation (see transcript 9) where a friendship had emerged in the aftermath of sorcery-related violence once the main perpetrator had died.
5 I will come back to the issue of domestic violence, when discussing the Udaheenagama soundscapes in section 4.1.
Photo 13: Afflicted person behind *kad'aturnava*, a white curtain separating women and children from the wild summoned in the centre of the ritual space.
In addition to the conflicts related to the civil war of 1988-1991 the community of Puvakden’iya was in the process of learning how to deal with a problem of more recent origins: the presence of deserters who had fled the front in the North and East. Two middle aged men (M1 from household 6 and M2 from household 4), and an elderly man and his wife (M3 and W from household 6) described the plight of deserters and their community and commented on what I would call 'coolie nationalism' or the 'nationalism' of the daily-wage-labourer:

[10] M2: The army has raided the funeral house.
M1: Did they capture anybody?
M2: They captured.
M1: Where was that?
M2: On the other side [of the river, lower Puvakden’iya].
M1: At the funeral house?
M2: The other two have escaped. Even D. was there! And L. was also there! Just when the army raid started they managed to escape.
M1: Now they have given an order to catch them.
M2: Now it goes as follows; the person who gives them shelter will be arrested also. If you keep a person like that [a deserter] in your house, you will be taken away... It must have been because of some kind of tip-off (ottuva) that they [the army] have come, otherwise, how would they know?
M1: Somebody must have told [the army] that they were at the funeral house.
M2: It is said (-lu) that five boys have escaped from the army.
M1: Whom did they catch?
M2: They said (kivuva) that it was a boy from the other side of the river.
M1: Now they even have the order to shoot them [the deserters].
M2: No matter how well you hide they will catch you. They catch and catch boys over here and over there. [angrily] And why did they become soldiers in the army? Couldn't they have stayed at home? Isn't that true, elder uncle?
M3: Oh, I don't know [laughs] [a way of agreeing with what was said],...
M2: If they catch you they beat you [talanavaa: to crush, to flatten, to hammer, to beat, to bruise],... W: But if they can't live in the army? Why do they go then?
M1: Why are they going?
M2: Oh, they go [to the army] as kerumkaarayoo [persons who think they are capable of doing anything],... But then, as soon as they get frightened they escape.
M1: When they are unable to cope with the training they escape. The training is difficult.
M2: The training is very difficult.

6 In fact 'daily wage labour' is a misleading translation of coolie work. The word 'coolie' strongly evokes the humiliation and degradation that goes along with working for somebody else and being dependent, overpowered and often exploited.
M1: Once the training is over it is less difficult, but then you don't know by whom you will get shot, by the army or the Tigers,...
M2: They escape because they fear for their lives.
M3: If they are escaping anyway why don't they just stay home?
M1: Oh, I don't know [laughs] [agrees, doesn't know either why they do it].
M2: It goes like this, they go to the army,... Then, after having fled, they become outlaws and steal things (mankolla kaarayoo).
M1: This time, because of all the army raids, they [the deserters] won't be able to stay here,... Even today it can't be there won't be an army raid [there will be a raid today].
W: Sometimes they [the army] come in civilian clothes.
M2: Somebody might have given them a list, and told them that there are so many [deserters] in this particular village. They even said that he [the arrested deserter] was arrested because of his own fault, they [?] said that they [the army] asked him 'what is your name', 'what?', 'what?', 'no, no, that is not your name [use disrespectful pronoun]' they [the army] have said, and next it was all over [laughs],..., They [?] said that he will be beaten severely,...
M1: [sarcastic] Oh, he will be tortured really well.
M2: Though the people at the other side of the river said that they have beaten him up here in the village itself,...
M2: The families [of the deserters] are said to get in trouble if they lie about the whereabouts of their sons.
W: They gave an order to capture them [the deserters], they even said that they would give presents to the people who would help to capture them. They said that recently, didn't they?
M1: [jokes] Yes, and once you have gone to get your present you will be beaten up by the boys [the deserters]. It is better not to do anything.
M2: [sarcasm] Presents? They will probably give us 'the hollow space within a bamboo stick!' [nothing],...
M2: It is only recently that a whole group of our boys had decided to join the army, saying it was a good job. Later, after some time had passed, they all escaped and came back. They couldn't stay in the army (inna behei),... They tortured them severely (vada).
M2: We can't protect them [our boys]. It is the government's law that we have to give them away.
W: Yes, there is a government law according to which you have to give the children.
M2: After one year of training, the parents [of the soldiers] have to sign a paper. Once the elders have signed they have completely given (baara diila) them to the army. Then the child is theirs, it belongs to the army. Then they [the children] can't do things in the way the parents would want it. Our boys have escaped before the end of the first year,...
M3: So the government has spent money on them for a year. If they would pay the government the amount of money that was spent on them, they would be free [financial indebtedness rather than military need to fight the LTTE is evoked].
M2: Yes, yes.
M3: So it is because of their [financial] debts that the boys [the deserters] are captured,...
M3: You can't stop the war.
M1: I say that the war will not come to an end.
M3: [sarcastic] To end the war we must reduce the production of Tamil people. The habits of our Sinhalese people are as follows. We only have five children per household, but the Tamil people have twenty per household, and the children they raised they give [for the war], not like us Sinhalese parents. They [the Tamil people] send them to the front straight away. They don't send them for money. Our people go to the army as coolie, Sri Lanka has a 'Coolie Army' (kuli hamudaavak) [an army of casual labourers, where the soldiers work because of money]. But [the Tamil people] go to the army courageously, to offer their lives for their country. Those are the habits of the Tamil people... If we want to win the war, our people must follow the example of the Tamil people; not do it because of money, but do it for the country. But our people don't want to go to the front and die. They don't like to tie a bomb on their bellies and die [become suicide bombers] [laughs, sarcastically] We are casual labourers! And they are not! Even their women fight,....
M1[start joking]: I wouldn't mind if they would enrol me in the army [laughs].
M3: You know why? If you live everything stays the same, and if you die everything stays the same [laughter].
M2: The people who remained alive will receive some money [compensation]!
M1: If we die! [at the front]
M3: Yes, after we have died!,....
M3: Mostly village people (gambada kat't'iya, game aya) go to the army. Look in any place, it is always village people who go to the army.
M1: Village people protect Colombo people and they [Colombo people] live well. Villagers just cannot live doing small jobs here and there, they just can't. Because of this state of being unable to do anything [a job] (beirikama) some boys go secretly to the army without telling their parents. Why? Because then at least they have a job. Because the boys in the village are unemployed they depend on their parents.
M1: They stay in the village without doing any work.
M2: So they think (hiteno kiyalaa) [uses reported speech to report on their thoughts]:'it is good to do this!' [to go to the army]. But then, after they have gone to the army, it is too hard and they run away.
M1: After that they just hang around without aims.
W: They have an ordinary education, they are educated, but can you get a job with an ordinary education? [rhetorical].
M2: In the village about 80% of the boys are rowdies (rastiyaadu). They go to school for a few days and then they get fed up. They don't listen to what their parents say. Once the child has been changed by the environment (parisarayen) like that he becomes a rowdy. It is children like this who try to go [to the army]. Why? To help build up the economy of the household,...
M2: The children who grow up these days are not like the ones growing up in our generation. We grew up with decency (hikmiimakin), having fallen into the society [samaadjet'a veitilaa as opposed veit'enoo rastiyaadu peittat'a, having
Photo 14a: Soldier, trained (and fed) by the army with one of his friends who stayed in the village.
Those boys get angry easily. These days we have to agree with what the boys say. What the young people say, what the new generation says, that is what is correct. Not what the parents say.

M2: [sarcastically] They go [to the army] and they think about it in a very simple way. They think that if they go to the army they will have a job, and then they will be able to live off of that salary.

M1: But then after you go they torture you there, don't they? And because they torture you, you escape,...

M1: But if they don't do any work in the house neither, what is the reason for them being at home?

M2: Most of the children of this generation don't do any work at home when they are told to. It is with great difficulty after having scolded and threatened them that you can get them to do some work.

M1: Now, I say in the morning [laughs], 'son, pluck some tea', but he doesn't pluck tea. He eats and then runs away, gets dressed has a bath, comes back in the afternoon, eats again, and runs away again, comes back at night at about 1 or 2 in the morning, eats, sleeps and goes away again in the morning. M2: He [the son] must have got used to the company of the rowdies. So then his mother scolds him. M1: Mother scolds him, I stay silent (man innoo sadda neituva).

The conflict with the Tamil ethnic minority has been reframed in local terms as the problem of rowdy sons, especially after they have become deserters. The local face of a remote form of political, inter-ethnic violence is very similar to the violence of the civil war of 1988-1991. During the civil war of the late eighties, during the conflict between pro-JVP and pro-army individuals denunciation of JVP activists to the Special Task Forces and their subsequent disappearance played a major role (which I described in the section on Galkanda). Nowadays a very similar type of violence takes place when deserters are betrayed by local people, denounced to the army and 'disappear' to a high risk squadron at the deadly front-line. It is again via the dynamic of giving tips (ottuwa) to the army about one's enemies that a political, large scale conflict gains relevance in the local context. Remote forms of 'wildness', such as the war against the LTTE did not seem to play a role in the women's ambiguous discourse about the dishti'ya. What featured were the drunken youths, unpredictable soldiers on holiday from the front, deserters and the increasingly common army raids to arrest deserters.

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7 The long journeys mothers currently undertake to search for information about the whereabouts of arrested sons/deserters are remarkably similar to the searches of the mothers and wives of the disappeared during the civil war (see chapter 8). For example a mother about a very recent search: The army came, he got caught, I walked and walked about for three months, then I got hold of big people and got him out, they might come again though [to arrest him]. From the point of view of the mothers whose sons disappeared during army raids the differences between the disappearances organised by the Special Task Forces during the civil war and the contemporary army raids might not seem very substantial. In both cases mothers and wives continued and continue to search for months on end.
Photo 14b: "Disappearances" - A widow, whose husband disappeared during the civil war of the late eighties, with her daughter, married to a (disappeared) deserter, and her two grandsons.
4. Bamarabokka

This lower caste community is condescendingly referred to by the neighbouring peoples as the 'god'ee', the 'heap' (of people)\(^8\). Bamarabokka, 'the intestines of the bee' is another humiliating name for this neighbourhood, only used by higher caste people and bureaucrats, and never mentioned by the inhabitants themselves. The drummers caste people inhabiting the village call their place 'Galkanda', thereby blurring the distinction with the higher caste status of the 'other' people living in the nearby neighbourhood of Galkanda. For the sake of clarity, and in order to be able to consider these people as a separate group I will have to use this pejorative place-name.

'The people from the heap' are from the drummers caste and are a major source of ritual specialists for the Udaheenagama area (and far beyond). None of them has 'disappeared'. When, during the civil war, the Special Task Force conducted large-scale raids\(^9\) and arrests in the area, large groups of men (up to 20 or 30 at a time) from 'the heap' were arrested but they were all released soon after. This might be a coincidence or it might have to do with the lack of interest the authorities had in lower caste people (who are usually not the target of political propaganda, since the vote of such minorities is not considered to be able to make a difference). Party politics in the Udaheenagama area tend to be dominated by people from the cultivator caste\(^10\). Women from Bamarabokka, when asked explicitly, would comment on how party political affiliation in their community was 'mixed'\(^11\). Party politics in Bamarabokka seemed to take up a less prominent position than, for example, in Puvakden'iya or Heendolakanda.

Too scared to fight.

Despite being lower caste this neighbourhood is economically well off. In the contemporary context, their traditional caste-related occupations - carpentry, masonry and dancing - are a more certain source of income than the occupations of higher caste neighbouring people can offer. Young boys often take up an apprenticeship (at a building site or a dancing school) outside the village. This community only sent one soldier to the

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\(^8\) The same word is for example used to refer to a heap of burning coal: \textit{gini anguru god'ee}.

\(^9\) For a description of these raids see next section.

\(^10\) About 80% of the MP's are from the cultivator's caste.

\(^11\) Many women from Bamarabokka would laugh when describing the political situation in their community as 'mixed', \textit{kavalam}. As I tried to understand the hilarity involved in such statements I started to make the connection with food that is \textit{kavalam}, mixed. Offering somebody a plate of curries which are already mixed (\textit{kavalam}, also \textit{indul}: touched or tasted by another human being) is a great insult and is extremely disgusting. In my interpretation the hilarity involved in presenting one's community as \textit{kavalam} (a party-political mix) to the outside world could have something to do with these other connotations \textit{kavalam} has.
Map 5: Survey area in Bamarabokka neighbourhood (random survey): 45 households (legend see map 3).
front, from a marginal and socially ostracised household. His wife's worries were met with little sympathy by the rest of the inhabitants of this neighbourhood. When I asked women from Bamarabokka why their sons were not sent to the army, they would answer in a quizzical way: 'oh, we are much too frightened for that, it is much too terrifying for us'. Fear, a terrified heart ('hitay bayay') is a common source of illness, but it also needs to be mentioned that it is a very fashionable and lady-like comment to make. While complaining about 'being terrified' one stresses one's distinctiveness from the people who are less frightened and engage in fearsome and reprehensible activities (see section 6.1. and section 8.1 for an account on fearlessness).

'The wild' from the perspective of the sorcerers.
The ritual specialists from Bamarabokka, who have regular access to other neighbourhoods, bring home stories of the dangerous and unsocialized nature of the people who attended their rituals. Often, rituals specialists have difficulties establishing their authority and carrying out a ritual in other neighbourhoods. They are teased by young men, who have the habit of ridiculing tradition and the ritual specialists are sometimes simply chased away. The violence of these young people 'who do not trust anybody' and the danger of the ambiguous notion of disht'iya generally both feature in narratives about awe-full visits to certain neighbourhoods. A 28 year old ritual specialist explained:

[11] No matter what happens, they [young men] don't care, they don't take it seriously,... There are also people who tell everybody that there aren't any yakku. They are going through a good period [of their lives]. It is only because of that they can they can be like that. But when they go through bad times, when something happens to such a person, then they will speak differently. In some households, there are people who say they don't care about the yakku. I have performed rituals for such people so many times, ... The boys who grow up now don't care, they don't even know [anything] until the disht'iya falls upon them,... Once we went to perform a tovil ritual in V., it was a long time ago, we went with my uncle [his teacher], ... There were four boys who constantly said: 'There are no yakku at all, where can there be beings that are more 'yakku' than us?' (mona yakkevot neiteyi kohedeiyi yakku inne apita vad'aa arahe kiyalaa). And the cock (billa: sacrificial substitute) died of disht'iya while we were at the cemetery*. We just left it there and made them bring another cock. So those four boys then said 'there are no yakku' and they said 'lets eat the cock'! So then

12 The notion of 'terrified heart' (hitay bayay) plays a major 'political' role since many deserters from other neighbourhoods argued they fled the front because their mothers were terrified. I will further discuss this way of presenting one's acts, such as desertion, in chapter 7.

13 More about this issue in the section on yakaa vagee minissu: cruel people who even deter the yakku and the preeta (section 6.1).
we [the ritual specialists] said 'eat it' and we left them at the cemetery. By six in
the morning a message came that all four boys had diarrhoea, that the *disht'iya*
had fallen upon them. It could not be cured. We [the ritual specialists] don't
know whether they got cured. We quickly slid away, left secretly in the
morning. We never went back to that area. Things like that happen,... There
are people [in the audience] who dance while the ritual specialists dance. Just
to tease and ridicule the ritual specialist. They grab and shake the flower hut [a
construction on the edge of the ritual space]. We don't let them do that, if they
don't stop the ritual specialist who came from outside/ from another village will
charm/ ensorcel them, so that they dance forever,... The *disht'iya* will then fall
upon such a person. We can send the *disht'iya* to people who keep teasing us.
They tend to disturb us, they tease us so much that we are not able to perform
the rituals in the proper way,... There are methods to send them away by using
charms (*gurukam*), ... Yes, you can punish them then and there. At the same
time we place an oil lamp in the lamp hut for the godling *Suuniyam*. If this is
done properly there will be no trouble at all till dawn, till six in the morning.
Then there won't be any trouble for the people at the tovil ritual. The godling
*Suuniyam* stays near us for protection. If somebody causes trouble at the tovil
ritual, the godling *Suuniyam* sees it. When this troublemaker is on his way to the
tovil ritual a punishment is given then and there; someone will hit him with a
pole, or somebody will hide in the forest, wait for him near the road and hit him**. It is with this thing [the power] of the godling *Suuniyam* that somebody
hits him,... We cannot see it [the godling *Suuniyam*], but my grandmother says
she sees the godling *Suuniyam*. We don't see it. We also call the godling
*Suuniyam* a yakaa, *Suuniyam* yakaa. It is for the godling *Suuniyam* that we
light an oil lamp when we start our [ritual] work. It is the other *yakku* we
summon through offerings, but the one who carries out our protection till dawn
is the godling *Suuniyam*. He won't let any trouble (*karadarayak*) happen to us.
*Suuniyam* protects us, so that no trouble will come to the house where we
perform the tovil ritual***.

The youth's constant (and often violent) threats to disrupt the ritual event lead the ritual
specialist to relate that the cock actually died from the *disht'iya* (see * in transcript). This is
an extreme situation, since the cock is usually not meant to die during the ritual. Being a
(sacrificial) substitute for a human being, the cock will not actually be killed but will be
substituted by other offerings to the *yakku*. The narratives reported in the ethnographic
literature which include the actual death of the cock relate how an exceptionally mad sick
person, utterly consumed by the *disht'iya*, bites off the head of the cock and sucks its blood.
In this narrative though, this sequence of events does not occur. The announcement of the
death of the cock caused by '*disht'iya*' closely follows upon a description of unsociable and
potentially violent youths (who claim to be not very different from *yakku*). Contemporary
violence and *disht'iya* are put next to one another, one story line forms the context for the
other and vice-versa.

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Photo 15: The boys that grow up now: 'Where can there be beings that are more 'yakku' than us?'
The threat of potentially violent youths and the gaze of the wild (*disht'iya*) are firmly intertwined and interwoven by the narrator. The narrative easily slides from one type of description to the other, and quickly shifts from a description which uses the vocabulary of violence and 'trouble', to a description based on the notion of *disht'iya* or 'gaze of the wild' (see *). Later on, the narrative slides in the reverse direction (see **), from *disht'iya* straight back to public violence. The *disht'iya* sent by the ritual specialists, with the help of the godling or *yakaa* *Suuniyam* results in a type of public violence common to *tovil* nights: the assault or murder of members of the audience whilst on their way to the ritual event (also see transcript 6 in Heendolakanda section). In this narrative, it is the gaze of *Suuniyam*, which is at once protective of the audience (and ritual specialists) and punitive towards the troublemakers; the *disht'iya* of the *Suuniyam* godling or the *Suuniyam yakaa*, which helps to avoid 'trouble' (see ***) at the *tovil* house. Here the *disht'iya* of *Suuniyam* is not merely there to protect people from the gazes of the other *yakku* which will be summoned and activated throughout the ritual (*disht'iya* of *Mahasohona*, *Kalu Kumaara*, or *Riiri Yakaa*). *Suuniyam*’s gaze is also there to protect everybody from human troublemakers. Throughout this particular narrative construction the *disht'iya*’s presence is very closely connected with a more secular, everyday cycle of violence; threats and assaults in the public sphere.

The communicative strategy chosen by this ritual specialist is not the ambiguity, which I described as typical of women’s accounts of the *disht'iya* in the previous chapter. The gaze of the wild and the youth’s threats remain as two separate narrative strands which revolve around one another. Ramanujan’s analysis (1989) of contextual descriptions and framing techniques within Indian literature, Tamil and Sanskrit lyrics could serve as a basis for the analysis of this narrative technique14. Ramanujan describes how a tale within the context receives its meaning and moral connotations from the tale included within the contextual description (49)15. A tale is constructed as a structure of successive encompassments in which the contained mirrors the container (51), the texts mirrors the context, and the meaning is elicited by the context (53). In this ritual specialist’s narrative it is unclear what is context and what is text, what is contained and what plays the role of container. It is as if both narrative strands form a context for one another, the *disht'iya* receiving its meaning from the violence of contemporary youths and the tale of the threatening youths acquiring

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14 This line of interpretation was suggested to me by A. Cantlie.
15 He argues that ‘we need to attend to the context-sensitive designs that embed a seeming variety of modes (tale, discourse, poem etc.) and materials’ (49).
its moral connotation by virtue of the evocation of the world of the yaksha and the gaze of the wild.

These same fears that affected this very young ritual specialist during performances were evoked (and proudly dismissed) by an elderly ritual specialist (RS) of a previous generation during an interview:

[12] S. Akkaa: Is it difficult to control the people who tease you?
RS: [rhetorical] Is it difficult? They don't listen to anything you say!
S. Akkaa: What can you do, gurunaanse [teacher, ritual specialist]?
RS: We know what to do against those, but we don't do it. It is sinful (pav) to do such things. We are all people who will die one day, won't we? So why should we do sinful things? [laughs] With one such thing I can hit such a man and finish him off [laughs].
S. Akkaa: That means by using sorcery spells [sending the disht'iya upon them]?
RS: [laughs]... If they trouble us, we don't wait and watch. Then and there we do something [cast a sorcery spell] [laughs]. Therefore they are scared of us. But we don't do such things,...
S. Akkaa: Is the new generation (apee alut paramparaava, alut l'amayi) scared of you?
RS: Scared! Even 'the people who do not trust anybody' do not dare to oppose me/ speak against me. They don't argue with me! It is like that [laughs].

Bamarabokka's ritual specialist's narratives about performances are often filled with fear, awe and condescension towards troublemakers in other neighbourhoods. As the sorcerers are haunted by un-sociable and un-socialised youths, they evoke the gaze of the wild, not only as the gaze of the institutionalised yakku (Mahasohona, Kalu Kumaara, Riiri Yakaa, Suuniyam) which are summoned during the rite. Ritual specialists also evoke the gaze of the wild in connection with the presence of human troublemakers and everyday forms of violence. What is important here is that they do not make a link between the disht'iya and people from other (often rival) neighbourhoods in an undifferentiated way. The dehumanising strategy is not applied to a whole group of people in an indiscriminate manner. The ritual specialists are careful to use this communicative strategy to describe specific incidents, and the behaviour of a very specific category of people from other neighbourhoods: troublesome young men. These young troublemakers' families are carefully left out of the picture and are not commonly associated with the disht'iya. This is a situation similar to the 'disassociation of perpetrator and his family' I described in the sections on Galkanda and Puvakden'iya.
Photo 16: Ritual specialist with a picture of himself as a young dancer. "We are all people who will die one day, so why should we do sinful things?"
What made me conduct fieldwork in this neighbourhood was the fact that quite a few families from Kalubowatta had been collaborating with the NGO I was studying. My research in Kalubowatta has been highly focused on NGO activity in the neighbourhood. I almost exclusively visited families mentioned on lists of participants of this mental health NGO. I left this type of research to the very end of my fieldwork as I did not want to be perceived as an agent of an NGO. This very focused approach severely limited the possible topics of conversation and created an atmosphere of formality and suspicion. This research strategy nevertheless led to the revelation of a fragment of the local history of counter-insurgency violence which people from other neighbourhoods, with whom I had built up a more long-term relationship had not mentioned so explicitly in order to protect me. This same type of counter-insurgency violence was also carried out in the other neighbourhoods under study but wasn't a main topic of conversation during my work in these neighbourhoods. I therefore include this fragment of the local history of violence under the section on Kalubowatta because the presentation of this type of information was typically related to my more focused research strategy in Kalubowatta. This does not mean that I learned more about 'discourses on violence' in Kalubowatta. On the contrary the interviews focused on the NGO and political violence led to the quick presentation of facts to an outsider, but revealed less about the way in which people make present such a violent reality amongst themselves.

Many people from Kalubowatta disappeared, many others hid in the nearby forest and managed to save their lives. Four of the families who collaborated with the NGO had lost a family member who was killed by the army. In two households men had been killed by local JVP insurgents. Some of the murderers or people who betrayed and gave tip-offs to the army were still hiding in this neighbourhood and some of the fear of them had remained ever since. Rumours were circulating that the JVP insurgents were re-organising themselves. What was most striking was the degree of suspicion, competition and even hate amongst the group of people receiving help from this national NGO. People tried to hide their involvement and potential benefits while at the same time trying to find out about other's contacts and successes. All of them had sent in a letter to the Commission of Inquiry. None of the families of the disappeared claimed to have received compensation, but there was much speculation and animosity about families who were suspected of having received some compensation, either through their involvement with this NGO, or through links with regional politicians.

16 I will come back to this issue of 'the protection of ethnographer' by informants in chapter 4.
The helicopters of the Special Task Force.

People from this area readily talked about high-tech cordon and search operations, both by ground troops and helicopters, in which all the men from the area were rounded up and driven to a local school. There, one of them was picked out to become the *billa*. This word is borrowed from the context of the domestic cleansing ritual, the *tovil* ritual, in which the *billa* is the cock or the human effigy; a (sacrificial) substitute offered to the *yaksha* in order to draw their attention away from the human victim. An idiom pertaining to domestic cleansing practices, such as *billa*, is used to describe counter-insurgency techniques and strategies of community destabilisation. Much like the idioms for expressing personal suffering related to domestic strife and violence are used to refer to political violence (see chapter 2), this notion of *billa*, which belongs to the domain of an essentially *domestic* cleansing rite, is transposed to a context of political violence. Within the context of the civil war and the modern\(^\text{17}\) counter-insurgency techniques used by the Special Task Force, the *billa* was the betrayer\(^\text{18}\). A member of the community who was certain to die soon\(^\text{19}\) was masked and was made to identify JVP insurgents amongst the crowd of village men who were made to parade in front of him. For this person's personal enemies or the inhabitants of disputed land, a nod of the *billa*'s head meant arrest and often 'disappearance'. After this identification parade the *billa* was invariably shot. Once fifty or sixty men were made to parade in front of a *billa* in *Kalubowatta*. Seven of them disappeared.

In addition to this state-led counter-insurgency violence a type of violence was perpetrated by local politicians which I did not encounter in other neighbourhoods. It occurred in the remote areas of *Kalubowatta* and *Keileiyaheena*. As part of the conflict between local pro-government and pro-opposition politicians about twenty houses were burned and people were chased from their land. It transpired during the pilot study (1996) that the headman of *Keileiyaheena* would not allow me to do research on his territory. The headman of

\(^{17}\) With this I mean counter-insurgency techniques, some of which were learned from Western instructors, and had been well practised in other cold-war era conflicts. In an article in the Sri Lankan national press entitled 'US military co-operation with Sri Lanka' the current role of the US armed forces is described as being limited to training events. 'All activities related to the training events took place well away from areas of active military operations' a spokesman of the US military asserted (Daily News 17/8/1996). After the publication of the contents of manuals used for the training of Latin American counter-intelligence services one can but speculate on the topics involved in the promotion of 'military professionalism in other regions where that concept is still nascent' (cf. The Washington Post: 'Army Instructed Latins on Torture' in the Guardian Weekly 29/9/96).

\(^{18}\) The word *billa* is equally used by village and town people. This type of counter-insurgency technique was common in the large coastal towns, regional centres as well as in remote villages. *Billa* was a notion also used by people who never attended a *tovil* ritual.

\(^{19}\) In sharp contrast to the *billa* of *tovil* rituals, which usually survives, and is only killed in exceptional circumstances when the patient is suffering from a very fierce *disht'lya* and bites of the neck of the cock.
Photo 17: Afflicted woman interacting with *billa* during domestic cleansing ritual, transfer of the sick person's *doosha* (moral faults) to the sacrificial substitute.
Kalubowatta had shown initial interest in the project but fiercely threatened us as soon as we arrived for long-term fieldwork in 1997. Only a year later, towards the end of the fieldwork did I return to Kalubowatta, and interviewed a few people from both Keileiyaheena and Kalubowatta.

The limits of hatred.

What caught my attention, was that, much like in the other neighbourhoods, a remarkable distinction was made between perpetrators and their families. A middle aged widow explained:

[13] One [of the murderers] is still alive. He was given bail. He got married and even has a small child. Those21 should go onto/affect the wife (ookunt'a pavul pit'in yaavi22). The wife is expecting a baby. It should affect that baby too and everybody with his blood. Because of what they did to me. I tell the gods every morning and evening,... I tell the gods my sorrows. I would like to take revenge on those who came [and murdered my husband]. I am not angry with those boys' parents though. Those young thugs/ wild boys (madaavi baappala) did it without their [parents'] knowledge,... I am only angry with those who came [and killed]. I am on speaking terms [with their parents]. Those young boys did that while their parents had told them not to. There were about a hundred or two hundred boys here who joined the JVP. I hate the four of them that came to my house [and killed]. Even though they [the hundred others] did this job [of organising an insurgency] they didn't do anything wrong to me. I will take revenge on the four boys that came to my house. This is on my two children's mind as well. The children say that when they grow up, when they grow old they are going to kill one of them, because they killed our father.

This woman clearly explains how the containment of violence works. A crucial point in the above-mentioned 'individualisation' of enmity is expressed by her as follows: 'Even though they organised an insurgency they didn't do anything wrong to me'. Even after what happened to her and her family she radically refrains from considering a whole group of people her enemy and a target for revenge. In this statement she proclaimed that her hatred limits itself to four boys out of the two hundred that carried out disappearances and killings

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20 I interviewed people from Keileiyaheena in Kalubowatta, as they agreed to come and see me there.

21 'Those' is a vague reference alluding to the effects of his crimes which should in turn affect his own family. I discuss the use of vague references in extenso in chapter 5.

22 Pit'in yanavaa: this same expression is often used to talk about sorcery. It expresses the victim's hope that the things he was made to suffer from will eventually turn back onto the perpetrator and affect him. When a sorcerer dies, people will use the same expression to say that his own sorcery spells have caused him harm. In the description of the Heendolakanda neighbourhood I translated pit'in yanavaa used in the context of anti-sorcery rituals as 'to send (a sorcery spell) back to sender'.

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Photo 18: The remains of a family: Grandmother and grandson.
in the area. And she argued she still is on speaking term with her husband's murderer's parents. As much as the cycle of violence is enigmatic so is the cycle of containment of violence. This cycle of containment is constituted by the family members of perpetrators and the family members of victims. On the one hand, did perpetrators not target the family members of their enemies, on the other hand did the family members of victims allow the families of perpetrators to lead a not too fearful life in the neighbourhood. In this woman's narrative however the cycle of containment of violence does not cover the children of the perpetrator. A question for the future will thus be to which extent this cycle of containment which protected the families of the young male protagonists of the civil war of 1988-1991 will protect their offspring; the next generation.

**Discussion.**

The local characteristic of the cycle of violence consists of the fact that it runs parallel to a cycle of containment of violence. This cycle of containment has largely protected the family members of the victims and perpetrators of the civil war of 1989-1991, and somehow allows them to live in close proximity to each other, in the same neighbourhoods. It reduced the number of internally displaced to a minimum. I linked this cycle of containment to the way in which people conceived of enmity in contexts which were not dominated by political violence. During such times enmity was constructed in a triadic way. Personal suffering related to family strife and/or domestic violence was attributed to the *disht'iya*, the gaze of the wild which was sent by an intimate enemy (through sorcery). The triad of victim, *disht'iya*, and an intimate, local enemy then became slightly altered at times when the 'gaze of the wild' also included the effects political violence had on individual people. The triadic structure however remained the same and the idioms used to describe and interpret domestic violence were used for the description of the effects of political violence.

I argued that this triadic organisation of enmity goes hand in hand with an *individualisation* and *localisation* of enmity. In *Udaheenagama* the dominant notion of enmity consists of an individual enemy and people are reluctant to conceive of an undifferentiated group of people as an enemy. Despite the omnipresent effects of the civil war, party-political strife, or inter-caste conflict people have in mind very particular enemies, on the basis of very particular incidents. Needless to say the nationalist propaganda about ethnic and religious minorities (i.e. 'Tamils') as a prime enemy does not seem to have caught on very well in *Udaheenagama.*
The discourse on *disht'iya* could easily be labelled a dehumanising discourse through which abusive husbands or sons, violent neighbours and more distant forms of wildness are lumped together into one dehumanised force, the *disht'iya*. The strategies of revenge that co-exist with this discourse however are directed towards individual enemies and not towards groups of people. In other words, people do not tend to take revenge upon the people they alluded to in the ambiguous discourse on *disht'iya*. The triadic organisation of enmity, transposed into a context of civil war, led to the organisation of hatred around particular, local, individual enemies and played a role in the cycle of containment in which the family members of killers and victims were spared.

This discussion - of the role of idioms and strategies related to personal suffering and domestic cleansing rituals in a context of civil war - can be framed within larger debates on the link between ritual and everyday or political violence. This wider debate includes discussions about the connection between the violence enacted by the victims of society in ritual contexts (cf. ethnographic texts reviewed by Lewis 1989) and everyday domestic or public/political violence. Some ethnographic research has argued that ritual violence functions as a protective mechanism against more widespread everyday violence (e.g. Allen 1998, quoting Evans-Pritchard 1940, Gluckman 1968, La Fontaine 1985, Heald 1986). The anthropologists who have studied contemporary urban riots (e.g. Das 1998, Devisch 1995, Kapferer 1988, 1995, 1997)23, though, show how certain aspects of culture-specific ritual violence spill-over into the everyday context and take the form of large-scale riots. In the Sri Lankan context this means that a demonised Tamil Other, as a general category, is periodically exorcised by means of wide-spread, indiscriminate looting, burning and killing.

These large-scale, middle class, national (and nationalist) strategies of dehumanisation of the enemy, however are a global phenomenon distinct from local, *Udaheenagama* processes of dehumanisation. In this chapter I have described these local processes of dehumanisation and their relation to strategies of revenge. A triadic organisation of enmity which includes the dehumanising notion of *disht'iya* both determines the local character of political violence as well as protects people against worse atrocities. While individual local enemies became a target for revenge their families were relatively safe. I thus advocate an intermediary position, in which ritual violence -together with the idioms and strategies of revenge it engenders - is both a protective mechanism, a factor in the cycle of containment

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23 Das (1998) argues that 'the language of exorcism and possession here becomes a political language through which the violence links the aggressors and the victims on the model of the exorcist and the patient' (124). Devisch (1995) draws a connection between 'discos and popular uprisings' and the 'traditional phantasmagory of sorcery' (607) while Kapferer (1988, 1997) describes the riot as a 'gigantic exorcism' with a 'similar dynamic as dynamic'.
of violence as well as a blueprint for the local characteristics of the cycle of violence. In part 2 I will further discuss the link between ritual violence, ritual cleansing, the idioms and discourses these engender and the local cycle of violence and containment of violence.

The experiential correlation between large scale communal riots and exorcism postulated within the ethnographic literature (e.g. Das 1998, Kapferer quoted in Das 1998) is, in my interpretation, deduced from the modernist narratives of middle class politicians and cartoonists, in which a universalised enemy is demonised or dehumanised. In Sri Lanka, politicians and cartoonists use the imagery of the *yaksha* and exorcism to mobilise popular hatred against the Tamil minority.

For my comments upon this middle class discourse I am indebted again to Ramanujan's analysis (1991) of the pervasive emphasis on contexts and the particularities of situations in the great narratives of the Indian literature. From the perspective of a Western observer Indian lyrics are excessively dependent on contextual descriptions. For Ramanujan however 'modernisation is an erosion of contexts' (55), the modern is the context-free in which universal values and universal knowledge reign. I suggest extending his literary analysis to an analysis of the organisation of enmity and hatred. In *Udaheenagama* enmity is context-specific and depends on very particular incidents. Revenge is not taken upon a generic group of enemies. Within middle-class politics however the discourse on *disht'iya* is reified, looses its ambiguity and its connection with a triadic organisation of enmity, and can thus become an instrument for the organisation of large-scale communal riots. The discourse on riots as a form of traditional exorcism is thus necessarily a product of modernity in which enmity has been extracted from its context and an entire ethnic group has become a universal enemy.

There is a danger however of extra-polating analyses of such middle class forms of dehumanisation or demonization to a rural context. The violence of the civil war of 1988-1991 is thought to have been particularly bad in remote areas, in villages at the outskirts of the divisions within districts, in communities located at a distance from a main road (see map 6). *Udaheenagama* is located in such a remote border-zone. These are exactly the communities which are thought of as traditional by people who live in town or even by the people who live near the main road and differentiate themselves from the people who live 'on the forested slopes of the hills' (*dushkara palaata*: backward areas). Middle class

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24 'Remoteness' is of course relative. On average it took an hour of serious hiking from the nearest motorable road, and two hours from the nearest bus stop to reach the *Udaheenagama* area. In time of war, when public transport had broken down, *Udaheenagama* was indeed a 'remote community'. I will discuss the discourse on 'remoteness' of NGO personnel in chapter 8.
political rhetoric and the above-mentioned ethnographic analyses which both establish a link between political violence and traditional forms of hatred (e.g. sorcery and anti-sorcery rites; exorcism) seem ready-made to explain the higher degree of violence that occurred in remote areas in 1988-1991. These discourses however secretly promote the projection of evil and violence upon rural, traditional communities, and help a violent modern nation state to locate the origins of wide scale human rights abuses in traditional, rural communities.

The role of anthropologists within such a dynamic needs to be specifically questioned. I will use an example of a French anthropologist, employed by a French state-sponsored institution to further explicate this statement. In an interview in Le Monde (Tuquoi 1997) about the atrocities in Algeria Grandguillaume argued that:

Anthropologist: What's taking place is a horrific and wholesale settling of scores...
Journalist: Can that explain why 300-400 people get massacred in a village?
Anthropologist: ... I agree that the scale of the violence is such that one probably has to delve further into the past. Scores are being settled today whose origins lie in conflicts resulting from Algerian independence, such as the massacre of 100,000 harkis that took place only months after independence,... those harkis were members of families and tribes. There are persistent grudges that have been reactivated, ... Traditional hatred between villages, families and clans - the results of breaches of honour or disputes over land - lingers on,... There may have been just as much violence in previous years without one being aware of it,...

'Traditional forms of hatred', which in the Sri Lankan case would include sorcery practices, were blamed for a massive form of violence. However weeks later a secret agent of Algeria's securité militaire who defected to Britain was given a voice in the Guardian (Sweeney 1997):

The relentless massacres in Algeria are the work of secret police and army death squads,... Algerian intelligence agents routinely bribe European police, journalists and MP's,... they spent some of Algeria's oil and gas billions to bribe politicians and security officials in Europe,... I personally delivered a suitcase containing 500,000 Francs to one French MP with strong links to the French intelligence services,... All the intelligence services in Europe know that the government is doing it, but they are keeping quiet because they want to protect their supplies of oil,...
Algeria's horrific settling of scores

Gilbert Grandguillaume, an anthropologist and Arab expert, discusses the Algeria situation with Jean-Pierre Tuquoi

The first round of the 1991 general election where huge massacres took place recently are located in areas that voted for the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) at the 1990 local elections and the first round of the 1991 general election. The second round was cancelled by the government.

It's not impossible that the army is happy to see them punished. In villages that voted for the FIS, many mayors were later replaced by communal delegates who performed the same functions. Some of those in turn were murdered. That's another source of violence.

There's talk of family feuds, too. Traditional hatred between villages, families and clans — the result of breaches of honour or disputes over land — lingers on. It reemerges as violent brawls at football matches.

That doesn't explain the present upsurge in violence. There may have been just as much violence in previous years without one being aware of it. New violence is managed by the armed Islamist groups and the government. Public opinion has been made vulnerable by the war people tend to believe any rumour, however wild.

There is a preventive form of violence triggered by tales of brutality.

Recently the state has encouraged the population to defend itself and has armed militia groups. In doing so it has recognised its own inability to protect the people and encouraged an avalanche of violence, only a fraction of which we ever hear about. I'm sure it has been caused by the setting up of armed militias. Either they carry out such operations or spur on the hatred of the opposite camp.

Delinquency also has to be taken into account. The climate of institutional violence which the law has broken down is a breeding ground for delinquency among unemployed young people.

The picture you paint is of a violent society.

Algeria is a harsh society. Look at its schools. Children are often beaten and victimised from an early age.

Ordinary people have to resort to bribery for their basic needs. Their feeling of disfruntment found an outlet in the 1991 vote for the FIS. It was as much a protest vote as a vote for Islamism. Even that outlet was violently rejected by the regime.

In 1973, you could already sense the population's contempt for the government. The first riots came in the early eighties. Only a small spark was needed for large-scale violence to break out.

I didn't that violence exist under colonial rule?

Yes, it did. Native Algerians had no recognised rights, just relative ones. Many elections were rigged. Independence should have allowed the restoration of the rule of law. But an oppressive system was set up. When there is no law and a regime governs by force, violence is never far behind. And violence spaws violence, especially when there is no hope of the law and people's rights being restored.

What's the most urgent thing to be done now?

The law and people's rights must be restored. The regime will gain no credit by organising rigged elections. Confidence must be restored in the government. And the government must accept that its existence should reflect the will of the people.

The impression one still has is that the regime is not prepared to give up its total control of affairs. I'm not calling on it to stand down, but it must agree to allow some breathing space for the various schools of thought in Algerian society. I can't see that happening without some kind of external mediation.

The UN secretary-general Kofi Annan's appeal to Algeria's President Liamine Zeroual for an urgent solution is an important development.

Mediation must be discreet. Events have shown that no military victory is possible. And even if it were, it would probably be a bad thing anyway — it would have the effect of placing Algeria in an even tighter straitjacket.

(September 5)
It is of course lamentable that Grandguillaume was not in the possession of this information when he analysed his ethnographic evidence of 'traditional hatred'. After 'Rwanda', 'Algeria', 'Chiapas', and 'East Timor' it has become clear that a documentation of culture-specific discourses on dehumanisation and the cycle of violence they engender can not be undertaken any longer without the consideration of the modernist discourses and practices of dehumanisation within Western military training manuals and military exercises and without considering the following facts:

- 'U.S. involvement with Rwanda's military has been far more extensive than previously disclosed, including psychological operations and tactical Special Forces exercises that occurred a few weeks before the start of last fall's Rwanda-led insurgency in neighbouring Congo, an internal Defence Department chronology shows... The official denied that this was counter-insurgency training...' (Duke 1997).
- 'The Mexican government blames the atrocities in Chiapas on village feuds. But they may be the handiwork of a state-backed ghost army' (MacAskill 1998).
- 'Indonesian military forces linked to the carnage in East Timor were trained in the United States under a covert programme sponsored by the Clinton administration that continued until last year... Kopassus was built up with American expertise despite Washington's awareness of its role in the genocide of about 200,000 people in the years after the invasion of East Timor in 1975, and in a string of massacres and disappearances' (Vulliamy 1999).
- It appears that the militias have been managed by elite units of Kopassus, the 'crack special forces unit' that had, according to veteran Asia correspondent David Jenkins, 'been training regularly with U.S. and Australian forces... These forces adopted the tactics of the US Phoenix programme in the Vietnam war, that killed tens of thousands of peasants and much of the indigenous South Vietnamese leadership, Jenkins writes' (Chomsky 1999).
- President Clinton expressed regret last week for the U.S. role in Guatemala's 36-year civil war, saying that Washington "was wrong" to have supported Guatemalan security forces in a brutal counter-insurgency campaign that slaughtered thousands of civilians. Clinton's statement marked the first substantive comment from the administration since an independent commission... concluded that U.S.-backed security forces committed the vast majority of human rights abuses during the war, including torture, kidnapping and the murder of thousands of rural Mayans (Babington 1999).

During the civil war of 1988-1991 an estimated 30,000 people disappeared in Sri Lanka. A Special Task Force (STF) carried out large scale counter-insurgency operations in rural areas as part of a cold-war strategy to eliminate the political base of the 'communist' politicians of the JVP. A description of culture-specific aspects of 'the wild in Udaheenagama' which does not attempt to consider the cultural force behind Special Forces such as the STF, Kopassus, or 'Phoenix' would participate in the by now well-
documented strategies to cover-up US involvement in atrocities around the world. Udaheenagama people suffered from high-tech cordon and search operations, community destabilisation by means of using a *billa* (a local person threatened into betraying his local enemies, see section on Kalubowatta) and other aspects of a high-tech counter-insurgency type of warfare. These constituted a type of wildness which was out of proportion with any type of violence that usually gets lumped together under the notion of *disht'iya*. This time the wild hovered around in the sky, and looked down upon the villagers from inside its helicopter.

This is not to say that the people from *Udaheenagama* did not actively participate in the atrocities of the civil war. I documented the ways in which neighbours made one another 'disappear'. However I would argue, on the basis of my analysis of the triadic organisation of enmity in *Udaheenagama*, that reprisals and violent acts against local enemies were very much related to people's personal suffering and terror caused by a more global wildness, orchestrated by a militarised nation state. I thus come back to the image of the two parallel triads I evoked in the section on *Heendolakanda*. The triads of enmity during the civil war could be defined as, on the one hand, the triad of a victim, the *disht'iya*, and a local enemy upon which the victim can take revenge through sorcery and on the other hand, the triad of a victim, the wildness of counter-insurgency violence and a local enemy whom can be made to 'disappear'.

The people who live near the main road, posses land and run shops are however not substantially culturally different from the landless, daily wage labourers who live on the forested slopes of the hills. The people who live near the roads in the *Udaheenagama* area do not organise domestic cleansing rituals (*tovil*) as often, have more easy access to the local (Ayurvedic) health centre and generally rely less upon the services of the ritual specialists from Bamarabokka when ill. This does however not mean that they engage less in sorcery accusations and sorcery, which can also be perpetrated at local and regional shrines (see Gombrich 1988). Yet, the violence of the civil war was less extreme in areas near to the main roads and worse in remote areas (see map 6).

On the basis of the data I collected in the *Udaheenagama area* I argue that the concentration of insurgency and counter-insurgency violence in remote areas is certainly *not* related to the higher prevalence of family feuds and traditional ritual activity in such communities but postulate a cycle of violence determined by the following factors. First of all Sri Lankan political analysts argued that the JVP organisation during the insurgency of 1988-1991 recruited 'a more dangerous group of semi-educated youth from remote villages'.
Map 6: Distribution of extreme violence in the divisions of the Matara district
Source: Outreach centre of a national mental health NGO.
Dots: War widows, detainees in camps, parents of the disappeared.

(Alles 1990: 301). Indeed the Marxist ideology of the JVP might have been more appealing to the offspring of landless coolie workers than to the sons of landowners and shopkeepers living near the main roads. This relatively small regional difference and differential distribution of JVP recruits might have triggered the already bloated imagery of 'communist enemies' and 'the dangerous landless peasantry' within cold-war counter-insurgency ideology. Violence organised by counter-insurgency forces would thus have become increasingly vicious in remote areas. The wildness of this incipient civil war caused an excessive amount of personal suffering and terror (*hita bayayi* and *disht'iya*) that
led to strategies of revenge against local enemies, and a full scale civil war. However, women and children and more generally the families of perpetrators were protected by a culturally-specific cycle of containment of violence.
PART 2: CAUTIOUS DISCOURSES ABOUT THE WILD.

I call the thesis 'sharp tongues', in teasing reference to the women in Udaheenagama I worked with, and who would often tell me about women who spoke a lot (kat'a kataa karanna ekkenaa) or too much (kat'a seirayi). But they invariably added 'not me', 'not here', 'we don't gossip', 'over there, there are many women with sharp tongues'. Their eloquence however seemed to prove the contrary.

In this part I describe discourses on violence I recorded in Udaheenagama. In each chapter I discuss one of the characteristics of this discourse and make links between the ways in which people talk about violent events and the post-war social re-organisation. Udaheenagama society survived the war as a conglomerate of well-bounded, small-scale social units. I look at the ways in which the majority of people contribute to such a societal re-organisation by talking about violence in culture-specific ways. The domestic sphere is as it were sealed off from the surrounding violent society by means of cautious discourses on violence. Violence is re-presented in cautious ways, in order not to terrify people and make them ill and in order to avoid further conflict.

I classify the discursive strategies discussed in this part as traditional in the sense that they resonate with other ancient cultural practices and are comparable with discursive practices in a wide cultural area, including both South and Southeast Asia. Only in the next part will I consider the potential impact of the recent civil war and atrocities upon these traditional, cautious discourses for talking about violence and responding to violent upheaval.

Regular domestic cleansing rituals, of course, play a prominent role in the organisation of small-scale, bounded social units. There is however a continuity between certain ritual cleansing strategies and everyday discursive strategies used for talking about illness, misfortune, or violence. I first explore this link by re-inserting the cautious discourses on violence, and the avoidance of words that represent the wild within the general context of domestic cleansing.

I then document the linguistic strategies that are used to bring about such a cautious discourse on violence. Such linguistic strategies include, for example, the frequent use of ambiguity, euphemism and reported speech. An exploration of these linguistic strategies leads to a further understanding of the degree to which households or small-scale social contexts are sealed off from one another, and the way in which small-scale contexts are thereby preserved. I document the ways in which the domestic sphere is constantly
discursively re-constructed despite the many infractions by contemporary violent processes in the wider society.

I also consider the question of how people conceive of the spaces in between such well-guarded and regularly cleansed domestic spheres. Within the post-war society it is especially those non-domestic spaces which are problematic and which function as a repository of the wild excluded from the cleansed, domestic spheres. In this part, I thus document the ways in which the discursive strategies used within the household are applied within this wider society and the ways in which they contribute to the social organisation and ethos of these non-domestic spaces.

Traditional, cautious discourses on violence are an important aspect of contemporary cleansing strategies which define the nature of both domestic and non-domestic spaces. Throughout the presentation of the social organisation such discursive strategies bring about, I seek to delineate the links between this Udaheenagama style of societal reconstruction and the local cycle of violence as well as the cycle of containment of violence I described in the previous part. While these cautious discursive strategies have undeniably played a role in the containment of massive forms of modernist violence during the civil war of the late eighties, their current role in the maintenance of societal fragmentation and low-intensity violence marks the social cost of such strategies. In this part of the thesis, I link both the containment of modernist violence and the price paid in terms of social fragmentation and the perpetuation of low-intensity violence to the above-mentioned cautious discursive strategies.
CHAPTER FOUR.
Udaheenagama soundscapes.

Introduction: Acoustic space.

Before I describe the characteristics of discourses about the wild in chapters five, six and seven I want to contextualise these discourses within Udaheenagama acoustic space. Indeed, a discourse is not only a flow of information or a style of talking. Discourse is voiced, sounds, resonates, plays a role amongst other sounds. Its enunciation thus crucially depends upon the ways in which acoustic space in general is organised and experienced. In this chapter I re-insert verbal discourses within the general economy of sounds in order to be able to make a link between Udaheenagama discursive styles and the ways people deal with sounds or noise in general.

This approach to discourse takes into account critiques of the visual bias within ethnographic descriptions (see Classen 1993, Howes 1991, Jackson 1989, Peek 1994, Tilley 1994). In analyses of the spatial organisation of houses and households (e.g. Bourdieu 1977, Moore 1986, Vom Bruck 19971) the visual aspects of the organisation and the embodiment of space are most often evoked; characteristics which can most easily be 'observed' by the researchers. Ardener (1993) however stated that 'a map of significant spaces identified by gaze might not coincide with a map of significant sound zones' (12).

In descriptions of their interactions with the wild people from Udaheenagama frequently mentioned soundscapes or the characteristics of acoustic space. As terrified people retreat into their houses, violence or the wild are primarily experienced as acoustic phenomena. It is thus not surprising that both large-scale (tovil) as well as small scale domestic cleansing rituals comprise forms of 'acoustic cleansing'. In this chapter I describe both the soundscape of the wild as well as the strategies of acoustic cleansing. The sound of words, especially the sound of words used to describe the wild play a role in both dynamics. Discourses about the wild can easily be made to play a role in the sickening soundscape of the wild, while the more cautious discourses about the wild play a protective and potentially cleansing role.

1 Vom Bruck (1997: 153) did mention the ways in which the voices of women are, at times, constrained within the house, but did not systematically address other aspects of the organisation of soundscapes within the Yemeni households she studied.
4.1. The soundscapes of the wild.

A broad distinction is commonly made between the gedara\(^2\) (the house, the household, the family)\(^3\) and samaadjaya (the society)\(^4\). People in Udaheenagama inadvertently evoke an almost non-Sinhala and non-Buddhist, wild society encroaching\(^5\) upon the gedara (household) ethos. The walls of the house form a barrier and boundary, a protection against evil eyes/ poisonous gazes, the gaze of the wild (\textit{dish'tiya}), or the effortless intrusion of strangers. If breached cleansing rituals re-establish the boundaries of house or garden. The house, however, is immersed within society's soundscapes, is porous and does not form an effective sound barrier. I thus turn away from an analysis of boundaries within visual space towards an analysis of soundscapes.

Scared as they may be, people often remain in their houses behind closed doors at moments of violence, and only witness the sounds of violent events. The dense vegetation makes up for a fragmented, obscure landscape, in which individual houses and gardens can only be observed at very close range. But this sense of the isolation of houses at the visual level is largely compensated for by the auditory landscape of the Udaheenagama area. The hillsides almost provide the acoustics of an amphitheatre in which sounds are carried along easily. The illicit liquor breweries at the top of the hills and the noises they bring into being easily subject the rest of the neighbourhood to their acoustic regime. As groups of drunken men trickle down the hillside paths in the evening they worry many people\(^6\). Loud families,

\(^2\) See Tambiah 1975.

\(^3\) Also often used: gedara geina: matters of the house, gedara prashna: family problems.

\(^4\) For a recent overview of the literature on the private/public debate see Vom Bruck 1997: 168, note 10. Ardener (1993) argued that, while the application of the Western public-private distinction in non-western contexts remains problematic, 'communities often regard the space closest to that occupied by the family as a relatively secure and predictable inner world in contrast to the potentially hostile and untrustworthy space outside' (10). It is in this sense that I define the distinction between gedara, the household and samaadjaya, the society. I am very much aware of the ideologically loaded nature of the word 'public' (cf. Abedi 1993; Hui 1994) and I used this 'modernist gloss' translation (Abedi 1993: 223) as a starting point for the description of the cycle of violence in part 1. From now on, however, I avoid using the notion of the public sphere, especially since it is so problematic in the Udaheenagama context, and instead I will translate samaadjaya as 'society'. Hereby I intend to root the definition of the non-domestic sphere in the local conceptualisation, rather than projecting the notion of a 'bourgeois public sphere' (as in Habermas 1962) onto the Udaheenagama context.

\(^5\) During the life-span of current generation of elders there has been an inward movement, in which the gedara as it were implodes and consolidates itself. Men who previously used to sleep outside on the porch, now prefer to sleep in the main room with the women and children. During puberty rituals, the seclusion hut (\textit{kili peila}: polluted hut) is no longer built in the forest, but (polluting) young girls spend their seclusion period in the kitchen, inside a usually very well protected section of the house.

\(^6\) As well as it worried me. I recorded a small anecdote about a quick visit to Karunavatthi in Heendolakanda in the early evening: Her husband was spread out on the floor in the main room; unconscious. Karunavatthi complained about him drinking too much. She was tearful, but then suddenly recomposed herself to assert that she was not afraid of anything. If necessary she would hit her husband with a piece of firewood, and she showed me how to. She quickly added that her husband does not scold or hit her when he is drunk. He tends to just lie there. When
invading the (acoustic) space of other houses with the chilling sounds of domestic strife, also frighten neighbours with their sounds. For example in *Puvakden'iya*, household 22, or 26 could easily understand what was screamed during fights in household 20d. (see map 4). A young woman (W) in house 24 told me:

[1] W: We didn't go to the funeral. We are angry. There is no land dispute, but we just don't get on. They can't live with us (*eegollant'a inna beieine apitekka*) [laughs]. He [the young man who died] was the son of our uncle. There is not a single person amongst them who is good. The people in this whole area (*ee peittema inna kat't'iya*) are angry with them. At any time you 'look' [listen]?, they are fighting, ...

Me: She [the mother of household 20d] is not in today, is she?
W: Aah, did you go there!? She probably isn't in. There isn't much noise. If she is at home you can hear the noise,... She shouts,... She fights often, if she is at home everything can be heard here.

Worse still, the sounds of shootings or murders often made many women in the neighbourhood ill (see for example transcript 15 in chapter 2). Similarly, as I was told by an elderly ritual specialist from *Bamarabokka*, the sound of bomb blasts in Colombo made the capital's citizens ill:

[2] Only people who live nearby fall ill. They hear the sound/noise of the bomb. We only know about it via the radio or television. We don't pay that much attention to it, so we don't fall ill,... We cannot get scared here, we don't hear the noise. But they [the people in Colombo] fall ill.

Such are the accidental soundscapes of Udaheenagama or Colombo, but more often than not sound effects are used as a deliberate weapon. During the civil war, groups of young insurgents would wander through the neighbourhoods, screaming insults and threats at their enemies as they passed their thoroughly closed houses. They created a soundscape of terror for many people in the area locked inside their own houses by shouting and loudly killing drunken her husband sings *mantra*. His grandfather was a ritual specialist and trained his grandson, who failed to complete the apprenticeship or to establish his own practice. Only when drunk the *mantra* come back to him. While Karunavatthi talked the voices of other drunken men resonated in the background. Eerie shouting and uncanny laughter echoed in between the hills. The atmosphere was unreal. I still had to walk the long journey to the road in order to get home, and felt afraid. But she told me, 'if they try to hit you, just run'.

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7 (*koyi velee beiluvat ran'd'uvena eka tamayi*) Uses *balanavaa* (to look in standard translations). Here it might have to be translated as to listen, since this woman never goes near the house of her enemy. *Balanavaa* ('to look') is also used in phrases like *lunu balanavaa, 'to look at the salt*', which would better be translated as 'to taste (whether the food is salty enough)' (see discussion of the vocabulary related to culture-specific 'sensory hierarchies' in Howes 1991).

8 For the strategic use of sound effects prior and during urban riots see Roberts 1990, 1994.
Photo 19: Udahenagama landscape as amphitheatre.
enemies or the dogs of enemies which had failed to protect themselves. Many people complained about the insurgent's noises that terrified them at night. A mother (M) from Puvakden'iya talked about her sick teenage son, whom she protected well and always kept inside the house at night:

[3a] M: He screams/ laments in his dreams. He is scared // He got scared when he was a child, didn't he? They [the JVP insurgents] come at night and make noises in these places. He might have got scared when he was young. It is that fear that is in his body. It is because of this that he started screaming in his dreams.
Me: That fear?
M: Yes, those people come at night, shoot and beat the dogs, kill people, because of anger. They [my children] were small and they got frightened. That fear stayed in his body just like that. He screams at night, in his dreams, 'mother, they are beating me' he screams such things.

During the fieldwork period the strategic use of noise and sound reached absurd dimensions. One night an elderly man and his grand daughter were shot by their neighbour when this neighbour had visited them to complain about their television being too loud. This was of course but one aspect of a much more complicated and long-standing conflict, but it was nevertheless the provocative use of noise that led to the fatal encounter. When analysing such types of 'sound politics' it was often not easy to discern accidental from more strategic acoustic regimes.

The soundscape of the wild is essentially a sickening soundscape which leads to terrified hearts (hita bayayi) and illness. It is impossible to contain, except in its discursive form. When the wild is represented, 'made to sound again' by means of words rigorous boundaries can be erected. Chapters five, six and seven describe how such boundaries are firmly installed at the level of discourse. Discourses about the wild in Udaheenagama thus need to be understood as part of this dynamic between an almost uncontrollable soundscape of the wild and the discursive and ritual strategies to contain it.

4.2. The sound of words.
To begin this description of verbal acoustic spaces, I start with a simple observation. People commonly establish their presence in the acoustic domain without relying upon the visual aspects of communication. From the confines of their houses or kitchens women easily start conversations with other women working inside their own homes hundreds of yards away. They simply raise their voices, and thus ostensibly bridge large distances without much effort. There is no need for them to face each other and, unlike in the West,
it is not considered unusual to communicate without eye-contact or visual contact. In fact, in the public domain, whole groups of people seem to be excluded from each other's visual landscapes. When there is a large status difference involved, lower status people are rarely looked upon by high status people. Very low status people are as it were made invisible within the daily landscapes of the powerful. Their presence thus only manifests itself at the acoustic level; when they speak and are spoken to or shouted at. Status differences are then enacted and negotiated within the acoustic domain; loud and fast-speaking voices (hayiyen means both loud and fast) dominating soft and slow ones (hemin). Words float more freely, certainly compared to Western contexts in which words tend to be contained within 'conversations' primarily defined by visual contact. I thus include the sound of words into an analysis of Udaheenagama soundscapes and their containment. As I will discuss below the expressions used to talk about voice often refer to the effects of Voice after it has left the speaker; which are more than mere effects on a listener.

When referring to a 'word' I thus do not primarily refer to the referential meaning of words or words which are thought, but the uttered word, the voiced word. I will use Voice with capital V to refer to a local understanding of the potential uses one can make of one's voice and the potential effects of utterances. I first present some local interpretations of the effects of Voices; Udaheenagama attitudes towards voicing and listening to a voice, before returning to the topic of the representation of the wild in uttered, 'voiced words'.

The poison in the Voice.

Many texts have described the evil mouth or the poisonous voice (kat'a vaha) in the Sri Lankan context (Kapferer 1983: 72, Obeyesekere 1984: 46-47, Wirz 1954: 7,10). For this argument I want briefly to reiterate the definition, and make explicit how the poisonous mouth was explained to me during my fieldwork. Apart from the verbal aspects of voicing and listening to voices, there are a few non-verbal cues that are crucial to understand the effects voices have: to sigh, to spit and to swallow saliva. I paraphrase P. Gurunaanse from Bamarabokka, and H. Mahattayaa from Puvakden'iya:

[3b] Saliva comes into your mouth when you see other people eating good food, your mouth starts watering. This might go along with a happy feeling, you enjoy the good food - wealth, health, or beauty - of people you care for without actually participating in it and you swallow your saliva (this is called seeman

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9 Also see methodology section in chapter 1.
10 Cantlie (forthcoming), in her description of evil mouth practices amongst the Assamese, remarks that the 'evil mouth is under-reported because ethnographers have concealed it under the evil eye'. But she adds it has been reported amongst the Dravidian Oraons and the Birhors, both tribal people of the Chota-Nagpur plateau in India.
Indeed poisonous voice goes hand in hand with the poisonous gaze (eiss vaha) and evil thoughts (hoo vaha). The poisonous voice takes the form of jealous praise, evil thoughts find a way out through a silent and bitter sigh, the jealous and poisonous gaze looks straight at its object. But the person who is at the receiving end of all this - evil words, breath or gaze - can sometimes choose to avoid it. When you realise you are the target of poisonous mouth you can refuse to take it, then you think 'May this not affect me, I am not taking this, you take it back', while spitting three times. More often than not though, there is no choice. When one is not aware of all this going on, one routinely swallows one's saliva and ingests the faults and moral shortcomings inherent in the other's jealousy and anger (eiss vaha doosha or kat'a vaha doosha). Then one 'takes' (in) the poisonous voice (kat'a vaha gannavaa), swallowing it together with one's saliva.

Swallowing other people's jealous words is a common cause of illness. Poisonous voice, in my interpretation, could be about the re-distribution of danger inherent in inequality. A negotiation takes place between the jealous and the wealthy one, about who will take responsibility (kat'a vaha baara gannavaa) for the moral shortcoming (doosha) inherent in this jealous relationship. This is but one very specific instance in which Voice plays a role in the creation of a moral self, a self not overwhelmed and sickened by the faults and moral shortcomings related to its own jealousy and anger, but a self in a moral deliberation with others.

'Don't tell people frightful things or you will make them ill'.

Another instance in which Voice is considered a cause of illness and has to be used with caution, is when it makes present frightful things. This is most obvious when people are talking about infectious or incurable diseases. It is not acceptable to utter words 'chickenpox' or 'epileptic fit' in the presence of family and friends. Their heart might suffer from fright (hita bayayi, see chapter 2) just by hearing those terrible words. They might get terrified and startled (hita geissenavaa), and this fear and terror may cause illness. So if

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11 For a dictionary type of translation of seeman gannavaa as 'feasting with the eyes' see Scott (1994: 225, 276).
one wants to mention infectious or incurable diseases, one must use a euphemism\textsuperscript{12}, such as 'the bad illness'.

This local understanding of fear has been well-documented as one of the major causes of illness (Kapferer 1983: 69, Obeyesekere 1969:176-177, Wirz 1954: 11). As I discussed in chapter two the more 'traditional' origins of fear, are the sudden sight of a snake or other crawling animal, or a branch suddenly falling off a tree when you pass by. Other, less innocent, sources of fear are sometimes experienced indirectly. People are informed by other people about violent and terrifying events. This is where the local understanding of the effects of listening to a Voice and hearing certain words comes in. Everybody overtly agrees that one has to use euphemisms to talk about dangerous diseases. On the basis of this explicit example and more data about the use of euphemism I discuss in chapter five I argue that this attitude underlies other speech practices. For example, general ways of speaking about suffering and violence in which it is important to be careful not to scare your interlocutor. Using scary words is as it were a weapon of the afflicted. Misery can easily spread through the Voice.

Taking this interpretation into account, I include some additional comments about how these understandings of the effects of Voices influenced my research on a day-to-day basis. In chapter three I chose to present the data in a structure which resonates with the way in which the material gradually emerged throughout the fieldwork period. During my long-term involvement in the neighbourhoods of Heendolakanda, Galkanda, Puvakden'iya and Bamarabokka narratives about violence were scarce and told to me in a cautious manner. If they were told to me at all in a manner that I could understand - that is by overriding some of the local rules for a cautious discourse about the wild - it usually happened during my first visit. In the last neighbourhood I described in chapter three (Kalubowatta) my position was much more that of an outsider and this resulted in more direct, less cautious portrayals of violence. The Euro-American notion of gradually opening up one's heart to somebody else and 'knowing' each other as a sign of closeness, is quite out of place here. In this context, I experienced that closeness has more to do with protection from frightful representations of reality or from a frightful reality altogether.

**Talking about extreme danger and the reduction of the life span.**

Taking this description of local interpretations of Voice one step further I want to consider a few instances in which Voice is not only the source of a single illness episode but is said

\textsuperscript{12} For a discussion of this communicative strategy as a euphemistic discourse see chapter 5. There I give examples of the many euphemisms people use to talk about illness, misfortune and violence.
Photo 20: Puberty party: Young girl with her parents on a rented sofa.
to reduce the life span (aayusha). Two such instances were often mentioned. A girl who is menstruating for the first time, should not tell her mother first, and bad dreams or nightmares should not be voiced without taking precautions. This is how a middle-aged woman from the neighbourhood of Bamarabokka explained it to me once:

[4] I became a big girl when I was 16, after I found out about it I told my aunt, she quickly put a small harvesting knife in my hand, to keep me company, and took me to the jack fruit tree, she said 'cut the tree',... when you get your first period, they say: 'you need to cut the milk tree with a small harvesting knife', and you need to say 'it is the time of that thing', don't you?, they truly say 'it is not good to tell mother', when you tell your own aunt, that is quite all right,... so we can tell anything to the milk tree, can't we?, it is apparently said that 'if something like that happens, before you tell anybody you have to tell the milk tree', it is also said that 'if you have seen a dream, it is not good to tell others', now, if you see a bad dream, without telling anybody, you first tell the jack fruit tree 'I saw a dream like this', then it goes out towards the tree, doesn't it? (pit'in yanavaa), if you would tell these people, then it would go outwards towards these people, isn't it?, you can tell anything to the milk tree, or the citrus tree, or the water, so I tell the milk tree...

First menstruation is a source of extreme pollution, and talking about it needs to be done in the correct order. If a pubescent girl would tell her mother first, her mother's life-span would be reduced (aayusha ad'uevenavaa). This is not an irreversible state. Most healing rites, both small and large scale ones, include episodes in which the life-span is being increased (aayusha veid'ikaranavaa, ayibooveevaa!). What is important for the argument here is that the voice presenting extreme pollution and danger mainly affects the closest relative of the speaker, the mother. Also, there is a way of diverting the effect of Voice away from human listeners towards purificatory containers, milk trees or water.

13 At moments of danger, for example when the ghost of a deceased ancestor or another evil being is causing illness to a family member, women, especially pregnant women, carry a knife when they go out to keep them company and to protect them.
14 When one gives a small cut to the bark of a milk tree, milky (pure) sap comes out. Trees that are called milk trees, are the bread fruit tree, the jack fruit tree, and of course the rubber tree.
15 She refers to the first menstruation as 'that thing'. I discuss the use of referential nouns and pronouns, as substitutes for dangerous words (such as menstruation) in section 5.2.
16 I discuss the use of 'apparently said' in chapter five.
17 see previous footnote.
18 This expression is also used to refer to situations in which the effects of sorcery are sent back and affect the sorcerous enemy (see transcript 9 in section 2 of chapter 3). It is also used for forms of revenge which do not obviously include sorcery (see transcript 13 in section 5 of chapter 3)
19 Cantlie (personal communication) described the use of trees as purificatory containers in Assam. During the rituals organised during the spring a troupe of dancers moves through the village and stops at each house to perform a dance. In this way evil and misfortune is drawn out of the house. The last dance can never be performed in front of a house, but is performed in front of a tree. This tree will die as it contains all the misfortune drawn from the houses. Likewise the danger inherent in unmarried, pubescent girls is contained...
Words that represent the wild.

I have brought these data together, not so much to describe a causal relation between one or the other, but to give an impression of a general atmosphere or ethos surrounding the use of Voice and its reception. I could only discern a few instances in which the effect of Voice on the listener was obvious, and there might be many more subtle ones that are not explicitly marked. The importance of these local interpretations of Voice, although mentioned by many people in Udaheenagama, would certainly not be agreed upon by everybody. I would rather qualify them as contested\textsuperscript{20} but powerful undercurrents that influence a general style of speaking which is cautious. The linguistic habits of English speakers might seem crude, lax, unguarded or even rude in this context.

Representing the wild involves the pronunciation of words and it is as if through the sound of these words the wild is given a voice. As much as the soundscapes of violence and civil war affect people so do the words that represent this reality. Discourses about the wild are potentially sickening agents of the wild. Throughout the thesis I have called such representations of the wild 'dangerous'. I first thought of using the term 'evil' instead of dangerous. I replaced it by the notion of danger, after considering Parkin's discussion (1985) of the use of the concept of evil in ethnographic accounts. He writes: 'As heirs of a Judeo-Christian tradition, like Ricoeur, we run the same danger of imposing on other people our idea of what evil is. Evil is not \textit{anything}: it denotes rather an area of discourse concerning human suffering...' (Parkin 1985:10, referring to Ricoeur P. 1967: The symbolism of evil). In the same volume Southwold addresses the possible relevance of the English word evil in a Sinhala Buddhist context. He makes a distinction between the moral and the descriptive meaning of evil, the weak and the strong sense of evil (1985:130-131). I opt to stay out of a discussion framed by means of these particular distinctions, by using a term less afflicted by Judeo-Christian connotations: danger. Dangerous statements can have good or bad consequences, depending whether they are uttered by a friend or an enemy, and heard by a friend or an enemy. In other words, they are not necessarily 'evil'. While 'evil' connotes an inherent, essential, individual property, having to do with 'being' (evil), the notion of 'danger' is an active property of action and of relationships with others\textsuperscript{21}. The 'relational' notion of danger thus seems more appropriate.

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\textsuperscript{20} For example by fearless youths who use rough speech.

\textsuperscript{21} This was suggested to me by N. Redclift.
Amongst families and friends such dangerous words are avoided as much as possible, and
discourses about the wild are cautious. This brings about a very particular distribution of
knowledge about a violent past. Flows of knowledge within a community are commonly
restricted by rules of secrecy established between different groups of people. One could
argue that the disclosure of information typically depends on the degree of trust and
closeness. In Udaheenagama one could postulate that the social categories which
determine the degree of disclosure of information are the following: gedara (house, nuclear
family), pavul (family, or wife), neieideiyoo (relatives), dura neieiyakama (remote
relatives), yaaluvo (friends), vishvaasa kenek (trusted people), ape minissu (our people),
ahala pahala minissu (people from our hamlet), anduranneiti minissu (people you don't
recognise/ know by name), aashraya (contacts), yakaa-like people, samaadjaya (society
at large) and the wild. Because of Udaheenagama understandings of the effects of Voice
and the enunciation of dangerous words there is no straightforward relationship between
degree of closeness, trust and the revelation of information about a violent past. Close
family members might be informed because they lived through the same events and - while
close friends, members of the extended family or people from the neighbourhood form a
core of relative ignorance around the afflicted - outsiders (such as the police, the army,
lawyers, regional politicians, NGO personnel) are easily informed. I will further discuss the
linguistic strategies used to bring about such a distribution of knowledge about the events
of the civil war in the next chapter.

4.3. Acoustic cleansing.
The boundary between the household and the wider society is subject to a continuous
process of protection as well as re-definition and re-negotiation. This becomes increasingly
important in a situation of chronic violence. The discourse on the gaze of the wild
distinguishes what is human(e) from non-human, what/who is a Sinhala Buddhist or a
yaksha. People need to continuously locate and re-locate those human and non-human
qualities and by doing so they create boundaries. The obvious locations for such qualities
are inside or outside one's own person, inside or outside one's household, one's garden,
one's immediate surroundings, or one's neighbourhood. Those are the boundaries within
visual space that are evoked during the process of defining, locating and re-locating the
human and the non-human. During cleansing rituals the disht'iya is gradually moved away
from the afflicted person's body, her room, the house, and the garden.

Various ritual strategies to isolate the house(hold) from a surplus of negative social
relations and embeddedness within the wider society take into account visually-defined

22 I discuss this category of people in chapter seven.
boundaries between household and society. For example if sorcery is suspected, the household can be protected by spreading sea-sand around the garden. As one ritual specialist explained, 'sand from the bottom of the sea has never been walked upon by other people'. Sea-sand denotes an absence of others, and in this sense purifies and isolates the household from the rest of society. During tovil rituals the house is purified by means of fire-balls, which cleanse room after room, and are eventually made to purify all the entrances. Windows are not valued, and when there is a contagious illness in the family the doors and windows remain closed. Equally, when an enemy has fallen ill and may try to take revenge through sorcery, all doors and windows of potential victims' houses are carefully closed.

These 'strategies of isolation' reveal the triadic organisation of enmity (a victim, a local enemy, and the disht'iya) I discussed in part 1. Domestic cleansing rituals (tovil), on the one hand remove the nefarious effects of a sorcery spell and send a sorcery spell back to a local enemy whom is held responsible. A focus upon anti-sorcery rites as a form of sorcery highlights dyadic relationships within the community. Not only is a boundary established between two feuding households, by means of cutting the tie of sorcery (the power one household had over another) but revenge is undertaken as well. On the other hand however the household is cleansed from the effects of sorcery: the disht'iya. Domestic cleansing rituals are thus involved in organising a boundary between individual households and the various contemporary forms of wildness which are subsumed under the notion of disht'iya. Indeed, the negotiation of the boundary between a household and the wider society involves more than the management of dyadic relationships with potential individual enemies. A boundary needs to be established between the nuclear gedara and the wild. Within a triadic organisation of enmity both a boundary between victim and local enemy and a boundary between victim and the wild are to be maintained.

The house and household are not only cleansed along the lines of visually-defined boundaries. The soundscapes of the wild lead to specifically acoustic strategies of exclusion. In a description of acoustic cleansing it is important to make a distinction between the relatively silent, small-scale, and often secret rituals and the loud, large-scale tovil rituals whose soundscapes invade large sections of the neighbourhood. The more silent rituals don't go along with drumming and are often used when people are afraid that the enemy or his sorcerer will take measures to prevent the rite from having any effect\textsuperscript{23}. In such instances it has to be kept secret that the preparations for the rite have started or that

\textsuperscript{23} This can be done by secretly sprinkling uru tel, wild pig's fat or chicken broth in the garden where a cleansing ritual is about to be held. Then the failure of the purifying ritual is guaranteed.
the rite is being performed. Sorcery spells are often cut in a silent and secretive manner, during a small dehi kapanavaa or more elaborate kodivina kapanavaa ritual (literally: to cut a lime, and to cut sorcery). Such (potentially clandestine) rituals are much smaller and cheaper than the anti-sorcery rites such as the Suuniyam tovil ritual (see Kapferer 1997), and above all they are silent. Both in the silent as well as in the loud rituals, however, a form of acoustic cleansing is carried out.

The absence of Voices.

To describe the effect of Voices on the agents of ritual protection and cleansing (like yantra and turmeric water) I will first quote a ritual specialist from the neighbourhood of Puvakden’iya who told me about the silence needed to bury yantra or sorcery spells. Before building the foundations of a house, yantra have to be buried in the four corners, to safeguard the house and its inhabitants from danger. These yantra have to be buried at a moment of perfect silence. The yantra should not be 'caught' by the Voice of a human or an animal otherwise they would loose their effect. The very early morning, hours before dawn, is a moment of high (hidden) ritual activity, a silent soundscape is one of the advantages of such moments. The expressions used to talk about voice often refer to the effects of Voice after it has left the speaker. The Voice 'falls' upon an object or interlocutor (kat’ahanda veit’enavaa), or it 'catches' something or somebody (kat’ahanda ahavenavaa). After it's initial appearance it might stay and reside (kat’ahanda pavatinavaa) and create disorder in for example the yantra, that looses it's efficacy. Not only yantra, but 'any other thing you bury' needs to be buried in the absence of Voice. This of course refers to the work of the sorcerer who will secretly enter people's gardens and bury charmed objects with which to ensorcel them.

Not any voice is equally dangerous, voices of enemies and friends are the most effective. In the case of the burial of protective yantra, one has to be careful of the voices of enemies. Their cruel thoughts (hoo vaha), and knowledge of charms that would incapacitate the yantra, are all contained in their 'Voice'. Conversely, when you try to kill an enemy through sorcery, you have to avoid the Voices of your enemies' friends when you bury something in his garden. You cannot say those voices have effect because they are polluted (killi), the 'effect of Voice' does not fall under the notion of pollution. Nor does it seem to have anything to do with supernatural dangerous beings (the dishtiya of the yakku), the human voice can have it's own effects without being dependent on supernatural help.

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24 Interestingly enough the same expression is used to refer to the effects of the gaze of dangerous supernatural beings (dishtiya). Dishtiya veit’enavaa: the gaze falls upon somebody and causes illness. Likewise Voice falls upon people and things, katahanda veit’enavaa (note the use of the involitional form of the verb to fall).
Photo 21: Acoustic cleansing: Drummer, pot with turmeric water on the left behind him.
In virtually all of the cleansing rituals, both small scale silent ones, as well as loud tovil performances turmeric water is sprinkled on the afflicted person and is used to purify the house, the garden or the ritual space. This water needs to be collected from the well in the very early morning, long before a human or animal voice could have 'fallen' upon the water. Water to be used for rites that will be performed during the day and the following night, is taken out of the well in the very early morning, and it is important that this is done even 'before the sounds of the animals' have started. Much like the sea-sand denotes the absence of people so does turmeric water embody silence and the absence of Voices. Turmeric water has of course its own intrinsic cleansing properties but in addition to this it spreads out a cleansing 'silence' while being sprinkled around.

**Ritual cleansing as sound blast.**

When tovil rituals are held the sound of the drums pervades the neighbourhood. Friends and family members gather at the tovil house and are ritually protected from the potentially dangerous effects of the ritual. In the early evening the ritual specialist applies charmed oil to the head of all the members of the audience (*tel meitiriima*), pregnant women are given a special type of oil. As one ritual specialist put it: 'if pregnant women hear the sound of the drums it will especially affect them'. People in the vicinity who don't attend the ritual are left unprotected. Enemies and distrustful people from the area remain at home but they are equally subjected to the acoustic regime of the tovil ritual. In order to protect themselves they close their doors and windows thereby sealing themselves off from the gaze of the wild. Such people are suspicious that the *disht'iya* might affect them. First of all the gaze of the wild is summoned and intensified in the course of tovil nights (*disht'iya karanavaa*, see chapter two), then it is driven out of the afflicted house, out of the garden, up to the cemetery and eventually to a river, stream or cross road, and then it is left to roam freely beyond that last boundary, that means amongst close-by neighbours. Hence the tendency of suspicious people to close off their house, or even leave the area for the night. People are very aware of the fact that while the actual gaze of the wild can be kept out by closing up the house (just as is done against the evil eye, or more everyday forms of *disht'iya*) the soundscape of the tovil cannot be contained or excluded

And more dangerously, the drumming arouses the gaze of the wild (*disht'iya eivissenavaa*). It is in this setting that the role played by women who suffer from (life-long) *disht'iya* needs to be placed. In chapter two and three I gave a description of women whom the *disht'iya*

25 As Peek (1994) argued: 'the visual presentation of spiritual beings is frequently secondary to their awesome acoustic dimensions (484),... , sound is the most potent representation of the secrets and mystery of the unknown' (488).
never leaves, or who are covered by the disht'iya for long periods of their lives. The sound of the drums thus especially affect women who have the disht'iya on them, who have never managed to get rid of it. It has been well documented that people within the audience of possession rituals might fall ill, enter a trance state or become possessed (e.g. Lewis 1989). I would like to add that in Udaheenagama women hiding in closed-off houses might suffer the same destiny. Most often those are women suffering from life-long disht'iya. The sound of the drums arouses the women's disht'i and makes them fall ill. Women from households who do not get on with the people from the tovil house are particularly vulnerable to this type of affliction since they have not been able to participate in the preparations of the ritual and cannot benefit from the protection that the closeness to the cleansing ritual specialists brings about. Once they have fallen ill, their family too might have to organise a loud tovil ritual.

It thus happened that people argued that the soundscape of a tovil obliged them in turn to organise a tovil ritual, which would then afflict another household. Some families anticipated this problem of 'acoustic contagion', and certain women were moved out of the area whenever it was likely that the sound of a drum might fall upon their ear. This regularly happened to the lady of household 14 in Heendolakanda. She was, for example brought to another village when a yaksha tovil ritual was held at household 1 in Galkanda (see map 3), or when a loud ritual (a deviyange tovil) was held at the temple three or four miles away. What often surprised me was that women afflicted in this way - afflicted through the soundscape - did not make a distinction between the sounds of different types of drums, used in different types of ceremonies. As soon as they heard 'the sound of a drum' they fell ill. They made no systematic distinction between the sound of the bera, a drum used by the lower caste ritual specialists during yaksha tovil rituals, or the sounds of the bera used during deviyange tovil rituals (rituals held for the deities), or the sound of the davul, a smaller drum used at pirit and funeral ceremonies and played by higher caste people. As a young woman from upper Puvakden'iya (household 18) argued, the sound of the drum (be it the bera of the tovil or the davul of a funeral ceremony) made her enter a fearful state of mind:

[5] I am too scared to go and see tovil rituals. Long ago, of course I went to see them, but now I don't go anymore. That is to say, I am scared of those. I got scared when I attended a funeral. That is why I don't go [and see tovil rituals] anymore. I went to a funeral in our house [her parent's house]. When I came back here I felt something like fear. So I don't go to tovil rituals anymore. My mind does not feel good,... My stomach burns, my limbs hurt,... Ever since I got frightened of that dead body at the funeral I don't feel like going [to funerals and tovil rituals]. So whenever there is a funeral, I feel strange (amutu gatiyak).
There is something like fear in the mind. When I hear the drumming I feel fear in the mind. Something like fear comes to the mind.

As I thought this was a layman's perspective, in which no distinction was made between the sounds of a lowly tovil ritual for wild inhumane beings, and the sound offerings to the deities, I was surprised to find the same association between affliction and instrumental sounds in general in the recitations of a ritual specialist from Galkanda. While attempting to bring a young woman back to consciousness, he addressed the yakku and described the places where (and times when) they had afflicted this young woman:

[6] This has been done by you at a place where this sick woman comes and goes,
while she was eating or drinking,
while she was at a place where she removed her dress and put on another dress,
while she was at a place where she shook and combed her hair,
at the time of the three samayama, [when the yaksha are allowed to cast their gaze upon the human world]
in a lonely house or at a lonely resting place,
at a graveyard, where pollution was caused by seeing a corpse and touching it,...
at a house were a party was held for a girl who attained puberty,
at a place where the drums (davul) were beaten,
at a place were the drums (bera) were beaten,
at a place where horns were blown,
at a place where a flute was blown,
at a stream, at a pipe coming from a stream,
at a place she comes and goes,
at a place where a dead body is buried,
at a party, at a meal,
at a time when she looked at the sun as it was descending,
at a time when she looked at the moon as it was descending at noon time,...

The ambiguous nature of otherwise pious sounds, such as the sound of the flute, the horn and the davul drum, usually used for sound offerings to the deities, re-appeared at another moment. After the bombing of the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy by the LTTE (4-2-1998), monks were expected to express their anger by beating the davul drum and ringing bells. The soundscape of their anger would thus envelop many villages across the country. The instruments of high religion became involved in a similar dynamic as the sounds of the drums of the sorcerers, and could potentially afflict women in the area.

As much as the secular sounds of human voices invade the house, and bring worries, fear or illness so do the ritual sounds form a source of danger and affliction. While ill, a woman
often lives with the total absence of any personal soundscape, as she doesn't speak for extended periods of time (see chapter two). Then suddenly the drums of the (her) tovil house dominate the soundscape for a night; a sound blast invades the neighbourhood. The sick woman's household and its wild spirits suddenly become a large presence in the village; so much so that many people in the neighbourhood stay inside their houses - and some of them get frightened and fall ill. But the afflicted household gathers 'the people they trust' (vishvaasa kenek, both friends and family members) closely around them, and thus protects them from danger (both in a spiritual and physical sense). Other groups of people from the neighbourhood, which might include enemies and innocent bystanders, are indiscriminately subjected to a dangerous acoustic regime.

It is the people who live close-by who are most affected by this sound blast and a very indiscriminate form of revenge is carried out against close neighbours. Acoustic cleansing and the revenge it brings about thus resembles the triadic organisation of enmity of sorcery and anti-sorcery practices in which revenge is carried out against local, intimate enemies, but differs from it because of its indiscriminate character. Indeed, it is often women from households, who are neither considered to be enemies nor friends who fall ill and then pose an additional burden on the general well-being of their households. The effects of the soundscape of the anti-sorcery rite (tovil) thus go beyond the simple strategy of taking revenge upon a close neighbour who committed sorcery, who is not invited to the tovil ritual and who is thus exposed to acoustic and other forms of danger (as well as sorcery\textsuperscript{26}). Through their crucial role in tovil rituals, women afflicted by long-term yaksha disht'iya help define the acoustic space, much like male drinking groups or youth gangs. They do not form a group of afflicted people in the traditional sense; they don't attend meetings, nor is there a special type of solidarity existing amongst women afflicted by long-term disht'iya\textsuperscript{27}. They each operate from within their own, relatively small-scale social world. Their afflictions in turn lead to loud performances, which bring other women into the centre of the 'acoustic' regime which governs Udaheenagama people.

**Discussion.**

In this description of the 'acoustic ecology' (see Peek 1994: 475) of the Udaheenagama area I included sounds of the wild, human voices and instrumental, non-human, ritual sounds. A description of these diverse aspects of the Udaheenagama soundscape further clarifies people's attitude towards words that re-present the wild. An understanding of this fear to

\textsuperscript{26} For a description of the ways in which anti-sorcery rites, ensorcel the enemy see Wirz 1954, and Kapferer 1997.

\textsuperscript{27} I will therefore refer to them as a 'group', which has more the meaning of a category of people than an actual group which meets regularly and establishes a group identity during such interactions.
re-present the wild is a central point within the main line of argument of part two and underpins many of my descriptions of 'cautious discourses on violence' in the next chapters. Much like the disht'iya, words (and discourses) that represent the wild can 'fall' on people and make people sick. They cause terrified hearts (hita bayayi) and lead to dreadful diseases that are associated with hita bayayi. The notion of 'hita bayayi' and fear related to hearing 'wild words' are key notions in the development of discursive strategies for talking about the wild. It is thus not surprising that, in part three, I will point at the demise of fear (hita bayayi) in the aftermath of the atrocities of the civil war as a potentially powerful agent of discursive change.

This description of the Udaheenagama soundscape also contributes to the analysis of the relationship between households (gedara) and society (samaadjaya). People's comments on the acoustic ecology of Udaheenagama revealed many times at which the gedara was utterly invaded by society's soundscape. A large variety of domestic cleansing rituals is available for when the boundaries between these two postulated moral spaces, the gedara as a Sinhala Buddhist space and the space of the wild, have been breached. I documented the ways in which households negotiate their relationship with the wider society not only by establishing and periodically re-confirming the visually-defined boundaries between household and society but also by means of acoustic cleansing.

A social world is imagined which is the mere sum of idealised domestic (gedara) spaces, a sum of houses and their inherent moralities. The society in the immediate surroundings of the household, however, is periodically excluded from this vision of a Sinhala Buddhist morally cleansed space. Friends, relatives, far relations, contacts and enemies (who did not attend the tovil ritual) are indiscriminately subjected to the dangerous acoustic regime of the tovil performance. Moreover the disht'iya is gradually moved away beyond boundaries within visual space, away from the afflicted person, the house and its garden. The wild is attracted to the offerings at the nearest river or crossroads, and is thus left to roam amongst the nearby neighbours.

This is quiet different from the vision of a 'society' I evoked in chapter three; a society in which revenge is taken upon an individual, local enemy, by means of sorcery or tips to the army. Apart from sending the disht'iya to an individual enemy the disht'iya is left to affect quiet a few vulnerable people within the local community (the women afflicted by life-long disht'iya). During cleansing rituals the local neighbourhood is almost used as a dump, a near-by repository for the wild. I will further analyse the nature of Udaheenagama 'samaadjaya' in the following chapters. This chapter already offered a pre-figuration of its

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problematic nature by describing the way in which the wider society around the household is indiscriminately affected by domestic cleansing strategies.
Photo 22: The drums of the next generation.
CHAPTER FIVE
The preservation of contexts

Introduction.
In this chapter I look at the discursive strategies that are used when people refer to the wild and the terrifying and divulge or receive such potentially dangerous or sickening messages. Let us consider the following transcript in order to give an initial impression of the type of communicative events that I will describe:

[1] My husband's father had three brothers and two sisters. One of them was from another father. His mother was one of three siblings. That "Booliyaeddha uncle" does not believe in the Yakku. He only believes in Buddhism. He is called Perera. Before, when that "Maat'in elder brother" was alive. He was the father of "Siita", the one who killed herself by drinking poison. He was a good worker! (eya hari hari veid'a karaa). It was him who did things like that*. Things like the ones that destroy families. When I think how those things* occur less frequently now I am very happy. Those have bad things in them. Now when we think about the things** that happened to our family, it is impossible not to accept that there is truth in those things*. My father did not believe in those*. He did not allow us to do anything*, because of that our family was destroyed. As time went on the troubles (karadara) were not finished.

This family history, which took on the form of a lament, reveals in turn how sorcery, an enemy, and the disappearance of family members are represented. To a Western observer it might seem surprising that all this has really been expressed in this lament. This surprise parallels my confusion and disorientation as I discovered the ambiguity2 of everyday discourse. To start to understand this lament I analyse three aspects of this type of discursive style. First I look at the use of euphemism (for example see transcript veid'a, "work" used to describe a sorcerer, and karadara, "trouble" to refer to disappearances). Secondly I describe the way in which referential pronouns and phrases are used to build up the vague and ambiguous quality of the argument. Apparent lack of any referential introduction, and clear-cut reference tracking mechanisms (see Besnier 1985: 139) makes it hard for an outsider to be able to identify the referent (for example what does "those" and "things like that" and "anything" refer to?). I thus describe the use of zero-anaphora3 in

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1 place name
2 See Besnier 1985 for a discussion of the specific format of referential ambiguity in Tuvaluan conversation.
3 I first used the term "vague references" or "unidentified referents". A. Cantlie suggested that I use a more precise terminology. I thus opt for the term which is used within linguistics: zero-anaphora. As Besnier (1985: 142) argued this is a theory-neutral alternative to the terms: "empty pronominalization", "zero pronominalization", "pronominalization by deletion", "NP-deletion" and "NP-ellipsis". He uses the term
Udaheenagama. Thirdly, for an analysis of the discourse that represents the particularities of violence in the village I will pay attention to the way in which people (and by extension their houses) are given a name.

5.1. "The hugged lady and the naughty soldier": On the avoidance of inauspicious words

A journalist for one of the English-language national newspapers once wrote that somebody had been "bothered" by opponents and was buried soon afterwards. The apparent link between the English terms "bothered" and "buried" is likely to make many a non-Sinhalese English speaker uncomfortable. Nor can such translations of Sinhalese accounts be solely attributed to the work of the ever-present censors of the Sri Lankan media. In my interpretation "bothered" was a literal translation of "karadara karancrva" which could indeed be translated as "to bother" or "to trouble". But karadara is also used to refer to menstruation pains, blackmail, death threats and torture. In his description of Sinhalese rhetoric D'Alwis (1858:313) commented upon the eager use of euphemism and the "decency of expression" cultivated by the Sinhala orator:

In a language like Sinhalese, which abounds with so many delicate expressions to convey various degrees of respect according to circumstances, we can scarcely fail to notice what is commonly denominated euphemism.

A "vivid exhibition of what may appear as delicate, offensive, or indecent" is always carefully avoided (D'Alwis 1858:314). Western linguists have argued that euphemistic discourse (from the ancient Greek euphemizein) found its roots in "the word-magic of taboo words" (Chilton 1987). When the presence of a word was understood to make present its referent in some ways, the use of words referring to inauspicious or morally reprehensible things was far too dangerous (ibid.: 13). Instead such dangerous words were replaced by, between others, polite metaphors, figurative descriptions or mere non-sensical and unrelated words. In an attempt to explicate the effect of contemporary euphemisms on the listener Western linguists postulate that euphemisms constitute a "conventionalised block" on the listener's mental representation of the real world (ibid.: 14). Euphemistic discourse is processed superficially and does not trigger the mental representations or visualisations of the taboo act or object itself (ibid.: 14).

anaphora without assuming that the referential pronoun necessarily points back to some previous item. This is the sense in which I will apply the notion of zero anaphora to Udaheenagama discourses which exactly play on the ambiguity created by referring to an unnamed, and previously undefined referent.

4 See Allan 1991 for an exhaustive classification of euphemisms.
As I discussed in chapter four, people from *Udaheenagama* argue that the pronunciation of words that refer to something dangerous can cause a "terrified heart" (*hita bayayi*), which is a common cause of illness. Since this local exegesis resembles the Western notion of euphemism in many ways, I opted for calling the avoidance of dangerous or inauspicious words in *Udaheenagama* a euphemistic discourse. In local terms "euphemistic" discourse, the avoidance of terrifying and dangerous words saves people from "terrified heart" and its concomitant illnesses.

In this section I present the euphemisms that caught my attention while recording interviews and conversations in *Udaheenagama* (see figure 11). Of particular interest are the euphemisms that are used to refer to a violent reality. Instead of words which might bring about painful memories, fear (*hita bayayi*) or moral outrage (such as sorcery, rape, torture, assault, murder, or war) a much softer terminology is deployed. Amongst others, one technique is to replace dangerous words with words that connote safety, warmth and trust. Thus woman is not assaulted or raped but "embraced by a lover", torture is encapsulated in a word that also stands for a child's mischief, and civil war is replaced by "the confusion and mistakes of the people who hurry too much". Soft expression are wrapped around harsh experiences, and gentle words prevent fearful realities from imprinting themselves on people's hearts.

**Figure 11: Some euphemisms used in colloquial Sinhala of *Udaheenagama***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benign meaning:</th>
<th>Euphemistically used for:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wealth, envy, sorcery:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>karapu deyak:</em></td>
<td>The things that were done sorcery spell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>diipu deyak:</em></td>
<td>The things that were given sorcery spell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>veid'ee karaa/dunaa?</em></td>
<td>Did the work/ gave the work sorcery (also used for sexual abuse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>peinnumak:</em></td>
<td>The thing somebody has jumped over sorcery spell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>veid'ak unaa:</em></td>
<td>Got work was sucessfull, effective, has become rich</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

For a discussion of the method of paying systematic attention to euphemisms when carrying out field research on sensitive topics see Foster 1966.  

Similarly Foster (1966:56) described how, in Tzintzuntzan, Mexico, the nefarious work of witches is referred to as *la travesuras*, "a word normally used for the pranks and mischief of small children."
Illness, death, menstruation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>naraka leda</td>
<td>The bad illness</td>
<td>epilepsy, febrile convulsions, smallpox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dangalanavaa</td>
<td>To be boisterous, disobedient, to misbehave</td>
<td>frantic movements during seizures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giyapu kat'tiya</td>
<td>The people who left</td>
<td>the dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neitivenavaa</td>
<td>To disappear, to loose</td>
<td>to die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darunu killak</td>
<td>The fierce/violent pollution</td>
<td>menstruation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avulak</td>
<td>Entanglement (of hair, of ideas)</td>
<td>menstruation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deinamutuvechcha</td>
<td>When the knowledge of the elder has happened</td>
<td>first menstruation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karadara</td>
<td>Trouble</td>
<td>menstruation pains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peini beerenavaa</td>
<td>The flow of something</td>
<td>menstruation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sweet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Violence, aggression:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kalabala</td>
<td>The general hustle and bustle of the day (as opposed to the quietness of the night), mistakes made in a hurry, confused and agitated acts of a mad person</td>
<td>domestic fight, the civil war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avulak</td>
<td>entanglement (of hair, of ideas)</td>
<td>political upheaval, the civil war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siddhi vechcha /vechcha</td>
<td>incidents</td>
<td>a fight, murder etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sidiin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karadara karanavaa</td>
<td>to trouble, to bother</td>
<td>child abuse, domestic violence, ragging, torture, bombing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>veid'ak</td>
<td>work</td>
<td>torture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vadakaranavaa</td>
<td>to berate a toddler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vad'ee gahanavaa</td>
<td>to hit with trouble, to tease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>navaka vadee</td>
<td>the new sorrow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eeva meeva</td>
<td>those and these</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>randuvak</td>
<td>a fight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meirun'e keieigahalaa</td>
<td>To have died after having screamed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gahanavaa</td>
<td>to hit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kapanavaa</td>
<td>to cut</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to beat in every way there is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhiishana kaala</td>
<td>the time of great fear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>billa ganna teinak</td>
<td>the place of sacrifice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gan'an kaarayoo/ gan'an kaarakan kerunkan</td>
<td>the value agent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keiliya, as in ang keiliya</td>
<td>game, competitive game</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gini keiliya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kilut'u</td>
<td>dirty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tada venavaa</td>
<td>to become full, densely packed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vikaara</td>
<td>funny nonsense</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mirikannavaa</td>
<td>to squeeze (e.g. a lemon)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enavaa</td>
<td>to come</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiyanavaa</td>
<td>to have</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yat'apat karagena</td>
<td>to burry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illa</td>
<td>sacrificial substitute used during domestic cleansing rituals (e.g. cock, effigy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yakaa-vagee minissu</td>
<td>disobedient, rowdy sons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mischief, trouble caused by old people or by naughty children; to berate a toddler; to hit with trouble, to tease; the new sorrow; those and these; a fight; To have died after having screamed; to hit; to cut; to beat in every way there is; the time of great fear; the place of sacrifice; the value agent; game, competitive game; dirty; to become full, densely packed; funny nonsense; to squeeze (e.g. a lemon); to come; to have; to burry; sacrificial substitute used during domestic cleansing rituals (e.g. cock, effigy); disobedient, rowdy sons.

torture, pain after having lost someone, cruelty; torturing, ragging; quarrels and fights; a lethal fight; unnatural death, murder; to kill, to murder; to kill, to murder; sexual abuse; civil war; a place where a lot of people have died (either by accident or murder, suicide); a thug, also an arrogant, ambitious person; fight as in gun fight; criminal; disorientation and confusion of the terrified; to strangle; to come to fight; to possess guns; to kill; person used by counter-insurgency forces to betray and make disappear fellow villagers; perpetrators, enemies of the civil war.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kat'a seirayi</th>
<th>a talkative person</th>
<th>a fearless person, using rough speech</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>disht'iya</td>
<td>the gaze of the yaksha</td>
<td>the gaze of perpetrators of domestic or political violence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Corruption, bribery, lies, gambling:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kavuruhari allagena:</th>
<th>to catch somebody</th>
<th>to bribe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>boruva:</td>
<td>joke, flirtation,</td>
<td>lie, pretence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huuran keieiva:</td>
<td>ate after having scratched</td>
<td>to exploit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bad'u:</td>
<td>goods</td>
<td>illicit liquor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naraka veid'a</td>
<td>bad work</td>
<td>drinking and gambling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sexuality, sexual violence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>atavara karanavaa:</th>
<th>(non-sexual) harrassment, had opposite meaning before: to help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>atin karadara karanavaa:</td>
<td>literally &quot;to trouble by hand&quot;, to trouble actively instead of the passive &quot;to be troubled&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>badaagannavaa:</td>
<td>to hug, to embrace as a lover, to hold an entranced person tightly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keita:</td>
<td>ugly, dirty, disgusting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paava denavaa:</td>
<td>to mislead, to trick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loku deeval unaa:</td>
<td>big things happened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muune peini/ tel</td>
<td>something sweet/ oil is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beerenavaa:</td>
<td>flowing from the face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bada:</td>
<td>goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tel tiyanavaa:</td>
<td>to have oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oonneiti vachana</td>
<td>unnecessary words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

7 Prof. J.B. Dissanayake, from the University of Colombo, Sinhala Department - Journalism Unit (personal communication) explained how in earlier times the assistant/ helper of a ritual specialist in the region of Kandy was called atavara kaaraya (from the earlier atavara: to help, and kaaraya: agent) or atoora kaaraya.
Let me consider the euphemisms used to refer to the civil war in greater detail. The civil war of '88-'91 is called 'bhiishan'a kaala', the 'time of extreme fear' or 'kalabala kaala', which is usually translated into English as the 'time of the great confusion'. Kalabala refers to the sheer speed of events and describes a period in which people could not think clearly. The speed of life amidst generalised violence made people unable to think and made people confused and disoriented. Many acts of violence went along with this state of kalabala in which there was no time to make a well-informed assessment. The speed of the spread of rumour and suspicions, the urgency of action lifted people out of the context of well-considered "realities". A much used synonym for kalabala is avulak. "Confusion" also meant "entanglement" (avulak); a state in which people were very closely involved in the situation, and could not take a step back to establish the necessary distance for contemplation. During those times relationships as well as thoughts got "entangled". Terrifying words are thus not replaced by nonsensical or unrelated words. As has been suggested by this example there is often an experiential correlation and continuity between the benign and less innocent meanings of a euphemism.

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8 The same word kalabala is used in expressions such as: 1/kalabalee duvanavaa: to drive in a hurry and dangerously without taking care of others; a form of traffic violence, 2/ vibagayak kalabalen liyanavaa: to write an exam badly and in a hurry, 3/ kalabala nisaa amatak unaa: to forget something because you were in a hurry and couldn't think in a calm and relaxed manner, 4/ kalabala after a traffic accident: people gather fast and in a chaotic manner to see what happened but without being able to do much, 5/ pissa kalabala karanavaa: a mad person shouts and tries to run away and creates a general atmosphere of confusion. I would thus not translate kalabala as straightforward 'panic'. During kalabala states there is more scope to think than during moments of sheer panic, yet there is a sense of the necessity to hurry up, which makes one do the wrong things (while driving a car, filling in exam papers, attending to the victims of a traffic accident, during the impatient expressions of distress of the 'mad' person, or during a civil war).

9 Avulak's most general translation would be 'entanglement'. Hair can be tangled in knots (konde avul velaa), thoughts can be unclear, mixed up and confused (oluva avul velaa, maanasika avulak as mental problem), and avulak is also used for menstruation when there is 'confusion' and 'trouble' in the blood. Verbal forms related to avulak are avula venavaa, avulanavaa, and eivilenavaa. When fire is catching up with something, when something becomes engulfed (entangled) with fire one can say gini eivilenavaa. Conversely when you try to set fire to something or try to 'entangle fire around a stick of wood' you say: kottuvat'a gini avulanavaa. Similarly you can instigate a fight (ran'd'uvak avulanavaa) by setting up two persons against each other by provoking and 'entangling' them in a fight. This 'entangling' is more literal in the ritual fighting of the an' keliya (lit. 'horn game'), a religious event in which two groups of men are competing/ fighting with each other (see Obeyesekere 1984, and Roberts 1994 for detailed accounts of this ritual). Two horns are entangled by the ritual specialist (an' avulavanavaa). A group of men is made to pull on each of the horns until one of the horns breaks and the two horns/ group of men get disentangled. In short, interpersonal or political turmoil as well as turbulent thoughts or setting fire to something are all referred to by the word 'avulak'.

10 This will also be made clear in the discussion of the euphemism boruva in section 6.2. There I link this culture-specific type of euphemism to the strategy of applying domestic types of conflict avoidance to non-domestic situations.
Euphemisms allow people not to unnecessarily expose their hearts to danger and shocks (hita bayayi). A violent reality is carefully wrapped in inoffensive words. A more gentle discursive reality forms a buffer zone between violent events and anxious citizens. A language that evokes the warmth and trust of the gedara, the household and the troubles that go along with the children's education is transplanted into the non-domestic sphere, in fact into a war-zone. The thus discursively constructed (slightly less harsh) reality attempts to safeguard the people who did not witness an incident themselves, at least safeguard them from hita bayayi or too close an involvement in a violent reality; the violence that occurs in the wider society (samaadjaya). Euphemisms thus help to protect life within the domestic context, by enabling people not to have to re-present or make present violence in ways that are threatening or sickening.

5.2. "Eeva meeva": Those and these ... : Zero anaphora.
The particular characteristics of violent or dangerous situations; the answers to the questions "who was involved?", "where did it happen?" and "what happened?" also need to be represented in discourse. In daily conversations people sometimes need to refer to local perpetrators, locations, or events. I now explore how such realities are represented or how an ambiguous picture of reality is super-imposed onto a well-known situation. Some of the techniques deployed could again be described as euphemistic, but the rationale of this type of discourse is not exclusively based on the avoidance of inauspicious words - terrified hearts (hita bayayi) and illness. In the table above I referred to "eeva meeva", "those and these" as a euphemism for "quarrels and fights". Apart from that "eeva meeva" belongs to a more widespread system of zero anaphora, of referential pronouns and nouns with uncertain referents.

Often referential pronouns and phrases are packed with specific but hidden meanings. Their referents are not explicitly named in the discourse. For example, in the lament I presented in the introduction "things like that", "those things", "things", "those" and "anything" (see * in transcript [1]) stand for sorcery spells (kodivina, which are not explicitly mentioned, though the sorcerer himself is mentioned through a euphemism). Furthermore "things" (see transcript **) might stand for sorcery, attempted murder, disappearance or poverty, all of which one can gather by knowing the context of this family. For insiders such references are clear, first of all by deduction from the general topic of the conversation, secondly by knowing the events and persons that are re-presented in this oblique way. But the referent itself is not introduced by being named, either
explicitly or through a standardised euphemism. Instead a referential pronoun is used and it is left to the interlocutor to imagine the referent. This technique allows for a substantial variability in the interpretation of the narrative, dependent on the knowledge and position of the interlocutor.

**Figure 12: Additional examples of ambiguous references.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference:</th>
<th>Referring to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>alut meeva</em>:</td>
<td>the new thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>meeva velaa</em>:</td>
<td>while being like this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>hambuna paman'ekut'a eevat'a</em>:</td>
<td>some people met (received) (things) for those things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>meeva eka tamayi mat'a deing tiyenne eevat'a</em>:</td>
<td>the things I have now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>because of those things my mother fell ill</em></td>
<td>either the fact that the offerings to the spirit of her deceased daughter had been polluted (<em>indul</em>) or to the fact that her daughter had been murdered (through sorcery?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The well-practised deployment of zero anaphora forces the audience to be an important co-author of the discourse. Within the context of the household this strategy of communication does not cause many doubles entendres since all the people from the same close-knit context know the people, places and events that are referred to by the customary zero anaphora. In this sense this type of communication might not be very different from the style of communication within families or between age-old friends in the West. What is particular about the *Udaheenagama* people's use of zero anaphora though is that they are also used outside the immediate context in which interlocutors are supposed too know the referents. This wider audience is highly involved in making sense of such communications, in imagining the referents that are touched upon by a deliberately vague discourse. The

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11 Brenneis (1990) in his description of conflict resolution discourse in Bhatgaon, a Fiji Indian community, points at a very similar strategy: "Speakers rely upon... several types of syntactic devices. Chief amongst these is what I have labelled "coy reference". Coy references employ the indefinite pronoun *koi*, "someone", and *kya "some(thing)"*, and occasionally relative pronouns such as *jo, "who". They are used to provide vague antecedents for the later use of the third person pronouns... (78, my emphasis)."
degree of clarity produced depends on the degree of closeness to the speaker. The various levels of understanding for different members of the audience is carefully built into the original utterance. Much like "one size only" clothes, this type of discourse is geared towards a diverse audience, without having to make too much adjustments.

In case something is overheard or heard by the wrong person there is an efficient safety mechanism built into the discourse. First of all the strategic ambiguity of such narrative might result in the audience not understanding the message or not being sure that they understood it well\textsuperscript{12}. Secondly the original speaker is not fully responsible for what she/he said. Since the audience has often to mentally fill in the most sensitive material of a narrative, the responsibility for the utterance is very much shared by speaker and audience\textsuperscript{13}. Such a diffuse type of responsibility\textsuperscript{14} leads to a diffuse type of "truth" (Besnier 1994:20) co-constituted by audience and speaker, in contradistinction to the "truth" constituted by means of the institutional or raw authority of a truth teller. "Truth" is located at the meeting point between individuals rather than being an intrinsic value of a "truth teller". "Truth" and knowledge thus remain firmly embedded within a localised context, and - as soon as the distance\textsuperscript{15} between speaker and interlocutor increases - "truth" and knowledge take on a dubious quality\textsuperscript{16}. I will further discuss the link between this strategy of encapsulating knowledge within a relatively small-scale context such as a nuclear or extended family and the cycle of containment of violence in the concluding discussion.

5.3. Beebi noona: Mrs. Baby and other names.
The transcript of a lament [1] I presented in the introduction also mentions several names: Booliyeddha uncle, Perera, Maat'in elder brother, Siita. A further interpretation of this lament leads me to the question of how people address and refer to one another in everyday conversation and by extension in discourses about violent events. Although every person is

\textsuperscript{12} On the Managalase practice of "telling stories that listeners will find difficult to interpret" and its relation to the avoidance of responsibility see McKellin (1984:111).
\textsuperscript{13} See Besnier (1994:19) for a discussion of this type of discursive tactic used for gossip in Nukulaelae. And Besnier's description (1990) of covert communicative channels that are "minimally marked for evidentiality, in that the author of the discourse may not readily be held accountable for the affect communicated in his discourse" (318).
\textsuperscript{14} White & Watson-Gegeo (1990:27) argues that "In Melanesia, ... speakers use quoted speech, metaphor, and other devices to distance themselves from responsibility for accusations or interpretations".
\textsuperscript{15} As the social distance increases the amount of common knowledge is sharply reduced and an unambiguous interpretation of a message becomes difficult. In addition to this messages commonly reach distant interlocutors through a chain of reporters.
\textsuperscript{16} In chapter 7 I discuss the linguistic marker (the suffix and reported speech marker -\textit{hu}) which conveys the dubious nature of information gathered in this manner.
registered by means of a personal name as a citizen of the Sri Lankan state, it is very 
impolite, indeed sacrilegious to address a person by his or her personal name\(^{17}/^{18}\).

**The avoidance of names within the family and beyond.**

Within the nuclear family people commonly use kinship terms to address each other. Rules of respect prevent people from using each others personal names and in some instances kinship terminology is also avoided. For example a woman might refer to her husband or grown-up son as "the one who lives in this house" (\textit{oya deing inna ekkenaa}) or a husband might refer to his wife as "the one in the house" (\textit{gedara ekkenayi})\(^{19}\). For the time being I will relegate these practices to rules of "respect" and avoidance that reign within the family. The avoidance of a person's name could simply be seen as one aspect of avoidance relations which go along with respect. However, below I further question why the avoidance of a person's name or kinship term is qualified as "respect".

Naming strategies within the wider community mirror this dynamic of naming and being named that operate within the family to a certain degree. Within contexts that transcend the nuclear and extended family kinship terminology is used and combined with parts of the personal name or a part of a place name, as in "Maat'in elder brother" or "Booliyeidda uncle". Teknonyms, such as "the mother of..." or "the father of..." are also popular. People are named in a variety of ways, depending on their relation to the person who addresses them or refers to them. What is important here is that there is a multiplicity of terms of address which is in fact endless and can even be made up on the spur of the moment depending on the context.

Once this dynamic of naming within the family and neighbourhood is taken into an even wider context, it is particularly difficult for widows or family members of the disappeared to choose a term of address. Because of the rules of respect governing names within the family, together with a reluctance to use the names of deceased persons (see below) a female head of household might choose a name which does not refer to her husband for official purposes. Single women sometimes resort to terms of address that were used

\(^{17}\) Geertz (1973) describes a similar situation in Bali: "As the virtually religious avoidance of its direct use indicates, a personal name is an intensely private matter" (370). He frames his interpretation within a general discussion of the Balinese definition of personhood.

\(^{18}\) For an overview of the ways in which these personal names were constructed see Reimers 1930.

\(^{19}\) Kolenda (1990) in her writings about untouchable Chuhras in Uttar Pradesh describes how it is even prohibited to use a \textit{descriptively correct} kinship terms when referring to or addressing a respected kinsman or kinswoman (my emphasis). "A woman might refer to her husband as "that one" or "someone"; a man similarly refers to his wife" (131). It is embarrassing or even shocking for a woman to pronounce her husband's name, even if she by chance is asked to say someone's name that is the same as her husband's (131).
before they got married. The government census that was carried out in *Udaheenagama* in 1993, thus included a considerable amount of terms of address such as *beebi noona* or *beebi haaminee*: "Mrs. Baby".

The names of a house are used and designed along the same pattern as people's names. When I asked the woman who told me the above-mentioned family history [1] why her house was called *Samanvatta*, she was initially surprised that I knew this name and then explained the following:

[2] Why is this house called *Samanvatta*? Because the characters come to the mind like that. It is not nice to say *Yamanvatta*! [play on words with *yaman*, "let's go"]. That does not mean anything. [whispers, in order to divulge something relatively secret] So we say *Samanvatta*. [loud] But people call this place by various names (*veiheivaara karanoo*). They say *Kalugalden'iya*, because that is the name of the next-door garden, and then they call the shop *Kalugalden'iya* shop. Before we used to live a bit further up the hill at *Ud'aden'iya*. They still call this place *Ud'aden'iya*. Grandmother was not born in this village, she came from "over there".

Houses are named in different ways dependent on the relation of the speaker to the household, or depending on the generation the speaker belongs to. The practice of using a variety of names for the same thing (*veiheivaara karanavaa*) particularly struck me; an outsider unfamiliar with Sinhalese naming strategies. The practical difficulties in trying to find people (with multiple names) and houses (with multiple names) was what initially led me to start wondering about "*veiheivaara karanavaa*".

I was not the only person moving between contexts in *Udaheenagama*. Ritual specialists, who routinely move from one context to another, do not tend to use names of houses or addresses to locate and reach people. When ritual specialists from Bamarabokka were called upon to organise a cleansing ritual in a nearby neighbourhood (for example Upper Puvakden'iya) they were generally picked up on the main road by a family member of the

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20 Related to the high Sinhala *vyavahaara*, from the Sanskrit word for usage: the way in which you say something (Prof. J.B. Dissanayaka, Sinhala Department, University of Colombo, personal communication).
21 What was particularly strange (in local terms) was that I always tended to address somebody or refer to somebody with the first term of address that I had encountered. I thus sometimes took over names that were used by people far younger or older than me, which was a source of considerable hilarity. I thus had called somebody "big mother" for almost the whole of my fieldwork before it daunting on me how comic this was. I also sometimes used terms of address exclusively used by members of the extended family within one neighbourhood in other neighbourhoods, which aroused considerable curiosity. This led to a game in which the anthropologist was made to name people from other neighbourhoods, repeatedly. "Can you tell us that name again!" (and again). In other words, as an outsider, I was to pronounce (make present) such names, which was an unusual comic feat.
afflicted person. Otherwise, they argued, they would not be able to find the house. I genuinely wondered about how new postmen, policemen, Special Task Force soldiers, the women collecting the radio tax, or NGO personnel managed to find the people they were looking for when they could not count on equivocal support from the people who lived along the route to a particular house. The multiplicity of names available lends itself particularly well to protect a context from unwelcome outsiders.

The fear of being "named" by enemies.

In the midst of this multiplicity of terms of address one finds a reluctance to divulge one's personal name or the name of one's house to enemies. Geertz (1973:375), encountering a very similar attitude amongst the Balinese, could not refrain from remarking that: "personal names are treated as though they were military secrets". In some cases the original name of a house is not divulged in order to protect its dwellers from sorcery. The woman quoted in transcript [2] trusted me enough to tell me her house was called Samanvatta, but she later asked me not to tell people. Amongst the myriad of terms of address there is one name of special status: the name given to a person at birth and the name given to a house by its inhabitants during the rituals of inauguration. The initials of a person's name are often determined by the astrologer and they depend on the neikat, the particular planetary constellation at the moment of birth. This name, which I would call the original term of address, carries a particular weight; most obviously revealed in its strict avoidance in a variety of circumstances.

There is one situation in which the knowledge, pronunciation, and "possession" of this original name is of particular importance: committing sorcery. In order to ensorcel one's enemy his/her name is imprinted on an ash pumpkin22 which is subsequently cut into pieces and destroyed (see Wirz 195, Kapferer 1997). By means of destroying this written name, an enemy becomes ensorcelled, and this might in turn lead to his or her destruction. In other words there is a link between the destruction of a person's original name and the destruction of the enemy him/herself; a link between people's knowledge of a name, their subsequent power over this name (including the power to destroy it) and people's power over a person or a house. Even in small-scale sorcery rites, the recitation of the enemy's

22 A similar strategy is used during funerary rites (sraddha) in Assam (A. Cantlie: personal communication). A (non-Sanskrit) ritual performed on the 10th day after the death of a person consists in writing the deceased persons name in ash and subsequently destroying it. The priests holds the thus written name behind his back and cuts the container of the ash and the name written into it into pieces, while standing in the river. The thus effectuated destruction of the name brings about the complete disappearance of a person. The similarities with the Sinhalese practice of writing an enemy's name onto an ash pumpkin and subsequently cutting the pumpkin into pieces are striking.
correct name is crucial\textsuperscript{23}. In an analysis of why original names are sometimes avoided within the wider community, the secrecy surrounding an original name could in part be interpreted as a protective mechanism against sorcery.

The restriction of the flow of names between contexts.

On first sight it might seem that the rationale for hiding original names of both people and houses from enemies finds its roots in fear of sorcerous recitations, or the destruction of one's written name. This interpretation however does not apply to many of the situations in which people avoid the unguarded use of original names within the wider community. The secrecy and reluctance to pronounce an original name thus seems to point to something else, beyond sorcery practices. The analysis of the use of names in everyday conversations leads to another set of possible interpretations. People who do possess the knowledge of an original name will carefully avoid it in certain contexts, often in circumstances where secrecy towards an enemy or outsider does not matter.

People avoid using any of the names of a house in which somebody was suffering from a "bad illness"\textsuperscript{24}, a house in which a sudden death occurred, or a house on which a sorcery spell had been cast. This caused quite a few problems for my day to day activities as an anthropologist. As I was asking where the anti-sorcery ritual would take place somebody told me: "the name of the house of course I don't know, we call it "the house of younger sister", but we don't mention a name!". When I would ask where a sick person I had heard about lived, people would simply say "over there" or "I don't know" (the name of the house). That is how I failed to attend many a ritual, but by the same token how I avoided the danger that comes with naming a house of misfortune and ultimately the pollution caused by visiting such a house\textsuperscript{25}.

\textsuperscript{23} I realised this, when during one of the darker periods of fieldwork, I decided to ensorcel somebody in England. I spend an afternoon, with the gurunaanse, the ritual specialist to determine what the correct name of the person in question was, or rather how this name could be written in Sinhalese. My original plan was to literally transliterate the Roman script into Sinhalese script, but this plan was met with indignation about my ignorance. The pronunciation during the sorcerer's recitations had to be absolutely correct and match the written version of the name on the yantra. So finally, after a lengthy deliberation, we agreed that we should use the phonetics of the English name and transliterate that into Sinhalese script, independent of how the name might have looked in Roman script.

\textsuperscript{24} Naraka leda see table on euphemisms in section 5.1.

\textsuperscript{25} If I had visited a house whose dwellers were suffering from severe misfortune or illness I was often instructed to wash before visiting other people. People tend to wash and change on their way home after, for example, having visited a house of a menstruating young girl. This is especially important if one of their family members is suffering from an illness which could be exacerbated by the pollution brought home after a visit to such a house.
At a 1-year daana, a ceremony organised a year after a person's death, a young man went out of his way to refer to his own deceased sister in the following way: "the relative that died under that particular family name" (ee pavule ee naamen miyagiya meirun'a). During such ceremonies people would refer to the deceased person as "the dead one" (maranakaaraya) and thereby avoid the term of address or name they used when the person in question was alive. This practice resonates with the custom of avoiding the deceased's name during the period of mourning in Assam and Bengal (Cantlie, personal communication). The custom finds its roots in the notion of naama ruupa, literally, "the name form, figure or appearance". To mention a person's name thus makes a name format of the person present, something that should be avoided during a period of mourning when people are trying to deal with the permanent absence of the person who passed away. In many of the above-mentioned attitudes towards pronouncing a name this dimension of naama ruupa, "name appearance", could help the Western observer to make sense of the fear to name or be named. This practice however does not limit itself to the context of death and mourning.

I now turn to Ramanujan's argument (1989) about the radical influence of a context on people and things in what he calls "an Indian way of thinking". Ramanujan uses examples from Vedic rituals, Tamil poetry and Ayurvedic medicine to show how people and objects are considered to be continuous with their context (1989: 50), how "all things are substantial (even non-material ones like space and time) and how there is a constant flow of substance from context to object" (1989: 52).

One could extend this type of analysis to my data about naming and being named in Udaheenagama. Though a name is a "non-material object" in Western folk theory, it seems to be involved in the flow of substance between context and the named entity in an Indian or Sri Lankan context. The state of people's naama ruupa, the appearance of their name seems closely linked to their bodily self. The destruction of a written name, or the pronunciation of a name within the context of sorcerous recitations can thus harm somebody. While the immersion of a name in a nefarious context can bear negatively on the named person, the name appearance itself can also alter a context. People therefore fear the pronunciation of the name of a house of misfortune. In everyday conversations names (and by extension the named people/things) are in a constant process of re-contextualisation. Sensitivity to the nature of this re-contextualisation and concern for the named one makes people engage in what I primarily experienced as vague discourse; a

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26 In Sinhala ruupa, derived from the Sanskrit ruupa, is used to refer to, amongst other things, statues and a person's face.
discourse which heavily relies on zero anaphora (see previous section); a discourse in which the referent is rarely introduced unambiguously through a name.

While I did mention the "word magic of taboo words" (see section 5.1), and the notion of the "flow of substance between context and word" (Ramanujan 1989) I do not want simply to relegate people's use of names to the world of the occult or the mysterious. The very mundane sensitivity to reputation, to a family's good name\textsuperscript{27} can help to explain many of the avoidance strategies. People try not to be named in contexts which they consider disreputable in order not to appear associated with such a context or status group. Within the family names are avoided out of "respect". One could argue that the avoidance of the pronunciation of certain names within the wider community also involves a form of respect. I understand the relationship between the avoidance of names and "respect" in \textit{Udaheenagama} as constituted by a refusal of the power to re-contextualise somebody by using his/her name.

Equally people try to remove disreputable people from their social context by avoiding the use of their names or the names of their houses. The apparent ignorance which results evokes a social distance from violence or illness and thus safeguards one's respectable status. The restriction of the flow of names between contexts is thus one aspect of the preservation of contexts, in which people protect their own contexts from further moral decay by carefully monitoring which person and which house can be mentioned by name.

I compare these strategies of naming with the use of the names of the \textit{yakku} during cleansing rituals. Ritual specialists engage in lengthy recitations of the names of the \textit{yakku}. This is one of the techniques by means of which the \textit{yakku} are summoned and made present. Subsequently the wild is subjected to forms of acoustic cleansing (see section 4.3.). I consider the refusal to pronounce certain names (e.g. the name of a house of misfortune) a form of acoustic cleansing. The zero anaphora which replace the names and prevent names from being uttered thus play a role in acoustic cleansing and the maintenance of boundaries between contexts. The movement of uttered names between contexts is restricted and the boundaries between contexts are not allowed to blur. While "dangerous words" and other sounds of the wild (see chapter four), together with the \textit{yakku} who have been made present through the recitations of their names are removed from the context of the household during domestic cleansing rituals, the sounds of the names of

\textsuperscript{27} For example the focus on protecting the family's good name (\textit{nambuva aaraksha karagannavaa, nambuva reika gannavaa}) or the jokes made about people who focus too much on their reputation and thus have become too arrogant, proud and isolated from their community (\textit{namba kaara minissu}: the "good name makers").
certain people and houses are removed from one's context by means of careful strategies of avoidance.

**Discussion: Conflict avoidance and ambiguous re-presentations.**

The above-mentioned communicative strategies are more deep-rooted or widespread than an analysis of suspicion and secretiveness between status groups or enemies might suggest. In the village of *Udaheenagama* plagued by the fall out of old and contemporary violent conflicts a constant tension is palpable. This, contrary to what one might expect, is not only the tension of ongoing conflict, or seething anger that resides just under the surface of polite relationships. Another type of tension resides in everyday conversation, in the effort to meticulously and consistently engage in *cautious* discourses necessary to avoid conflict.

Much like gossip type of communication in Nukulaelae the style of informal discourse of women in Udaheenagama is evasive and the speakers rigorously show as few signs of personal involvement as possible. Euphemisms allow people not to unnecessarily expose their hearts to danger and shocks (*hitay bayayi*). Even at the level of enunciation people evade very clear-cut positions by avoiding naming the referents. The customary sensitivity needed to refer to people and houses without necessarily naming them increases the number of available discursive strategies to remain vague and dissociated from the people one talks about. Such discursive strategies can be considered as a cultural resource deployed to manage conflicts. Similar styles of communication have been described in cultural contexts where there is an emphasis on the avoidance of direct confrontation and open conflict (Atkinson 1990:42-43)

Ambiguous discourses as it were form an insulation against too passionate an involvement:

> In contexts where persons are insulated from the moral force of discourse through mechanisms of indirection or ambiguity the situational ethos is less marked by passions of conflict (White & Watson-Gegeo 1990:15)

Such a "strategic approach to communication" could be considered as one amongst many strategies of survival (see Besnier 1994:25) deployed in a community like *Udaheenagama*. As much as a chronic presence of colonial and neo-colonial violence fostered flexible kinship relations facilitating adoption it also brought about cautious types of communication. This corresponds to the presence of a variety of devices of indirection and cautious communication in other contexts where collective social life is fragile and a polity

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28 Amongst the Wana of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia people, by speaking forcefully, risk not only illness but even death (Atkinson 1990:42). They developed a way of speaking with great caution, in which utterances hint at multiple meanings (ibid.: 43,50).
cannot be taken for granted. Then the maintenance of a political arena required a substantial amount of linguistic work (Brenneis 1990: 12-18, 24):

In some situations the crucial factor is that talk can occur at all; the creation and maintenance of communicative contexts is the creation, however fleeting, of a political order (Brenneis 1990:28, my emphasis)

Such cautious styles of communication however should not be seen as a mere sign of resistance and antagonism against domination. An all too easy answer to the question of "when can a speaker not say exactly what he means?" (Brenneis 1984:69) would evoke a situation of hegemony or domination; the speech style of the dominated being cautious and ambiguous. Another question however seems more apt and leads to a less stereotypical analysis that goes beyond a documentation of forms of resistance: "In what type of societies is oblique reference or highly allusive speech the predominant mode of communication?" (Brenneis 1984:70). In other words, what type of political organisation goes hand in hand with verbal disguise and ambiguous discourse. Such a question follows a more recent call to pay more attention to the intrinsic value of ambiguity and indeterminacy, independent of their potential classification as forms of resistance:

Ambiguity and indeterminacy are not the values only of the weak, nor are they associated only with the need of the dominated to accommodate, but they are more generally widespread and may be crucial to the maintenance of long-term social relations" (Osella 1998:204).

Brenneis (1984) argued that highly allusive speech and oblique referencing are the predominant mode of communication in egalitarian, acephalous forms of social organisation, in leaderless communities, where direct leadership is dangerous to all involved (70, 83). He describes the prevalence of cautious speech in a social context - a Fiji Indian community - which bears many similarities to the situation in Udaheenagama. Absence of formal agencies of social control together with the need for a constant renegotiation of people's reputation and status within the community lead to conflicts that are largely dyadic (73). Much like in Udaheenagama, such dyadic conflicts are marked by the constant search for an outside mediator or third party and the dominant mode of conflict communication in this Fiji Indian community is indirection (82).

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29 For a discussion of status indeterminacy in a Sri Lankan rural community see Spencer 1990.
30 See Appendix A and the description of the triadic organisation of enmity in chapter three.
Brenneis' analysis takes an interesting turn when he extends his description of zero anaphora (which he calls "coy references" see footnote 11) to a description of the political organisation surrounding such zero anaphora. In a situation where status and social identity greatly depend on the possession of knowledge, common knowledge about everyday life in the village becomes a valued commodity. Thus differential participation in common knowledge, is interpreted by Brenneis as a "political fact" (75). It is exactly this differential participation in common knowledge which the use of zero anaphora draws upon and reinforces. A temporary omission of such ambiguity and vagueness would thus disrupt this form of (micro-) political organisation by divulging pieces of information to the willfully uninformed. Zero anaphora can thus be thought of as playing a critical role in the negotiation of statuses based on knowledge about everyday life.

The political impact of such deliberately vague discourses, however, goes beyond its role in the establishment of status differences. Since the audience is invited to come up with a variety of interpretations depending on their degree of knowledge about a situation an unanimous collective judgement cannot be expected. The lack of such a unanimous judgement or a judgement shared by a large group of people leads to the absence of a local cycle of modernist violence31 as well as a high degree of integration of violent individuals. Multiple interpretations and the above described "diffuse truths" do not easily lead to communal judgements of a situation and the subsequent stigmatisation and marginalisation of violent people. The kaleidoscopic picture constructed by this cautious type of discourse is quite different from the "collective knowledge"32 about a violent past (or present) a Western observer might expect33. Moreover such a cautious discourse about violence has a limited impact. It pervades relatively small well preserved family or neighbourhood contexts while safeguarding a wider context through relative ignorance. While victims construct a cautious and often vague picture of a violent reality they allow perpetrators to create their own liveable contexts.

The preservation of contexts brought about by the above described discursive practices is particularly important in view of the fact that Udaheenagama people - in the aftermath of the social devastation the civil war has brought about - take the same (overcrowded) bus to town, send their children to the same school, worship at the same temple, and buy goods in

31 See chapter three where I contrasted the local cycle of violence with modernist forms of violence in which revenge is taken upon a whole group of people independent from their involvement in specific disputes (e.g. on the basis of ethnic origin, party political affiliation or people's association with perpetrators of the civil war).
32 Also see my reservations to use the notion of "common" or "collective" knowledge in the section on the reported speech marker -lu (section 5.4.).
33 The notion of a "public outcry" seems particularly out of place here.
the same shopping area near the main road. The tension inherent in such close encounters with enemies and morally reprehensible people is partially re-converted into a (equally tense) drive to meticulously safeguard and consolidate one's context. The preservation of contexts also stands for a dis-identification or non-identification\textsuperscript{34} with the wider, often violent society (\textit{samaadjaya}). This non-identification with the outward appearance of community life or one's outward appearances when venturing into 'spaces in between contexts', such as buses or temples, finds it expression in the subsequent meticulous preservation of one's context.

The relationship between these local strategies to preserve contexts and the local cycle of violence is complex. On the one hand, I argue that the meticulous preservation of contexts was one factor in the containment or limitation of widespread, modernist outbreaks of violence during the civil war and immediately afterwards\textsuperscript{35}. The absence of unanimous collective judgements about whole groups of enemies led to the absence of modernist collective violence.

On the other hand, the preservation of contexts allowed the community to accommodate a substantial number of perpetrators and essentially violent individuals. "The preservation of contexts" also stands for the fragmentation of the community, the social isolation this goes along with and many people's dis-identification with society. It could thus be argued that this plays a role in the contemporary, ongoing cycle of low-intensity violence. From another perspective however, one could argue that the preservation of contexts allows perpetrators and victims to live in close proximity to one another. As my description of the complex forms of violence in Udaheenagama has shown (see chapter 3) the categories of victim and perpetrator are easily interchangeable, and with so many people being at once victim and perpetrators the creation of liveable contexts for perpetrators might have been the best short-term solution. Indeed, in view of the atrocities of the late eighties the number of internally displaced people is remarkably small. The current role of the violent individuals of the civil war in the current cycle of low-intensity violence has thus to be weighted against the problems that would have been brought about by massive internal displacement.

The data presented in this chapter were not gathered in a systematic way. The material gradually emerged during numerous encounters along paths in the \textit{Udaheenagama} area. Apart from personal safety, there thus was one more advantage in being a "commuting

\textsuperscript{34} See discussion of the notion of non-identification in chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{35} See chapter 3 for a description of this cycle of containment of modernist violence.
anthropologist". In order to visit people on the slopes of the hills I moved from context to context\textsuperscript{36}. Along the road people would routinely greet me with "where are you going?". The conversations which ensued often took up most of the day before I reached my envisaged destination. It is on the basis of these conversations that I described the preservation of contexts. In the next chapter, however, I look at how the spaces between contexts are constructed, especially when strategies pertaining to the household and to the preservation of domestic contexts are applied "out of context".

\textsuperscript{36} In order to make the notion of a "context" more concrete I will give a few examples. In Puvakden'iya (see map 4) household 29, 30 and the un-numbered house above form one context, household 25, 21, and 18 another, and household 22, 23, and 24 another. Members of household 23, 22 and 2b were involved in the murders of the heads of household 30 and 32. Household 21 and 25 were involved in a failed attempt at murder of a man in household 23. Such contexts are the very small-scale fragments Puvakden'iya neighbourhood is made of. At times when I was involved in gossip about nearby "contexts" people took a lot of time to find out which household I was actually talking about. For example household 29 was outside the range of common knowledge of members of household 2.
CHAPTER SIX
Out of context(s)

Introduction
In the previous chapter I looked at how the use of essentially domestic discursive strategies (such as euphemisms, zero anaphora and the avoidance of names) in the non-domestic sphere leads to a preservation of contexts. Such discursive strategies play a role in further sealing of households from the surrounding world and enabling perpetrators and victims to live in close proximity of one another. In this chapter I discuss a similar dynamic. I give two more examples of the way in which certain domestic strategies to avoid conflict or talk about violence radiate out into the wider community. In other words how discursive strategies usually deployed within the context of the household, the gedara are applied 'out of context'. The discursive strategies discussed in this chapter, however, have implications which reach beyond the issue of 'the preservation of contexts'. They play a role in the construction and conceptualisation of 'spaces in between contexts'.

Shops, liquor breweries, hill side paths, bus stands and buses, public roads, junctions, regional towns, or the Colombo slums which men and women from Udaheenagama regularly frequent or travel to could be considered as 'spaces in between contexts'. What strikes an outsider most is the harsh, icy and almost cruel nature of such spaces when compared with the atmosphere in close-knit kin groups or gedara. As a Westerner one would obviously talk about 'a public sphere in crisis', a public sphere still strongly affected by the war-time ethos of the 1989-1991 civil war. Since the notion of a bourgeois public sphere is not applicable within the Udaheenagama cultural context\(^1\) I replaced this with the notion of 'spaces in between contexts' or non-domestic spaces. Many women in Udaheenagama, however, make comments similar to the Euro-American notion of 'a crisis of the public sphere'. For them the boundary between safe and dangerous spaces often lies at their doorstep. A blatant example of the crisis of the non-domestic sphere is the fact that skull-hunting expeditions (see chapter 2, footnote 33) are carried out within very nearby neighbourhoods\(^2\).

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\(^1\) See footnote 4 in chapter 4, I will further discuss this issue in chapter 7.

\(^2\) Young men from Puvakden'iya would for example acquire skulls from graves in the Galkanda neighbourhood (see map 2).
Photos 23-24: The awkwardness of 'spaces in between contexts' - Party political propaganda posters outside the village shops near the main road -
The current government's vivid depiction of the mistakes of the previous government: torture and disappearance.
Photo 25: Remembering the disappeared - Red ribbons on the road to town in places where JVP activists were killed.
In this chapter I discuss two ways in which *Udaheenagama* people construct and re-construct this problematic non-domestic sphere by means of discursive strategies which originate in the domestic sphere. First of all I describe the use of the euphemism 'yakaa-like people' which is used to refer to violent individuals within the family and within the wider community. Secondly, I look at how the practice of telling *boru*, which I tentatively translate as 'obvious pretence', and which traditionally pertained to the realm of joking relations and conflict avoidance within the family, takes on a very different character when applied within the wider society.


> There is a very cruel type of person living amongst us.

Young ritual specialist.

Part of my fieldwork experience in the village consisted of being constantly warned of impending danger. I was told not to visit certain households, not to proceed on this or that path, or not to set foot in particular neighbourhoods. When I asked why I had been warned about certain people, I was often given a metaphor as explanation: those people are like *yakku*! (*yakaa vague minissu!*). In time, I began using this metaphor myself as a way of interviewing people about perpetrators, violent events, and about danger in their own immediate surroundings or in more remote neighbourhoods.

The gender ideology behind this metaphor is interesting. The commonly cited Sinhalese gender ideology mainly associates women with the *yakku*. Women are most prone to the effects of the gaze of the wild (the *disht'iya* of the *yakku*) because their mind is 'weak' or 'delicate' (*hita laamakayi, durvala*). This 'weakness' and propensity to indulge in things disapproved of by Sinhala Buddhist cultural norms (greed, materialism, illicit love, verbal abuse) construct women as - in many respects - similar to the *yakku*. Such are the dominant representations of female identity as they are reinforced and enacted in practices such as trance and *tovil* rituals.

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3 I never asked direct questions about these issues, and the metaphor of *yakaa vague minissu* was a way of raising issues I could otherwise not have addressed in an acceptable manner.

4 Kapferer (1983) argued that 'women ... attract and engender the demonic as an involuntary aspect of their cultural identity as female, as a property of femaleness, and as a function of their cultural identity as women... It is in their cultural constitution as women, mediating in themselves nature with culture and as primary foci of articulation and transition of the natural into the cultural, which makes women vulnerable to demonic attack and which creates them as symbolic vehicles for the manifestation of disorder in the world around them' (149).
The expression 'yakaa-like people', which is mainly used for men, establishes an alternative type of gender ideology, in which certain types of men are said to resemble the yakku. Unlike female patients, such men, however, are not understood to be suffering from an illness caused by the disht'iya, nor are they submitted to tovil rituals. In other words they are distinct from the group of men who routinely emerge in statistics on exorcism and possession as the minority of male patients (the majority being women). The link between these men and the yakku is established by other means. Both women and men engaged in a discourse which evoked a resemblance between groups of men and unsocialized, non-human beings, the yakku. This discourse is very different from the ambiguous discourse on the gaze of the wild, the disht'iya I discussed in chapter two, in the sense that it is an explicit discourse by means of which people are able to directly and explicitly point at trouble makers.

**Peace-time characteristics of yakaa-like people.**

An elderly lady, the wife of a ritual specialist in Galkanda commented:

> [1] [Yakaa-like people] are jealous people, who don't know any kindness/humanity (manussakamak) or values (agayak). You can see it when you look at their face; there is no affection (lengatuva), no mercy (pingatiya).

A group of joking teenage boys from Bamarabokka added:

> [2] You say it about a man with very rough behaviour, somebody hard/cruel/violent (darunu). He talks in a very fierce/wicked way (seira-purusha). We accept (piligeiniima) the presence of yakku amongst the people. Very fierce/rough persons. So if you see a man like that, he is also called a yakaa.

When a middle-aged husband (H) and wife (W) from Heendolakanda talked about their enemy, with whom they were involved in a marriage dispute, they described this neighbour as a female yakaa, a yakshini:

> [3] W: She [the enemy] said: 'if [my daughter] has a child [with your son] I will break the child's neck with my own nails', that is what this mother said with her own mouth.

S. Akkaa: Did she come and tell you that?

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5 Such people defy neat categorisation as either yakku or human beings and are thus particularly 'dangerous' (as in Douglas 1966).

6 See epigram in chapter three for a description of a yakaa and his long nails.
W: No she said [shouted] it from within her own house. It is said (-/«) that she has said that if a child is conceived, she will break the neck of the child with her nails. 
H: [whispers] She is not human (manussayek nevii eyevi).
W: [loud and angry] Not a human but a yakshini! [a female yakaa]. You cannot say she has love/ kindness (karunaava). Also the way in which she talks, she uses extremely dirty words.
H: A wild animal (tirisan).
W: They say that she doesn't care about human qualities.

A young ritual specialist from Galkanda explained the metaphor in extenso. He took the metaphor one step further by arguing that if you see a yakaa-like person, the disht'iya might fall upon you and you might fall ill. Cruel people - as much as the yakku - are briefly described as a source of illness within the community. For a short moment this ritual specialist obliterates the distinction between yakaa-like people and the institutionalised illness-causing yakku (Mahasohona, Riiri Yakaa, Kalu Kumaara, Suuniyam) as he explained:

[4] There are people who use to resemble a yakaa. People with a big, fat stomach, with teeth that have come forward, extra teeth that come out like a monster's teeth (nala dat), ... Those people live in the midst of us all. It is those people we call 'yakaa vagee'. Most people get frightened when they see them. Why is that? Because they are like the yakku. We say it in this way - a fat face, drowned eyes (gilila), a fat stomach - those are people who look like a yakaa and have the same figure/personality (heid'aruva) as a yakaa,...

People have made up that expression (kataava). There are various types of people. When we see somebody with the shape (heid'eet'a) of a yakaa or the figure/forms (ruupavalvala) [of a yakaa] - some have faces that look just like the ones of the eighteen masked yakaa figures of the tovil ritual (daha at'a paaliya) - it is about such people they say 'this one [uses un-respectful pronoun, moo] is like a yakad'. The character (chariot) [is] also [like a yakaa], you can read it from the face it's like that too. There are people who are completely like that [like a yakaa]. ... Their behaviour (heisiriima) also. There are some people, if they see that human [who resembles a yakaa], the disht'iya falls onto them. Usually there are other people [who are not like yakku], whom when they go somewhere and see such a human [who resembles a yakaa] the disht'iya falls on them. The speech of those people [who resemble yakku] is very loud/fast (hayiyen), their speech is sharp/rough/ violent (seirayi) too. The speech of the yakku is also very sharp/rough/wild (seirayi), and such is the speech of those people. It is because of all these things that people have made up this expression,...

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7See section 4.1. on the soundscapes of the wild.
8See section 7.4. for a discussion of this discursive strategy.
The expressions about evil eye and evil mouth are very similar. Such people exist. It is correct [what the expression describes]. In every village you have a group of people like that, humans // if a cow is expecting a calf it is enough that they just touch it and the calf will not be born. There are people like that. It is people like that we call yakku vagee [laughs]. There is a very bad/ very evil kind of people amongst us (maha naraka minissu djaatiyak innoo, api atarema). They are successful (hond'a veid'a karanne), but they are bad,...

Yakaa-like people and the civil war.
In other contexts this metaphor would be used in descriptions of insurgency and counter-insurgency politics in the area. A young man (M) and his sister (S) from Kalubowatta argued:

[5] M: [Yakaa-like people are] people who are not scared. If you fight with them they will hit you back. That is why we call them yakaa vagee minissu. Here also there are people like that.
S: In the Veilden'iya neighbourhood [part of the Pein'igahakanda neighbourhood] people are like yakku. In Veilden'iya most people are from the [lower] jaggery maker's caste,...
M: They are treated as lower caste. Then they become helpless (ahinsaka), rough/violent (seirai), and not scared of anyone (baya neiei kaat'avat). During the civil war these people didn't mind their own business at all. All got mixed (ehemat neiei iting kavalamee tamayi), they weren't especially violent, our people were involved also, but there were a lot of them [JVP insurgents] in Veilden'iya. We were destroyed because of them. I don't even know one of them by name. That is their habit in those neighbourhood: they leave their neighbourhood and jump into/ raid ours. There are no human beings in those neighbourhoods, so they come to our neighbourhood and trouble us! [laughs]
S: That is what happened. Even our ID cards were taken, by people we didn't know/recognise. They haven't given them back yet,... In this neighbourhood there weren't many people who created trouble [committed violent acts]; most of them came from that neighbourhood [Veilden'iya].

Yakaa-like people's lack of fear.
This young man from Kalubowatta mentioned how yakaa-like people are people who aren't scared of anything. In the narratives that I was told about yakaa-vagee minissu it transpired that such people are claimed to be scared neither of the institutionalised illness-causing yakku (Mahasohona, Kalu Kumaara, Suuniyam, Riiri Yakaa) nor of human beings (even in war-time situations). Some young people evoked an ongoing struggle between yakaa-like people and the institutionalised yakku of the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon. Late at night, at a

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9 I will come back to this issue of fearlessness in chapter eight.
10 Again the horror of being mixed (kavalam) is evoked (also see footnote 29 in chapter three).
tovil ritual in a neighbourhood known for its past and present affiliation with the JVP insurgency movement some boasting teenagers told us how once (yakaa-like) JVP insurgents would be in power in the country, nobody would be troubled by the (institutionalised) yakkku and no cleansing tovil rituals would be necessary anymore. In chapter three (transcript 11) I quoted a ritual specialist complaining about young men who made his ritual performance difficult. He quoted them as saying: 'There are no yakku at all, where can there be beings that are more 'yakku' than us?' Another ritual specialist - almost resigned to the fact that the struggle between institutionalised yakku and yakaa-like youths was over - simply asserted how the institutionalised yakku are scared of yakaa-like people, how they tremble and turn away their dangerous gaze (see chapter two, transcript 6). In this type of narrative the yakku suffer more from fear than their human counterparts, the yakaa vagee minissu, and seem to have more human characteristics. Yakaa-like people thus invert the usual hierarchical relation of yakku and human being.

An astrologer (A) and his teenage daughter (D) from Edanduwila, while discussing the contemporary decline of ritual specialists and traditional ritual, also discussed this issue:

[6] A: Before there were various people to do the [ritual] work. None of those [people] are here now. Where are the yakku now? [rhetorical] The yakku who were here in those days are not here anymore. They have been chased away. Now it is the humans who have become yakku! (deing manushyayin tamayi yakkku velaa tiyenne\textsuperscript{1}).

S. Akkaa: So why are there less rituals now?

D: Before people were scared of the slightest thing. The people who live in this era/ time are not scared. Before, if a tree shook they were afraid, weren't they? Now people just approach [the tree] and check [what happened]. They are not scared.

Yakaa-like people excluded from sorcery and anti-sorcery practices:

Since such people are not afraid of anything they are less prone to fall ill. Often mothers of such men would tell me that the only illness their sons had was unemployment. The failures and misfortunes of yakaa-like people would be attributed to bad planetary influences (graha apala, agun'a), for which the remedies would, for example, be a yantra bandinavaa or a mal baliya ritual\textsuperscript{12}. According to my data, in such circumstances the yakku, the disht'iya or a sorcerous enemy would never be evoked by the people involved.

\textsuperscript{1} A more literal translation would be: now the humans are going through a period of yakaa-ness.

\textsuperscript{12} The tying of a yantra around the afflicted person's neck together with a ritual in which mal baliya, offering trays covered in flowers are offered in order to reduce nefarious planetary influence.
An elderly ritual specialist from *Bamarabokka* entreated me to think about this in the following way:

[7] You have to think about that in this way. We can't give the responsibility to the *yakku* for everything. Even without the *yakku* things happen, sorrow comes, even without the *yakku*... That [those criminals] are not the gaze of the wild, that [that they kill and burn corpses\(^{13}\)] is the mind in anger. When you burn a corpse it is difficult to identify. One must see the face to identify it, [and if you have identified it] you will have suspicions. After having killed they are still angry/ they feel even more anger, therefore they burn [the corpse]. That is not because of the *yakku*, that has nothing to do with the *yakku*. That is just the way humans are, it is those people you call 'yakaa-vagee miniissu',... [When people are like yakku] the gaze of the wild (*disht'iya*) falls less onto them. At such times the *yakku* don't come. You know why? Because such a man doesn't have any consciousness (*kalpanaaava sihiyak neiei*), even the *yakaa* is fed up with/ dislikes (*epaavelaa*) that man [laughs]. There is no way of 'putting the gaze of the wild' [= sorcery] onto a person you don't like/ desire/ want (*eyeiyit'a disht'iya daanna vidiyak neieine epaa ekkenaat'a*). And a much younger ritual specialist from *Galkanda* reiterated this:

[8] We say it [*yakaa vagee minihek*] to any person we want, usually someone with a sharp tongue, a girl or a boy. In the past people have made up that expression,... Someone like that is less often ill. Usually we say it to people with a sharp tongue, even the *disht'i* are afraid [of them],...

Undesirable people, people who aren't liked are excluded from the threats or the gaze of the *yakku* (the *disht'iya*). The *yakku* seem to operate mostly in a situation where the victim is liked/ desired to a certain extent, whether this is the desire of the enemy for the victim or the desire of the *yakaa* for his victim. 'Sorcery/ possession' only operates in a context, where hatred and desire are both present, where the *yakaa* deployed by an enemy actually likes the victim (or the victim is in some ways liked by the human enemy?)\(^{14}\). *Yakaa*-like people have thus been largely excluded from forms of sociability that rely on sorcery and anti-sorcery practices, fear of the gaze of the wild (*disht'iya*) and tovil rituals\(^{15}\). Anti-social

\(^{13}\) The majority of the corpses of people killed in the village during the civil war were burned.

\(^{14}\) Nabokov (1997) writing about exorcism and spirits (*peeys*) in Tamil Nadu stated: *Peeys* do not seem to be compelled to possess people, as the missionary Caldwell (1849) believed, because of a hatred of human beings, nor, as Caplan more recently put it, out of 'anger' (1985). All my informants - specialists, lay people, and the spirits themselves - were unanimous that *peeys* are motivated by 'love' and 'lust'. In the Madurai district, Dumont also noted that relationships between *peeys* and victims were 'very clearly stated to be ... love relationships' (300, original emphasis).

\(^{15}\) This is very different from Kapferer's description (1983). He wrote: 'Thus there is a tendency for young men who are unemployed and/or are still dependent on their natal household to become victims of demonic attack. Some young male victims are members of youth gangs (see Case 2: The delinquent youth: 106) and
men have become categorised as beings who, by and large, have less human qualities than the institutionalised non-human yakku of the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon.

The location of yakaa-like people:
An important aspect of this discourse on yakaa-like people is where people locate these inhumane persons in relation to their own nuclear household, the gedara, or in relation to their own neighbourhood. The discourse makes a less radical distinction between 'our people' (ape minissu, ahala pahala minissu, tamange kenek) and 'yakaa-like people' (yakaa vagee minissu) than one might expect. The distance between 'Us' and a partially 'dehumanised Other' is not one that is fixed and dogmatic. This is not to say that people do not often refer to further-away neighbourhoods, or people from another caste or political affiliation as yakaa-like. As a middle aged lady from Bamarabokka argued:

[9] 'Yakaa like people', we say that to people who drink. Not here! Further away, it is near the road [where people from a higher caste live] that there are people like that. When they get drunk in the evening, although we hear the noises [of the drunks or drunken fights] we don't go to see. We don't inquire about other people's things.16

But within the discourse on yakaa-like people there is also ample space to recognise and state publicly that these yakaa-like people might be very close neighbours or family members. A middle aged woman from Kalubowatta, for example, used the discourse on yakaa-like people to describe domestic violence in her uncle's/ neighbour's household:

[10] We also use that term for people who drink, scream and use obscene words. If a person talks in an unnecessary way (ooneiti vidiyat'a) [euphemism], wears clothes and has hair like a yakaa, then people say: 'look that man is like a yakaa, he is very drunk',... They call people from Pein'igahakanda yakaa like, because they don't behave and because of their [lower caste] status. They don't dress properly, they don't walk on the road in a proper way [i.e. are drunk]. People say somebody is like a yakaa, when he behaves wildly (vanachara kamat'a heisirenavayi), or because he does things like the yakku (yakku vidiyat'a deeval karana). These are words that people have made up for people's behaviour, behaviour that results from drinking. Everything changes because of people drinking. Even 'our people' (ape kat't'iya) are sometimes like that. In our own neighbourhood there are people who drink a lot, some of our own people are like that. My uncle [and neighbour] sometimes screams engaged in petty criminal activity. Like demons they are at the margins of the cultural order and act to disrupt it. One youth who had a Mahasohona tovil exorcism was a notorious local gang leader and had recently been involved in a celebrated rape incident. (149) This delinquent youth had become possessed and a tovil ritual was organised for him.

16 This is another example of 'the preservation of context' which operates at the discursive level (only?).
obscenities,... or talks nonsense (*anan manang*\(^\text{17}\)). People say he is like a *yakaa*. He doesn't know how to live at home: he screams, uses unnecessary words, throws the pots on the floor, fights with his wife, throws even with the cups and saucers. It is such people they call *yakaa*-like.

**Discussion**

In the previous chapter I defined the notion of *yakaa-vagee minissu* as a euphemism. It can be used for both enemies which are loved and enemies which are loathed. In my understanding, this discourse on *yakaa*-like people which stresses the distance from as well as the closeness to cruel or inhumane people is very similar to the discourse on the *disht'iya* which I described in part 1. In both discourses intimate enemies *as well as* radical others are addressed in the same ways (and are both evoked by ambiguous notions such as *disht'iya* or *yakaa vagee minissu*). Neighbourhood enemies are spoken about in the same way as very close domestic enemies, while the same idioms are used to describe political enemies or perpetrators and killers. When mobilised to refer to the people who committed atrocities during the civil war, these idioms can be defined as euphemistic.

Critical analyses of the use of euphemism have often pointed out how euphemisms form part of the discourse of repressive regimes. Shown in this negative light euphemisms form a crucial aspect of the discourse of the oppressor. Euphemisms are said to reduce people's access to a critical representation of reality, or altogether make them evade reality; euphemisms 'suppress reality' (Chilton 1987). As a powerful device of hegemonic discourse euphemisms conceal the undesirable (or unbearable) while legitimising the status quo. In this respect their excessive presence points to a general crisis of the moral legitimacy of a regime (ibid.: 17).

In my interpretation such overtly critical approaches to the use of euphemism can easily get entangled in the dyadic 'war of words' (Chilton 1987:15) of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces. Indeed, for every euphemism an alternative - but equally ideologically loaded - word could be suggested. For example, to translate the concepts of Western human rights activists or mental health professionals, high Sinhala and the vocabulary of State Buddhism are often used by the professional elites in Colombo, while colloquial Sinhala and its euphemisms are carefully avoided\(^\text{18}\).

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\(^{17}\) See discussion of *anan manang* in section 2.4. *Anang manang* is not only used for women in trance, but the same word is used for inebriated men.

\(^{18}\) I will further address this issue in chapter 8.
In my opinion however, this approach misses an important point. I would have supported such a critical interpretation of the use of euphemism in *Udaheenagama* if I had looked exclusively at the relation between *Udaheenagama* villagers and the Sri Lankan state, its army and other institutions. If one assumes that local power relations exclusively mirror the relationship between a violent nation state and its citizens, and furthermore deploy similar hegemonic discursive strategies then such a Gramscian critique of the use of euphemism in *Udaheenagama* seems valid. And although it is obvious that euphemisms play a role in such a dynamic and it could easily be argued that euphemisms legitimise violent aspects of reality in *Udaheenagama*, I would also argue that they play a role in an altogether different local dynamic.

By suggesting an alternative reality through the use of euphemism, by evoking safety and trust while talking about danger and violence the atmosphere of a very small-scale context, the *gedara*, the household is extended to the darker corners of society. As much as it might be empowering to say 'younger brother' to an untrustworthy or feared soldier, it might be of equal value to assert that he has been 'naughty' or 'confused'. The notion of *yakaa-vagee*, *yakaa*-like is used for both 'bothersome' sons as well as for the murderers of the civil war. A vocabulary primarily used to talk about troubles within the household ('a household vocabulary'); a vocabulary pertaining to the small-scale context of the *gedara* is mobilised to talk about less homely forms of violence. Euphemisms thus play a role in a village level dynamic which operates independently of the above-mentioned hegemonic (or counter-hegemonic) discourses.

I thus disagree with Chilton's approach (1987) to euphemism. Chilton suggests to replace euphemisms by making an alternative vocabulary available (or 'semiotic pool' Daniel 1993:597). While the short-term effects of such a strategy are obvious, the role of euphemisms in the long-term dynamic between safe and dangerous spaces at the village level is overlooked. It has been argued that euphemisms 'effectively implicate the speaker's wishes and hopes that the negative state in question will be replaced by its positive counterpart' (Farghal 1995:376). It should also be considered whether the almost forceful domestication of a violent reality by 'a household vocabulary', plays a role in the radical re-contextualisation of violent events and violent individuals.

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19 See section 1.5. for a critique of such a research strategy.
20 I will further discuss the issue of the use of kinship terminology in non-domestic contexts at the end of this section.
The application of a 'household vocabulary' (or euphemisms) for events that happened 'out of context(s)' re-insert such events and more specifically their re-presentation within a small-scale, gedara-like context. The description of violent people with such a 'household vocabulary' re-integrates such people within the moral economy of the household and makes (symbolic) links between a victim's and a perpetrator's household.

The ties between the gedara or more extended family and the wider society are mediated by means of domestic cleansing rituals as well as the above-described discursive techniques which bring about a 'preservation of contexts'. The gedara is depicted as a bounded moral entity, in need of protection from outside forces. Data on cleansing rituals largely suggest this model: A sick person's whole household/house (gedara) as a moral unity is affected by the sickening effects of doosha (misdeeds, sins) and disht'iya (the gaze of the wild). Therefore all family members, and the house and garden are to be ritually cleansed.

Within the current situation though, more often than not the boundaries between the gedara and the wild are breached. The discourses on disht'iya and yakaawagee minissu, locate the non-human or partially human within the family or close surroundings. Deep fissures within the gedara are thus evoked which temporarily dehumanise family members without always naming them. One interpretation of the discourse on the invasion of the gedara by the non-human or inhumane stresses the communal, 'gedara' nature of affliction and cure. Another, alternative type of description, which I would endorse, highlights the domestic fissures that are tacitly created by the discourse on disht'iya and yakaawagee minissu. By virtue of the ambiguous notions of disht'iya and yakaawagee minissu, local, intimately related, anti-social and abusive people, are lumped together with enemies from other families and neighbourhoods, who might be insurgents or killers.

It is of course not necessarily true that the use of the same metaphor for anti-social sons, political opponents and murderers necessarily goes along with the same emotions and level of dehumanisation. The same metaphor used in relation to different kinds of enemies and different locations might mean quite different things for the person using the metaphor. While interpreting these data on the use of the notion of yakaaw-like people, one could simply assert the polysemic nature of this metaphor and end the analysis there. I would tentatively take the interpretation a step further, however, and postulate the very real power of this discourse on yakaaw-like people; a discourse in which the same metaphor is used for a variety of enemies. By means of this idiom a (metaphorical) link may be established between the fissures in one's own household, and the possible fissures in an enemy's or a perpetrator's household. A conceptualisation of the possible fissures in a perpetrator's
household on the basis of the experience of radical fissures in one's own household might have played a role in the disassociation of a perpetrator and his family I described in chapter 3.

Indeed, what made me question the 'power of this discourse' was the fact that, despite the widespread and horrific nature of the violence of the civil war of 1989-1991, there were some definite boundaries and firmly established tacit mechanisms for the control of violence; the local cycle of containment of violence. Young and middle-aged men were killed during the war, their wives or children were threatened but hardly ever physically harmed or killed (and they knew they wouldn't be)\textsuperscript{21}. In the aftermath of the war perpetrators were clearly dissociated from their families. Compared to the feelings aroused by the perpetrators themselves (e.g. see transcript 13 in chapter three), the perpetrator's families were a source of fear and incited sentiments of anger and revenge only to \textit{a much} lesser extent. People took revenge upon a perpetrator, while leaving a perpetrator's household largely untouched. In my interpretation, this moral distinction between a perpetrator and his household\textsuperscript{22}, which resulted in highly controlled and specific types of violence, derives part of it's strength from the discourse on \textit{yakaa}-like people.

Especially the way in which this discourse \textit{also} operates at the very local, intra-neighbourhood level and even within the \textit{gedara} seems crucial here. In other words, as I understand it, many lives were saved because people were not operating from the moral high ground of their own \textit{gedara}\textsuperscript{23} nor radically opposing 'our people' to a generic 'dehumanised other'. \textit{Yakaa}-like people were described as both nearby and faraway. A discourse existed to distinguish ordinary people (\textit{samaanya minissu}) from \textit{yakaa}-like people. This discourse left people the option not to get involved in the killings and to distinguish themselves from very close \textit{yakaa}-like people, while it also enabled people to see that many members of opposing groups were not involved either.

In my description of the discourse on \textit{yakaa}-like people I tried to show how even very close-by spaces are 'dehumanised', that is to say are conceived of as being occupied by inhumane, cruel people, the \textit{yakaa vagee minissu}. Previously dangerous or illness-provoking spaces were predominantly defined by the traditional (water)cosmology:

\textsuperscript{21} This might be very surprising when compared with counter-insurgency techniques in other civil wars, where it is often common practice to wipe out whole families and villages in order to weaken support for the guerrilla, or vice-versa in which a guerrilla uses the technique of 'emptying out' disputed areas.
\textsuperscript{22} His \textit{gedara}, or \textit{mahagedara} (parent's house).
\textsuperscript{23} While people routinely engage in domestic cleansing rituals and discursive strategies to preserve their own contexts they nevertheless recognise the problem of violence both within their own \textit{gedara} and within more far away contexts.
streams, wells, cross-roads, or the forest. Nabokov (1997: 306) describes how in Tamil Nadu demons have moved to modern sites such as the heart of large urban centres, cinemas, and buses. The new, modern 'landscapes of demonic attack still remain associated with anonymous, threatening zones, for they are away from the security of home' (ibid.: 306). My data about Udaheenagama however suggest that the institutionalised yaksha have either remained in their traditional places or are claimed to have disappeared (see for example transcripts 11 in chapter three and transcript 1 in chapter eight). And it is the yakaa-like people together with an ambiguously defined 'gaze of the wild' who have made spaces in between contexts dangerous and threatening. An important difference with Nabokov's findings is that these spaces are not relatively far-away spaces of modernity, but are very well-known close-by spaces within the village; paths or shopping areas.

As much as the wider, often cruel society pervades houses and households, so does the domestic ethos determine the societal ethos. 'Household vocabularies' and 'household metaphors' are applied out of context. One obvious example is the frequent use of kinship terminology (e.g. elder brother, elder sister) for non-kin during brief encounters outside the context of the gedara24. This gives an air of conviviality and congeniality to such interactions. Joseph (1997: 74-75) stresses the importance of discussing the continuities of moralities, practices, idioms and discourses between the domestic and the public/political sphere and recognising the 'cultural rules of familistic politics' (ibid.: 87). In my interpretation the discourse on yakaa-like people, and disht'iya is another example of such a transposition of discursive strategies pertaining to the domestic context onto 'the space in between contexts'.

The discourse on yakaa-like people operates at the family level, in very intimate contexts. Some people are temporarily dehumanised but this dehumanisation is ephemeral, volatile or superficial. After all one is talking about people one meets on a daily basis and towards whom one might have family obligations; people one eats with and with whom one shares a 'fluid, shared self'. These same idioms and discourse are then transposed to another sphere,

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24 For a discussion of the use of idiomatic kinship in the public sphere in Lebanon see Joseph 1997: 'In referring to each other by kin terms of address they have evoked the expectations and obligations of kinship for instrumental and affective purposes. Through idiomatic kinship, they have incorporated kin and non-kin into familial boundaries, moralities and modes of operation.' (79). Osella and Osella (1996), however, document the ways in which kinship discourse is used to disguise inequitable relations (54) and could be understood as one of the 'hidden transcripts' of domination (as in Scott 1990), in which the powerful organise a fictional claim to parenthood together with the natural hierarchical superiority and authority this offers (Scott 1990: 96 quoted in Osella 1996: 57). In line with my critique of the uni-dimensional analysis of euphemisms as a hegemonic discursive strategy (see Chilton 1987), I argue that Udaheenagama women's use of kinship discourse in the non-domestic sphere plays a role in a local dynamic which cannot be reduced to questions of domination and resistance (for a particularly salient example see transcript 5 in chapter 7).
where political opponents or perpetrators are discussed and conceptualised in the same ways. Much like what happens within the family, these remote perpetrators are dehumanised but are also dissociated and distinguished from their kin. This (primarily domestic) discursive strategy which, in my interpretation, has played a role in the control of the spread of violence both during as well as after the civil war.

As I discussed in chapter three this process of dehumanisation is thus very different from dehumanisation in middle-class discursive practices which have been linked to urban riots and massacres (see Das 1998, Kapferer quoted in Das 1998, Kapferer 1988), where whole groups of people are identified with yaksha and are 'exorcised' eliminated. I thus make a link between the local cycle of containment of violence and the application of domestic strategies of discursive dehumanisation outside the context of the household, within spaces outside contexts.

6.2. Boruva kiyanavaa and ravat'tanavaa: Obvious pretence: for fun or for real?

They do not want courage, and are men of quick parts, complaisant and insinuating in their address, naturally grave, of an even temper, not easily moved, and when they happen to be in a passion, soon reconciled again; they are very temperate in their diet, neat in their apparel, something nice in their eating, and do not indulge in sleep; but though they commend industry much, like the natives of other hot countries, they are a little inclined to laziness; they are not given to theft, but intolerably addicted to lying, and have not much regard to what they promise; they allow their women great liberty, and are seldom jealous; they are extremely superstitious and great observers of omens (Salmon 1739, quoted in Senaveratne 1913: xi, my emphasis).

The high degree of lying and concealment of awkward truth in their everyday lives poses ethnographic problems. Without the election and its prompting of overt hostility I have no idea how long it would have taken to see the other side of daily politesse (Spencer 1990: 177, my emphasis).

Intolerably addicted to lying?

In this section I discuss the ways in which the use of boru; an essentially domestic strategy of - between other things - conflict avoidance, is transposed into the non-domestic sphere. I chose to translate boruva as 'obvious pretence', and refrained from using its more common translation as 'lie'. The notion of the lie frequently features in accounts of colonial, neo-colonial or ethnographic encounters with Others. The lie and the liar are, however,
concepts inherently linked with Western moral history and metaphysics\(^2\(^5\); and their use as analytic or descriptive tools reveals a certain degree of metaphysical ethnocentrism. Mobilising the concept of the lie can also be seen as a negotiation of power relations. Describing another person as a liar, or a community of Others as addicted to lying reveals a hierarchical relation vis-à-vis such Others. From a position of power it seems as if 'lying, like the laugh, is the favoured weapon of the oppressed - to fool the oppressor is to humiliate him' (Forrester 1997:17). In the face of an 'imperialistic requirement to reveal all' (Forrester 1997: ix) the colonised or the people subjected to ethnographic inquiry seem to re-create their freedom and independence through lying.

Evoking the notion of the lie, though, is not only a statement about one's power or superiority. It also reveals that the traveller's or the ethnographer's position within a particular regime of truth\(^2\(^6\) - a set of truth-producing institutions - is taken for granted. Labelling people who do or do not want to belong to this same regime of truth as liars forcefully incorporates them within this regime. From a Foucaultian perspective they are only liars by virtue of refusing to participate in the genres of truth-telling of the outsider; they are only liars in relation to the outsider's taken for granted regime of truth.

Once a Foucaultian deconstruction of the various regimes of truth that govern a Western life-world is taken into account, the Nietzschean call for a 'psycho-pathology of the truth-teller' has its attractions. For Nietzsche lying is not typically a weapon of the oppressed. Rather, it is 'the powerful who always lie' (Nietzsche quoted in Forrester 1997:20). Following this Nietzschean point of view one could thus argue that the powerful's cunning alliance with an arms-bearing and arms-trading state, its institutions and 'regimes of truth' itself is an elaborate trick giving rise to multiple, elaborate lies, amongst which is 'the claim to truth'.

Ethnographies in which the lie is used as a descriptive category (e.g. Risseeuw 1988, Spencer 1990) and more in-depth anthropological studies of lying\(^2\(^7\) involve a cautious

\(^2\(^5\) See Forrester (1997: 7-66) for a discussion of the influence of the philosophies of, between others, Plato, Augustine, Descartes, Kant, Hobbes, Swift, Oscar Wilde, Nietzsche, Sartre, and MacIntyre on our contemporary notion of 'the lie'.

\(^2\(^6\) In Forrester's words: 'In the normal run of things, we take the plurality of truths for granted. We inhabit the games that generate them without any feeling of outlandishness or oddity. The fact that these games are often allied to an array of institutions, each with uncontested authority over truth claims made in its name - among them the law, medicine, the churches, the sciences, the central bank when allied with the arms-bearing state-does not strike us as perverse' (1997:2).

\(^2\(^7\) Such as (see Besnier 1994):

choice of position. Does the ethnographer identify with the regime of truth of his or her own culture, or the regimes of truth of neo-colonial institutions, traditional institutions or everyday, local contexts\textsuperscript{28} in order to describe somebody as a liar or a truth teller? And are there local concepts that can be satisfactorily translated as 'a lie'? One could argue that the Judeo-Christian notion of the lie, and the Sinhala Buddhist notion of \textit{boruva} partially overlap, but that does not mean that one can satisfactorily translate \textit{boruva} as 'lie'.

Many things can be classified as \textit{boruva} or \textit{ravat't'anavaa}: a cross-cousin's flirtatious comments, a person's illness or trance, a ritual specialist's recitations, a soothsayer's predictions, the government's policies, or people's offerings to the spirits of the wild. All these very disparate instances have one aspect in common: they are often only pretence. If people know or discover it was only pretence they have been deceived, or misled (\textit{ravat't'anavaa})\textsuperscript{29}. Often deception and revelation of the truth rapidly alternate and the trick is made obvious to the tricked one. That is the sense in which I chose to translate \textit{boruva} as 'obvious pretence'.

\textbf{Teenage \textit{boru}: The creation of grotesque realities.}

The main aspect of teenagers' use of \textit{boru} is revelation rather than concealment of the deceptive nature of their statement. '(I told you this but) it wasn't true!' (\textit{boruvak!}) is often the climax of a joking type of interaction\textsuperscript{30}. This is a very popular form of humour

\begin{flushright}
Biebuyck-Goetz, B. 1977 \textit{This is the dyin' truth: Mechanisms of lying.} Journal of the Folklore Institute 14: 73-95.

Since I will try not to rely on the notion of the lie, a review of this literature seems to be beyond the scope of this chapter.

\textsuperscript{28} Here I follow Besnier's non-Foucaultian model of truth (1994) and distinguish between institutional and everyday, local regimes of truth: 'Though Foucault does help us understand how the truth is constituted in everyday contexts that are not obviously dominated by institutions like the state, he does so only in relation to these institutions. In the everyday existence of individuals, truth inherirs characteristics that are formed in institutions. However,... while everyday definitions of truth do refer to institutional definitions, they can also depart from them in significant ways' (3).

\textsuperscript{29} Also \textit{ravat't'enavaa}: to mistake something for something else: involitional verbal form of the verb \textit{ravat't'anavaa}: to mislead, to trick.

\textsuperscript{30} As Kolenda (1990) noted many ethnographic analyses of joking relations (following in the footsteps of Radcliffe-Brown 1952a, 1952b) do not account for the content of the humorous insults. She thus argues that there is 'considerable value in the ethnographer's reporting of the content of joking and not just covering it with a single adjective like 'obscene' which is common practice' (142). One of such possible contents of
amongst youths\textsuperscript{31}, and it is especially used to flirt and seduce\textsuperscript{32}. For example, a 19 year old young man from \textit{Puvakden‘iya} told his cross-cousins - 15 and 17 year old girls - that he would not participate in the yearly pilgrimage to Adam's Peak because he did not want to miss the (daily) volley-ball game with his friends. He then secretly enjoyed the young girls complaints and requests to join them on the trip, while stoically refusing to reconsider his position. The next morning, however he turned up at the bus, ready for the pilgrimage. The heroic moment came when the girls realised he had managed genuinely to mislead them, and he became surrounded with the young women's' laughter and exclamations: \textit{boruval!}: it wasn't true!\textsuperscript{33}

Some \textit{boruva} unravel themselves over time. People might take time to realise they have been made to believe something. Other teenage \textit{boru} are so grotesque that they immediately reveal their fake character, yet lose none of their hilarity. Once, on a journey to the forest organised to make offerings to the forest dwelling monks, two families were packed on the trailer of a tractor. A group of teenage girls started to re-invent their kinship relations. Two girls proclaimed they were married to each other and their mothers and another elderly woman became their children. The elders remained silent while the teenage girls had so much fun with their new family that they nearly fell off the back of the trailer. Experts in the creation of grotesque realities, they then boasted they would not have minded falling off the vehicle and dying. It thus hardly needs to be mentioned how funny it was to mislead the anthropologist interested in kinship relations. If one wanted to, the most impossible and grotesque kinship diagrams could be recorded to give a sense of the ludic to one's fieldnotes\textsuperscript{34}.

\textit{Udaheenagama} jokes goes beyond the obviously obscene: \textit{boru}, make believe stories. Deployed in joking relations; in 'rituals of insult' (Kolenda 1990:133) \textit{boru} don't insult by means of obscenity but by means of bringing to the surface the stupidity of the person who believed such a story.

\textsuperscript{31} On joking relations between cross-cousins see Leach (1961:118) and Yalman (1967:154). The prescribed, traditional form of marriage alliance in Southern Sri Lanka is cross cousin marriage (Yalman 1967:151). \textit{Boru}, make-believe stories play a major role in such joking relations, which nowadays mainly occur between potential spouses which are not necessarily cross cousins, and between their brothers and sisters or best friends. As Osella (1998:197) remarked: flirting in general can be considered a sub-set of the classic, institutionalised, joking relationships.

\textsuperscript{32} Also see Simmel (1984) quoted in Osella (1998:205): 'One of the most typical cases of the practice of the flirt lies in the domain of intellectual self-concealment: the assertion of something that is not really meant'.

\textsuperscript{33} Osella (1998:195) notes how in Kerala the 'preferred form of flirting is that in which a pair try to outwit each other by posing riddles, or by contradicting or mock insulting each other' (my emphasis).

\textsuperscript{34} Several months after the bomb blast in central Colombo, which ripped apart a large section of the Hilton hotel, it also became difficult to find out what the daily occupation of some young men was. I started to come across what I later called the 'Hilton boruva'. Some houses in \textit{Udaheenagama} became adorned with luxurious Hilton paraphernalia: Hilton soap, Hilton shampoo, Hilton conditioner, Hilton towels,... A few (unemployed?) young men systematically told me 'I work at the Hilton' and showed me these items to prove their statement.
Boruva 'out of context'.

This leads me to consider how boruva appear outside the immediate family context. Osella (1998: 196) argues that 'flirting is far from a trivial activity' and suggests that it acts as a trope for other forms of social relations. Boruva, used for flirting or just for fun in same-sex teenage groups, indeed takes on a life of its own within society at large. The following quote makes the link between the teenage use of boruva and the more serious and awkward aspects of boruva within Sri Lankan society by evoking both at once: teenage flirtation as well as the relationship between a soldier of the Sri Lankan armed forces and a young citizen. S. Akkaa, my assistant, wrote the following about 'boruva' at a checkpoint in Colombo:

[11] [Colombo, early morning] I was ready to leave by 6.00 a.m. but since it was extremely dark out I only left at 6.30 a.m. The roads were deserted, except for the soldiers who were on duty. I was so nervous. Luckily there were three other girls at the bus-stop. We waited for the bus for 10 minutes. We could see buses coming from far away but they all turned off about two hundred meters before reaching our bus stop. I knew something was wrong. Luckily one soldier asked 'elder sister, where do you want to go'? What I uttered first was 'Galle' [her home town], but luckily, half-way through that word I managed to say 'to the campus'. He told me the road would be closed off until 8 a.m. and that in order to take the bus you had to go further down the road. The other three girls hurried away to catch a bus, but I was already late so I decided to walk. By then it wasn't so dark anymore, and there were some other civilians on the road. I reached a checkpoint with a barrier that was completely closed unlike the other ones I passed. So there was no choice but to ask the soldiers whether I could pass. There were already some civilians showing their ID cards. The soldiers told me that I couldn't pass, that the roads were closed. They sounded serious. Then I asked when the roads would open. They said: 'Until the authorities give an order we cannot open the gates'. They weren't even 18 years old, but they definitely didn't look as if they were pretending (boruva kiyanavaa). All I did was, I said 'oh no!' to myself and turned back. The moment I started walking back they laughed and said 'ah!, go!, go!' and they opened the gate. [revelation of the deceptive nature of the previous statement] Walking along the pavement of Henry Pedris Mawatha road is the most horrible experience. There are large trees along the road and the pavement is covered in bird excrement. The odour of the cold air is not at all pleasant when you pass under those trees. It is so strong and disgusting it makes me vomit. So I don't breathe when I walk under those trees. When I reached the campus it was about 7.15 a.m. 

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Whether this type of interaction is interpreted as harassment\textsuperscript{35} or innocent banter, or whether the ambiguity of the interaction is enjoyed is not overtly mentioned. The description of the foul landscape immediately after the account of the exchange at the checkpoint could be interpreted as a way of commenting on the interaction\textsuperscript{36}. The dominant emotion is disgust, and it could be questioned whether this is primarily about the birds or the soldiers. Whether this interpretation is valid or not, it nevertheless opens up questions about the use of boruva, outside the social context composed of friends and family members.

'\textit{Boruva}' encompasses a continuum from flirtatious pretence to outward aggression. \textit{Boru} include expressions of aggression and hate which are nevertheless somehow masked or constructed as funny post-facto by virtue of being dismissed as just 'boruva' by the majority of the witnesses. The following example retains the classical structure of a boruva: the construction of a make believe situation and the revelation of the truth relatively soon afterwards. A young man, who just came back from a trip to town, told people that a sick elderly member of the community had died in the town hospital. His wife thus became a 'widow' for a day or two, before she realised her husband was still alive and it had been a boruva. That is the way in which I died once as well. As I was home late, a young man told my searching husband I had gone up the hill to a dangerous area and insinuated that something fatal had happened to me.

\textit{Ravat't'anavaa: Obvious pretence during rituals.}

This brings up the issue of how boruva are used to deal with enemies. A rapid succession of deception and revelation can be used to disorient an opponent. The most obvious example of \textit{reiveit't'iilak}\textsuperscript{37} (from \textit{ravat't'anavaa}: to mislead) can be found in the large scale cleansing rituals (tovil) (see Kapferer 1983). Offerings are made to the wild spirits in an attempt to appease them and make them leave a sick person or a house. The spirits are made to believe that they are offered first a cock and then a human corpse. An effigy

\textsuperscript{35} Osella and Osella (1998) argued that 'it is often difficult to tell whether a youth's first remark is intended as harassment or as an opening gambit: while the ambiguity is certainly intentional and may be interpreted as permitting a face-saving withdrawal in the event of a non-response, we prefer to draw on anthropological and linguistic literature on similar behaviours and to see the ambiguity as an essential part of the game, of the pleasure and, indeed, of the aesthetics of social interaction' (193).

\textsuperscript{36} For such an interpretation I would rely on Ramanujan's (1989:50) description of a poetic figure in Southern Indian lyrics (\textit{ullurai} in Tamil): the description of landscapes takes on centre stage to reveal people's moods. The metonymical relation between scene and agent means that 'to describe the exterior landscape is also to inscribe the interior landscape' of emotions. I propose this interpretation because I was struck by the similarity between this poetic figure and the structure of this excerpt of a letter.

\textsuperscript{37} This is not a boruva in the strict sense, but a wider category of 'tricks in general' which encompass boru. '\textit{Boru kiyanna vena kenek ravat't'anavaa}': when you tell a boruva you mislead somebody.
portraying the sick person (*pambaya*, see chapter three)\(^3\) or a ritual specialist in a coffin are used to trick them. In a rapid succession of offerings they are lead from the sick person to a sacrificial victim, a cock, which will nevertheless not be sacrificed and survives. Then the spirits are led to the effigy, a ritual specialist in a coffin, or a ritual specialist pretending to undergo a burial at the graveyard (in a grave on top of a fresh corpse)\(^3\). Kapferer (1983) argued that 'the demons are figures upon whom an enormous joke has been played' (317) and that the entire rite is the 'elaborate springing of a trap' (317)\(^4\). He also points out that *the joke of the rite is fully revealed* (316). In other words, it is not about merely misleading the spirits, but also about *revealing* that one is doing so. A translation of *ravat’tanavaa* as 'to mislead' or 'to trick' is thus incomplete. *Ravat’tanavaa* and *reivat’t’enavaa* also refer to obvious pretence, the *revealed* trick, or the realisation that one has been misled.

**Disorientation of the enemy.**

This dimension of *ravat’tanavaa* is particularly strong when the person being tricked is inferior. The moment of revelation of a *boruva* is also a moment of subordination. One's superiority is confirmed by the power to deceive without having to hide it. This daunted on me when dealing with certain civil servants, customs officers\(^4\) or NGO personnel in Colombo. Especially if the status difference was perceived to be large, the immediate revelation of the *boruva*-character of a statement had quite surreal effects. If a person had not turned up for a meeting, he/she could subsequently say 'of course I was there', or when an appointment was cancelled it later became 'the meeting which you cancelled'. I would certainly not describe such statements with the Western notion of a lie, as they are not predominantly made to conceal a truth, but are oriented towards revealing and accentuating the liberty to deceive. The revelation of a *boruva* is this time inherent within the statement

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\(^3\) The ritual mock killing of the effigy/sick person bears parallels to the ritual mock killing described by Turner (Turner 1962 quoted in Douglas 1975) which was further analysed by Douglas (1975:110-111). The interpretation is predominantly philosophical though: the profound meaning in this African joke rite lies in the expression of what cannot be thought of, the expression 'of unfathomable mysteries about the inadequacy of the categories of thought for expressing the nature of existence'. The joke rite thus becomes an image of the conditions of human knowledge and is concerned with problems about the relation of thought to experience (Douglas 1975:111). I would argue to the contrary that in the Sinhalese joke rite, in the mock ritual killing of a human being the mockery is taken seriously and the unthinkable is never experienced in a straightforward manner; it is only experienced as *ravat’tanavaa*.

\(^4\) The *yaksha* have been deceived: *yaksha reivat’t’enoo*.

\(^4\) In other words: 'the demons as tricksters are revealed as subject to the trick and, therefore, subordinate to those whom they sought to delude' (Kapferer 1983:303).

\(^4\) 'Fieldwork' within these social contexts was carried out full time for two months in 1997 (August - September) when I attempted to get clearance for a residence permit from the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Almost daily telephonic conversations with custom officers at the Customs Bonded Facility from January to March 1998, in order to clear a tape-recorder provided another body of data.
and immediate, as opposed to the delay characteristic of the more humorous or flirtatious type of *boru* of village teenagers.

**Radically out of context.**
I will now take the liberty to briefly rely on data which radically transcend the realities of *Udaheenagama*, civil servants or NGO's but - in my opinion - nevertheless reveal a similar *boruvā*-dynamic. It concerns an exchange between Her Excellency Madeleine K. Albright, Secretary of State of the United States of America (hereafter MA) and Her Excellency Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (hereafter CK) recorded in a newspaper article (Suranimala 1997). The exchange concerned the reconstruction of the financial district in Colombo after it was destroyed by a bomb blast. According to this newspaper article the facts were as follows:

It was on February 29, 1996 that the board of directors of Property Development Limited, the owners and operators of the Bank of Ceylon building contacted the Managing Director, Evans International, Dr. Christopher M. Baylis over the telephone following the Central Bank bombing with regard to evaluating the damage to the Bank of Ceylon building. Dr. Baylis who was personally praised by President Bill Clinton for his role in the earthquake recovery process in California, in response to this call travelled to Sri Lanka the following day... The very next day, Baylis called on Chairman, Urban Development Authority Suren Wickremasinghe at which meeting repairs to all buildings in Colombo's financial district figured with Wickremasinghe requesting Evans International to forward a proposal 'as a general contractor for reconstruction, bringing financing' as part of the overall construction package... Not only did the Urban Development Authority accept the plan, they also requested Evans International to expand the 'clean up' to incorporate the redesigning of a pedestrian mall... Within four weeks of this request by the Urban Development Agency, on May 17,1996 the Urban Development Agency signed a contract for the 'clean up' of the buildings...' (Suranimala 1997).

However, about a year later, after heavy investment by the U.S. authorities the project was cancelled. It was within this context that the following personal communication between MA and CK was reported to have ensued:

MA: ... This enterprise was a sign of the solid partnerships between American and Sri Lankan private sectors as well as our government... While I understand your concern for fiscal caution, I urge you to proceed with this high-profile project... Failure to follow through now with a comprehensive reconstruction project will inevitably raise questions among foreign investors and governments regarding Sri Lanka's commitment to building a strong economic future. This will slow Sri Lanka's drive to become an important economic centre in the
region... With progressive and forward looking policies Sri Lanka has a very bright future...

CK: ... I would however like to raise the essential issues which have rendered it difficult for the government of Sri Lanka to accept the proposal put forward by the private company, Evans International. Evans International arrived in Sri Lanka with an unsolicited proposal to design, construct and arrange the finances of the rehabilitation project in the Fort District of Colombo... The government's development project however is a comprehensive one, in keeping with our present needs, and of course, our present financial possibilities. Your concern about the question that may be raised among foreign investors and governments due to a failure to follow through with a 'comprehensive reconstruction project' would not therefore arise, as our proposal is quite specifically 'a comprehensive reconstruction project', even though it may not be a new development project as proposed by Evans International... The effort of my government to build a strong and durable economy for Sri Lanka in the face of many odds, such as a debilitating military conflict which still continues in one part of the country and an economy in dire straits which we inherited, has been appreciated by your government, by the World Bank, IMF, and many friendly governments. I take this opportunity to assure you that I and my government shall not waver in these efforts at building a strong economy for our country (Suranimala 1997).

When reading the details of this major U.S.-Sri Lanka conflict it is difficult not to see a boruva-structure in the argument. Worse still it seems to be a boruva which immediately revealed itself:

To the US authorities, the comments, particularly the 'unsolicited proposal' given the details outlined earlier... were unpalatable. It was unpalatable because, that according to the Americans was not the reality and they believed the president knew it to be so. And given the chronology of events, the president's letter was construed as being not quite correct in content... And now, Evans International is in the process of finalising its legal papers to sue the government and concerned officials... (Suranimala 1997).

We should not expect Her Excellency Madeleine K. Albright to exclaim 'boruva!' and burst out laughing. Her dismay and threats were nevertheless prudent and couched in diplomatic language (see excerpt of clairvoyance concerning the 'very bright future of Sri Lanka' above). Through other channels though a message about Sri Lanka's unethical and corrupt

42The severity of this conflict comes to light when it is considered within the context of the ongoing trade relations between Sri Lanka and Iraq during the U.S.-Iraq conflict.
43After all a contract had been signed. But if one interprets this relation as dominated by a boruva - dynamic one should recall Radcliffe-Brown's analysis of joking relations in which he stated that: 'The joking relation is in some ways the exact opposite of a contractual relation. Instead of specific duties to be fulfilled there is privileged disrespect and freedom, or even licence, and the only obligation is not to take offence at the disrespect so long as it is kept within certain bounds defined by custom' (1952b:103, my emphasis).
business practices reached the international business community and affected Sri Lanka's trade relations. For Western observers Her Excellency CK had blatantly lied (almost like being declared to be 'intolerably addicted to lying' in Mr. Salmon's 18th century account). She virtually enraged the U.S. government while in fact she could have chosen to conceal instead of revealing her power to deceive. While CK obviously changed her mind because of Sri Lankan business interests, it is impossible to explain why it was in her (and by extension) Sri Lanka's interest to participate in what seems to be a fairly blatant denial of the facts. In my eyes the only possible explanation can be provided by analysing her strategy as a *boruva*. The revelation of the power to deceive, however, is the form *boru* take on towards subordinates or towards people one wishes to subordinate, in this case MA and the U.S.

**Boru as conflict avoidance.**

When subordinates perform a *boruva* towards superiors it is much more tricky to reveal this power to deceive. Then the *boruva* takes on the form of what Westerners would routinely understand under deception, concealment of the truth, and lies. Far from being a straightforward form of deceit or a self-interested attempt to gain some advantage, this form of *boruva* is used to avoid conflict, and please and appease the powerful. In such cases *boru* become the lubricant for relations that might otherwise be strained. This strategy is not only used to prevent conflict, but also to interpret past conflicts. In view of the delay that is acceptable between a *boruva* and the revelation of a truth, past statements can be retroactively re-defined as *boru*. For example a father whose son had committed suicide used this technique to trivialise and domesticate a conflict. His son had lost a large sum of money while gambling. When he came home a row ensued and his father told him that he would have to sell his land to make up for the debts, upon which the son drank a bottle of pesticide. But now that his son was dying, the father argued that it had only been a *boruva*: he had not meant it about having to sell the land. Reality can thus be made to move like quicksand; it can easily be taken away from under the feet of the people who had firmly believed in it. After this young man's deadly reaction, which he survived for two long weeks, he was told it had only been a *boruva*.

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44 For an analysis of the relevance of an 'instrument of flirtation' in adult political relations see Atkinson 1990. 'Why should an instrument of flirtation be a hallmark of Wana political authority?' she asks and then comments: 'Because, like lovers, influential Wana men seek to charm others, to attract peers and dependants with displays of wit and wisdom' (59). She describes the seductive tactics in Wana politics: 'Politics in this case depends on attraction, not coercion. Thus the idiom of Wana politics is appropriately courtship, not realpolitik' (60). Likewise conflict avoidance in Udaheenagama uses a strategy of courtship: to tell *boru*.
There is no clear distinction between statements that are meant and utterances that are *boru*. 'Boru' is rather an attitude that one can adopt at will, at any point in time, in relation to any statement. Living in what I would call a 'quicksand-reality' creates an all pervading instability to the common sense everyday world. At least that is how the person who went through false widowhood or the siblings of the boy who committed suicide because of an alleged *boruva* might experience any future form of communication.

Ravat't'anavaa and *boru*, far from being only a source of domination and oppression\(^{45}\), allow people to speak cautiously. People can try out statements, evaluate people's reactions to personal opinions and thus take their time to find out whether it is worthwhile to hang on to a particular opinion or not. Much like the flirtatious stories of teenage lovers, statements of adults can also take on the character of a bait. A type of trial and error communication takes place, in which, if it seems that a mistake has been made, a statement can be withdrawn: 'It was a *boruva*, I didn't really mean it'.

In its most innocent form to tell *boru* is a strategy to get to know one's interlocutor teasingly or rather to find out the interlocutor's expectations. The resulting rapid succession of deception and revelation might give people an impression of a shaky and unstable communicative world. At the same time this strategy sometimes helps to avoid major conflicts as it allows people to carefully tune into each other. Once a conflict is looming there seems to be a quick exit: a withdrawal by claiming the *boruva* status of one's unfortunate statement.

It would thus be incorrect to exclusively translate *boru* as lies, assertions of superiority, flirtatious jokes or provocation. To claim that one's statement was a *boruva* also gives

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\(^{45}\) As Kapferer (1983) argued: 'The demonic is to be found not simply in the illness of a demonic victim, and potentially in those horrifying figures who crowd the Sinhalese universe; the demonic is also discovered in the passion, lust, greed and anger of men and women in the everyday world. The demonic is in those political and social orders which appear to constrain and restrict the actions of men and women in their daily lives. *It is in falsity and illusion. The demonic is present in the actions of those who appear to be other than they actually are* (315-316) (my emphasis). In this interpretation exorcists become 'well placed to draw attention to falsity, and the illusory, in the everyday social order - to point to the 'demonic' destructive, false and oppressive character of its controlling agents' (317). In my opinion this interpretation unnecessarily narrows down a very widespread and exquisite sense to create illusory realities to the illusions created by the powerful in order to dominate or oppress. Not only do dominant, powerful people and demons pretend to be different than they actually are and have 'mastery of the illusory' (301) but many others playfully engage with alternative realities. *Boru* and ravat't'anavaa is not only a strategy deployed by the powerful to dominate, but also plays a crucial role in everyday relatively egalitarian relationships. To assert that it is this generic 'power to create illusions' that is ritually 'exorcised' by the community fails to differentiate between the *boruva* and *reiveit't'ilak* performed in order to dominate and the *boru* amongst the powerless which lie at the heart of successful social relations. Such an interpretation unnecessarily polarises the evil of the demonic and its mastery over the illusory versus the exorcised who are (momentarily) freed from the illusory.
people an opportunity to withdraw statements and to backtrack. Telling *boru* is thus also a method of attunement not only to find out the feelings of potential lovers46 but also to draw out other people's more hidden positions without causing offence47. *Boru* also allow people to detach themselves from the heat of a discussion or conflict, and to disqualify any previous participation. Telling *boru* is a powerful method for non-identification or dis-identification with a previous self or previous outward appearance. A widow, living in a particularly precarious situation, expressed her radical detachment and caution as follows:

>[12] I have no fear. I haven't done anything wrong, so I talk with anyone. I am not indecent either. *I just pretend* (my emphasis).

**Discussion**

In the analysis of the use of *boru* within a close-knit local context I did not want to evoke the notion of lying nor the atmosphere of conflict, hegemony and segregation that goes along with concepts such as lies, concealment and secrecy. Nor did I use the villages' social divisions (political factions, castes and family alliances) to describe and locate strategies of deception and concealment of 'truths'. I rather understand the use of *boruva* at the local level as a form of conflict avoidance, a strategy to ease tensions.

Once this strategy is applied 'out of context', however, *boru* contribute to the awkwardness of 'spaces between contexts'. While within the local context *boruva* can be interpreted as classical joking relations or the funny stories of teenage lovers, within the wider society they easily become the outrageous lies of corrupt business practices. At least this is how they were classified by Her Excellency Madeleine Albright. The use of *boru* is a discursive strategy which operates within the household to ease tensions. Once it is exported to the much looser fabric of the wider society however it contributes to the harshness of life outside the domestic context.

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46 Arno (1990) described how in Fiji, traditional patterns of interaction amongst cross-cousins pervade modern communication events such as meetings of co-operative societies, land-rights hearings, or island political meetings. When such discussions touch upon individual or group misconduct traditional rules of etiquette and an indirect style of conflict discourse resurge and limit frank interchange (242). Public criticism is often undertaken indirectly through joking, traditionally typical of communication between cross-cousins. 'The frame it erects around the exchange means 'we are cross-cousins', 'this is not a serious discussion', and 'no one is allowed to become angry or to feel shame" (263). Considering the use of *boru* in *Udaheenagama*, both in hierarchical and egalitarian relationships, I would argue that it also erects such a frame around the interaction. A *boruva* includes a message of 'we momentarily are like cross-cousins' and 'you should not be offended'. Similar to conflict discourses in Fiji described by Arno, the flirtatious type of interaction between cross-cousins thus forms a blueprint for a much wider variety of interactions at times of conflict.

47 McKellin (1984) argued that in Managalase (Papua New Guinea) 'indirect discourse such as allegory also enables them to hide the substance of their discussions from others who are not directly involved. Furthermore, metaphorical rhetoric is a means of testing the opinions of exchange associates and partners before taking a public position on a political issue (108, my emphasis).
The frequent use of the harsher form of boru in the spaces between contexts makes people cautious to take communications outside the local context at face value. In the next chapter I describe the linguistic strategy\(^\text{48}\) that expresses this attitude towards common forms of knowledge. The local understanding of truth, the truths generated in everyday contexts - independent from the truth producing institutions of the Sri Lankan state - are very much dependent on close relations of trust (vishvaasa). During domestic cleansing rituals people would invariably tell me that they only invited the people they trusted (vishvaasa kenek). This gave me an impression of relations of trust surrounding the gedara and of the degree of mistrust vis-à-vis the wider community. As I discussed in section 5.2. truth is often a diffuse truth, dialectically constituted by people who know each other really well, live each other’s lives, and as it were share a self. People would often argue something was true because they had witnessed it or because they had witnessed somebody saying something\(^\text{49}\). Beyond such a very local communicative context truth is difficult to establish especially in view of the ever-present possibility of statements being boru.

One could argue that the notion of boruva, used to describe power games of bureaucrats or elites is a euphemism. Boru within the wider society took up an entirely different form, but were nevertheless called boru. There, the close intertwining of deception and revelation is a trademark of hierarchical relations and the cultivation of tension these go along with. By calling awkward relations with bureaucrats or lack of trust amongst business partners boru the morality of the gedara is evoked in a place where it does not apply. This strategy is thus comparable to what I described in the first section of this chapter: the use of 'household vocabularies' or euphemisms outside the context of the domestic sphere.

One can discern a similar structure of deception and revelation in the practice of boru both within the household and wider society. This leads to questions about the culture-specific way in which certain euphemisms are constructed. For example, terrifying words are not commonly replaced by nonsensical or unrelated words. There is often an experiential correlation and continuity between the benign and less innocent meanings of a euphemism. In the case of the euphemism boruva, I would argue that it originated or crucially depended upon the transposition of a domestic mode of conflict avoidance (boruva as part of traditional joking relationships) to non-domestic situations. In other words, the transposition of a term typically pertaining to the realm of the household into the non-domestic sphere depended upon the translation and transposition of the domestic practice

\(^{48}\) The use of the reported speech marker -\textit{lu}; 'it is apparently said that', see section 7.4.

\(^{49}\) In this case they would use the reported speech marker \textit{kivvaas-kiyalaa}, see next chapter.
of *boru* into the reality of the contemporary spaces in between contexts. Albeit, in contrast to the use of the notion *yakaa-vagee minissu* within the non-domestic sphere, the use of *boru* 'out of contexts' does not contribute to the cycle of containment of violence.
CHAPTER SEVEN

'She said that he said that...': The use of reported speech

He came back (from the front) because it seems to have been said that his mother said: 'You should come home because I am scared'.

Gossip about a deserter.

I came home because my mother said: 'You should come home because I can't sleep'.

Air Force Officer at home (unmarried girl in her mid-twenties).

Introduction: Reported speech: Quoting others.

While in the previous chapters of part 2 I discussed the discursive strategies people use when speaking for themselves in this chapter I analyse the ways in which Udaheenagama people quote one another. 'Lets quote each other' is a game that is firmly woven into the fabric of discourses in many cultures. The toddler quotes his dad when in trouble on the playground. The journalist quotes a cunning politician, or an ethnographer quotes one of the famous forefathers. In the West, reporting other people's speech is a powerful token in the game of identities. The listener finds him/herself at the centre of a variety of statements of others which he/she can reproduce or redesign at leisure. Original statements are uttered, and then become alive in the imagination of the listener, and finally re-enter conversations as reported speech; a rich and often ambiguous reflection of 'original' words.

Most texts on the topic of reported speech however do not address the relation between the use of reported speech and processes of identity formation. One notable exception is Maybin (1996). She argues that the use of reported speech allows people to 'explore their relation to dominant cultural conceptions of identity' (44). The narrator can construct a particular kind of voice for the self and others, and can as it were experiment with a range of possible identities that can be made to vary from one narrative from another. Narratives are thus but glimpses of an on-going life-long 'long conversation' (47) in which identities are explored and negotiated. This 'long conversation' - repeated acts of discursive identification with others - is seen not so much as expressing identity but as constituting it. Briggs (1992), in his description of ritual wailing amongst the Warao, presents a similar argument when he states: 'reported speech plays a central role in the exploration of alternative perspectives and the construction of a collective vision of community life' (347). He however focuses on the formation of a collective identity in a non-Western context as opposed to Maybin's approach which focuses on the constitution of an individual identity throughout childhood in the West.

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1 On the basis of this chapter I will present a paper at 'Sociolinguistics Symposium 2000: The interface between linguistics and social theory' at the University of the West of England, Bristol in April.
In our own, Western culture the use of reported speech can be categorised along a continuum and I identify four important points along this continuum. In the first place, people can identify with a statement to the point of almost completely ingesting it, one's own voice becomes completely merged with the voice of others and other people's voices as it were become part of one's identity. This often occurs in scientific discourse in which taken-for-granted statements cease to be examples of reported speech. One does not have to quote Newton to talk about gravity. Or the same thing happens in communities with a high sense of coherence and a strong identity, such as a community of readers of the same newspaper. In that case one would not have to say that the Daily Telegraph mentioned something, but simply assert one knows it - without necessarily mentioning the source of information. Little distinction is made between the source of the ingested information and the self. In such a community private and public knowledge overlap to a large extent, public knowledge easily becoming one's own knowledge.

Secondly, in many instances there is only a partial identification. The identity of the original source is revealed or even stressed. A distinction is made between the quoted speaker and the self, and one identifies or agrees with a particular point of view, or position which the quoted speaker holds. This is a technique often used when one wants to take advantage of a social position that is obviously not one's own. One needs to maintain a certain distance between the speaker and the self, so that this social distance or difference can be exploited. The voice of authority is quoted and re-quoted, and clusters of followers are formed at the feet of powerful speakers. An utterance finds a new life as a cluster of reported speech events.

Thirdly, more perverse or wicked uses of reported speech also exist, in which the original statement is dragged through the mud in more or less subtle ways. In such cases reported speech is used to show how one does not identify with the quoted speaker. It is rather a process of 'non-identification' that is going on. An identity is created in distinction to the speaker's identity. The original statements can be plucked out of their context and re-implanted in a context that is not so flattering. Or a quotation can be used in an ironical way; subtle forms of irony and cynicism which are only revealed in the intonation used to quote. Taking this process further still, one can create 'shock quotes', in which the reporter can be sure to shock his/her audience by using a quote in a particular way or even by misquoting somebody. In such a setting the original meaning of the utterance might be of

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2 As I mentioned in chapter one, Bhabha (1994) pointed at 'a strategy of ambivalence in the structure of identification' (59), a 'strategic motion' (55) within processes of identity formation.

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secondary importance, and the identity of the reporter as it were obliterates the identity of
the original speaker. The speaker might acquire a novel, bogus identity by being quoted,
instead of playing a genuine role in the negotiation of identity of the reporter. More often
than not, though, this more blatant form of inserting a wedge between the original speaker's
and the reporter's identity is not acceptable, and subtle forms of irony and re-
contextualisation of the original quote have to be deployed to convey one's disagreement or
resentment. In the West the ironical and cynical modes of relating to other people's
statements and identities are the predominant types of 'non-identification'.

Finally, another 'mode of reporting speech' occurs when the identity of the original speaker
is not so much obliterated or negated, but is merely stolen. In other words, a spoken idea
may be plagiarised. This mode is close to the first example mentioned here, the instance of
complete identification, but is still essentially different. In such cases the person does not
throw him or her self wholesale into the pool of public knowledge, but tries to carve out a
particular identity, with ideas and statements 'stolen' from somebody else. The statements
of the original speaker now become the statements of the reporter, the original speaker is no
longer present in the current sentence, which might loose the characteristics of reported
speech altogether.

A description of these essentially Western 'modes of quoting others' and their links with
processes of identity formation provide the background material which I will build upon to
explore the use of reported speech in Udaheenagama discourses on illness, misfortune and
violence. I document the ways in which Udaheenagama styles of quoting and the non-
identification that goes along with them differ from the above-mentioned Euro-American
modes of quotation. I present data from different communicative contexts, and bring
together quoting strategies characteristic of differing speech genres. These include a group
interview, the speech of a mediumistic diviner, and a narrative from an individual
interview. These are snapshots of communicative events chosen in order to re-present a
more widely practised style of quoting in the community of Udaheenagama (for an
example of this methodology see Parmentier 1993).

Before presenting the data I need briefly to introduce the ways in which reported speech is
conveyed in Sinhala3. The constructions most commonly used in spoken Sinhala to report

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3 The translation of the transcripts I use are open for debate. My assistant had translated these transcripts by
using indirect reported speech in the English version, which gave an overall better result as far as the English
was concerned. For this chapter on reported speech, I made quite a few alterations and gave priority to a
more literal translation of these reported speech events. I used the analyses of Briggs 1993, Buttyn 1997,
another person's speech are the verbal construction *kivvaa-kiyalaa* or *kivvaa* and the suffix -lu. I will further describe the use of the suffix -lu in section 5.4. *Kivvaa-kiyalaa* or *kivvaa* are reported speech constructions which are relatively easy to grasp for the non-Sinhalese. Both *kivvaa* and *kiyalaa* are derived from the verb *kiyanavaa*, to say. *Kivvaa* means 'said' and *kiyalaa* means 'having said' (Reynolds 1995:9, 226-229). These terms can be used to report a statement very much like English speakers use 'said' and 'said that'. But Reynolds warns his students: 'Sentences containing *kiyalaa* more than once may be confusing'. This is what I would call double or even triple reported speech clauses. And indeed that is what the title of this chapter hints at: sentences like 'She said that he said that...' are in fact common in *Udaheenagama*.

7.1. Transcript of a group discussion amongst humans.

I have chosen this family interview as an illustration of the ways in which people quote each other, give Voice to each other, and put their Voice in other people's mouths. I pay special attention to quoting strategies used when 'dangerous' statements have to be made or

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4 I deliberately do not enter the debate on direct and indirect reported speech at this stage (see Buttny 1998, Holt 1996, Lucy 1993, Wilkinson 1998). In English 'He said 'I am gob smacked'' is an example of direct reported speech, representing the original direct sentence of the speaker. But 'He said that he was gob smacked' is an example of indirect reported speech, in which the reporter paraphrases the utterance of the original speaker. I took into account Hirose's (1995) article which analyses direct and indirect reported speech in Japanese. In my opinion, for the sake of this argument, it is better not to try to patch Sinhala sentence structures into the mould of English grammatical notions such as 'direct' and 'indirect' reported speech. The problem also is that most research on reported speech has concentrated on written language (Coulmas 1986:11,25), and in written language the distinction between indirect reported speech that paraphrases and direct reported speech that claims to quote verbatim is obvious. As Coulmas remarks, this model might not be relevant for the study of reported speech in oral language, and he quotes Goody to further substantiate his point: (in oral cultures) 'reproduction is rarely if ever verbatim'. (Goody J. 1977 The domestication of the savage mind. CUP). Direct reported speech in oral language seldom represents the original statement of the original speaker, but is part of a concoction made up for the sake of the argument of the reporter. In that sense, for an analysis of the social implications of particular modes of quoting in Sinhalese the distinction between direct and indirect reported speech does not seem a priority. While I realise that this distinction between direct and indirect reported speech is not particularly relevant for this type of analysis I nevertheless opted to use direct reported speech in the translations. This technique allows me to translate double and triple reported speech clauses (see section 5.2.) which cannot easily be conveyed through indirect reported speech in English. M. Last suggested dropping the notion of quotation altogether and replacing it with the concept of attribution. Indeed within oral discourse literal quotations tend to be scarce and more often than not people, in their quest for authority, attribute their own words to other people. I however retain the notion of quotation as the main concept and heuristic device for this chapter. I therefore use a very narrow definition of 'quotation' as a linguistic format (*kivvaa-kiyalaa* and -lu), which I used to identify both quotations and attributions in a variety of communicative contexts.

5 I first thought of using the term 'evil' instead of dangerous. I replaced it by the notion of danger, after considering Parkin's discussion (1985) of the use of the concept of evil in ethnographic accounts. He writes: 'As heirs of a Judeo-Christian tradition, like Ricoeur, we run the same danger of imposing on other people our idea of what evil is. Evil is not anything: it denotes rather an area of discourse concerning human suffering...' (Parkin 1985:10, referring to Ricoeur P. 1967: The symbolism of evil). In the same volume Southwold
'wild words' (see chapter four) have to be used, which could cause terrified hearts (*hita bayayi*) and its concomitant illnesses. Such dangerous statements include sorcery accusations, the words of an entranced person, the naming of an illness, or curses and terrifying statements. Before presenting the interview I first describe the family context and the participants in the discussion.

To describe evil and danger in a manner typical of Euro-American culture, I would mention the following. The *Obeyesekere* family lives in a small mud house, at the outskirts of the neighbourhood of *Heendolakanda*. As I described in chapter three, the people from *Heendolakanda* are engaged in an ongoing conflict with the people from *Pein'igahakanda*. Especially the people living on the outskirts of *Heendolakanda* suffer from the periodic violent clashes between young men from *Heendolakanda* and *Pein'igahakanda*. The house of the *Obeyesekere* family is built on a contested piece of land. The family's neighbours have attempted to reclaim the land for many years, and a bitter court case has ensued. To make things worse, a hostile woman; a local enemy living in one of the neighbouring houses is suspected of having used sorcery against them. The *Obeyesekere* family once called in the police, who gave the hostile neighbour a warning, but things didn't change. If all goes well the house is a home for ten people, but throughout the year I was there, people have moved in and out, as 'they couldn't bear staying' in the house. The sorcery spell has mainly affected the mother, Mrs. *Obeyesekere*. Over the past few years the whole family organised quite a few healing rites for her. When her suffering becomes unbearable she looses consciousness and starts screaming, either at midday, 6 p.m. or midnight. Sometimes she hits her bed with her fists and heels all night, tries to flee the house, and physically attacks her family members. In November 1997, after many sleepless nights for

addresses the possible relevance of the English word evil in a Sinhala Buddhist context. He makes a distinction between the moral and the descriptive meaning of evil, the weak and the strong sense of evil (1985:130-131). I opt to stay out of a discussion framed by means of these particular distinctions, by using a term less afflicted by Judeo-Christian connotations: danger. Dangerous statements can have good or bad consequences, depending whether they are uttered by a friend or an enemy, and heard by a friend or an enemy. In other words, they are not necessarily 'evil'. N. Redclift also suggested that 'evil' connotes an inherent, essential, individual property, having to do with 'being' (evil), while the notion of 'danger' is an active property of action and of relationships with others. The 'relational' notion of danger thus seems more appropriate.

6 In 1997-1998 alone they had organised a small-scale *mul bandinavaa* and *dehi kaponavaa* rituals in June 1997, an *irimudun pidenna* ritual on the 18th of November 1997, *mahasohona* ritual on the 18-19 of November 1997, *kasaaya denavaa* ritual on the 20-21st of November 1997, a *yantra bandinavaa* ritual on the 23-24th of November 1997, a visit to a soothsayer in a far away town, and a *kasaaya* ritual in another house (the house Mrs. *Obeyesekere* had fled to) on the 13-14th of December, followed by a visit to the local psychiatrist (she was invited for a few sessions of hypnosis, which she never took up), *kasaaya* ritual on the 7-8th of February 1998 in a house miles away from *Heendolakanda*, a visit to a soothsayer on the 30th of June 1998, followed by another major ritual; a *mahasohona* ritual on the 7-8th of July 1998, again in a house far away from her home.

7 See chapter two for a description of such states and the discourses related to them.
the whole family, an all-night healing performance was organised, followed by two minor all-night performances.

We visited the family a few days later. The sick Mrs. Obeyesekere (L), her husband (H), and her cousin, a young unmarried man (M), talk and give each other voice. S refers to my assistant. Other participants take up the role of overhearing the conversation: the two eldest sons of Mrs. Obeyesekere, her teenage daughter, three younger daughters, her daughter-in-law with her baby, and me. People were scattered over the various rooms, the porch and the kitchen of the house. Many ‘conversations’ went on at the same time, and most of the participants were busy with household activities. During this particular interview, I was mainly talking with Mrs. Obeyesekere’s daughter-in-law. My assistant (with the tape-recorder) continued focusing on Mrs. Obeyesekere, while Mrs. Obeyesekere’s husband busied himself preparing betel nuts, and taking care of the young children. He positioned himself at the doorsteps, the outside door, or the door to the bedroom. Throughout the day, many snacks and cups of tea were served and M. the young nephew, dropped in a few times, and then participated in the interview.

Mrs. Obeyesekere gave a very disaffected impression, speaking in a soft monotonous voice, at high speed. There was no change in intonation when she was quoting other people, and (in my interpretation) her self-presentation was very understated. Her body language did not reveal much of the excitement and engagement that might have gone along with narrating things that were obviously close to her heart.

[1]
1 S: Why did you go and see the horoscope reader?
2 L: They might have consulted the horoscope reader when I was sick [but I don’t know].
3 M: That is the first thing we do if anybody is sick.
4 L: Yes, when I got ill they read my horoscope [but I was not involved].
5 S: What did the horoscope reader say?
6 L: I [stressed] don’t know
7 M: (He) said ‘(she) has aloneness-sickness’.
8 S: Did he say you should do a tovil ritual?
9 M: He said: ‘Tie a thread’ [around her arm].
10 L: Ask big brother what the horoscope reader said! [L tells M to ask H what the horoscope reader said].
11 M: Big brother, what did the horoscope reader say?
12 H: After he read the horoscope (he) said: ‘Do a tovil ritual, do this and that’. So we did small healing rites.
13 ...
S: [to L] Did your family members tell you what happened to you afterwards? [when you lost consciousness]
L: No, I don't know, they didn't tell me.

S: What does she do?
M: She talks and talks, a mad person's talk, (she) (apparently) says: 'look!, the yakku are coming', 'look!, the yakku are coming' she says (apparently), (she) hits her hands and feet on the floor, and twists and turns.
S: And when it is time to sleep?
M: (She) didn't sleep, she slept at our house [Mrs. Obeyesekere's mother's house], she said 'at night I can't stay here' and went, after having left the house, she slept in our house for a little while, then she fell ill again... and she said: 'can't stay', she said: 'want to go', then she left us, in the morning she bathed [at another house] and then came back.
L: Why? I don't know anything.
M: It was apparently said: 'The yakku come, they are causing trouble', ... , she said: 'The gaze of the wild (disht'iya) is at work', she said: 'Can't stay', but we can't keep the healer here all the time, those people have work to do, this is not their only job!
L: On the first day of the illness, at night, when the ritual healer had left I saw a tovil healing ritual in my dream... the dream indicated that (we should) 'make decorations' [for the ritual], that little I know, that is all, I don't know anything else.
L: The day after, at noontime, I realised they had done a tovil ritual, I told them [her family members]: 'find out what happened' [the things that happened during the ritual while she was unconscious].
L: It seems that everybody has come, they say: 'everybody helped me', it is said that: 'they saw my illness, and after having come, seen me, and gone, everybody came back and helped'.
S: While the disht'iya was leaving the body, did it leave a sign /proof of it's departure?.
L: They [her family members] didn't tell me.

S: Were there moral faults (doosha) in the house ...?
L: [to her husband] Come and talk, I don't know about it, do I?

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8 As I described in chapter two this is a phrase often used by women who are suffering from domestic violence.
H: They [the ensorcelling enemies]\(^9\) didn't do it to the house, they gave something to her, something charmed, it wasn't the healer but the sick person [L!] who told us.

M: Yes, when she was unconscious, she told us, she said: 'a charmed thing'. ...

H: Even before that she had told us: 'there is something* buried' [a sorcery spell buried in the garden].

M: It* [the sorcery spell] has something to do with a wedding, elder sister's [L's] eldest son got married, because of that marriage there are problems.

L: At that time (she) [the sorcerous enemy, her son's mother-in-law] spoke and scolded me because my son had brought (her daughter) home [as a wife], so now I don't know, younger brother (M) said: 'it might have happened like that' [= sorcery accusation]*, when my daughter-in-law was brought here, she [the daughter-in-law's mother] scolded me, and called me 'wrongdoer'... younger brother told me: 'it is through this* [sorcery] that they might have done this* to you', (she) [mother of her daughter-in-law] said 'I will really do it', (she) said it truly, (she) told me: 'I will not allow you to stay alive', her mother [points at her daughter-in-law] told me: 'I will not allow you to stay alive'. [in summary: L accuses the mother of her daughter-in-law of sorcery]

M: We don't say: 'it is exactly those people' [who did this* to us], but we don't trust them [L's daughter-in-law's family members], in fact we don't know, we cannot say 'they did it', we didn't see it happen, nobody told us [that they did it], don't trust them really, so to say, even today they are friendly with me, they talk (to me) [they are on speaking terms], meet up, everybody is good.

L: I am not working, since I have been ill, I am not working, our mother told me: 'don't do any work', (she) said: 'don't eat any fried food for a while'.

There are a few sequences in this discussion I want to comment upon in detail. Mrs. Obeyesekere often says 'I don't know' (lines 2, 6, 15, 21, 34, 40). In doing so she invites other people to speak for her, and to quote her entranced speech. It is most probable that people have already told her what she said during the trance as the speech of the entranced is a very popular topic of conversation soon after a healing ritual. I noticed the same dynamic during group interviews in similar situations. What often struck me was that the

\(^9\) This conversation includes many zero-anaphora (see chapter 5). I indicated further examples within this piece of transcript with a *.
Photo 26: Obeyesekere family after Mrs. Obeyesekere had fled the house.
healed person will not say: they told me 'I said: 'sorcery is involved". It is as if a recently healed person does not want to take such words in her mouth again, and relies on other people to do so. It is as if such words can only be uttered in a sick or entranced state and should not be repeated so soon after a successful recovery. This is not surprising in the light of the fact that an accusation of sorcery can be considered an accusation of premeditated murder (see Obeyesekere 1975), and indeed a dangerous utterance. It means that the accused person will be taken revenge upon in a healing rite for the accuser. In this case Mrs. Obeyesekere's husband (line 35) and her younger brother (line 36) are made to breach the topic, albeit in veiled terms\textsuperscript{10}.

But then Mrs. Obeyesekere takes this strategy of caution one step further. Not only are her close family members made to quote her dangerous utterances, she finally puts a dangerous utterance in the mouth of her younger brother (line 40). 'Younger brother said: 'it might have happened like that... it is through this that they might have done this to you". Again this does not take the form of the grandiose sorcery accusation that an anthropologist might expect or be looking for. In my experience, this is a very common mode in which such dangerous statements are uttered\textsuperscript{11}. I had expected a powerful interest group unconditionally backing a particular accusation, and finding a spokesperson to make a public statement. More often than not, however, relations within an ensorcelled household are rather precarious\textsuperscript{12}. The dangerous statement is heavily debated (line 41) and sent around from one person to the other. Others are given voice, and 'giving Voice' takes here a rather different meaning from the connotations it gets in the usual context of empowerment and advocacy. Whirlpools of dangerous utterances are constructed around the self, not really voiced by oneself, but spread by quoting others.

\textsuperscript{10} As I described in chapter 5 people tend to use veiled terms in order to present potentially dangerous statements.
\textsuperscript{11} Brow (1988: 322,1987) gave evidence of the contrary. His data show how 'demonic possession' and related sorcery accusations are given a prominent place in public discourse. These accusations expressed pre-existing polarities and conflicts within the community, and as such were important in a conflict-resolution-type of debate between factions within the community (for another similar example see Parmentier 1993). During my fieldwork I did not come across such clear cut situations. En trance speech and sorcery accusations did not take up the role of a public discourse, which mediated between large groups of people (such as different castes, or pro-government and pro-opposition factions). On the contrary, as I will discuss below, sorcery accusations and entranced speech were subjected to the same verbal regime as other dangerous utterances and did not have the tendency to become communal or 'public' knowledge.

\textsuperscript{12} Household quarrels, fights and domestic violence are often considered to be caused by sorcery. When the conflicts are never-ending, a fragmented household might sooner or later start wondering about sorcery. Then the everyday quarrels might be taken over by a debate about the possible perpetrator of sorcery, about which healer should be consulted, about the detailed ways in which the ritual should be prepared for, and finally about whether the ritual has been successful or not. The household splits into the believers and the non-believers, the sceptics and the zealous, sometimes along lines which are defined by previous quarrels.
7.2. Transcript of a group discussion amongst deities.

This time I will not present the context of the communicative event myself, but I will paraphrase Loku Ammaa to describe the setting in which the mediumistic diviner, a middle aged woman, spoke. Loku Ammaa, a seventy-five year old grandmother, went to visit the diviner and took me with her on an (in my experience) eerie journey up the hill, through the neighbourhood of Heendolakanda up to Pein'igahakanda where the diviner works (see map). This is how she introduced the neighbourhood to me:

[2] Before this was forest, it used to be given to people as chena [for slash and burn cultivation], Pein'igahakanda is very prosperous now, they teach the children very well there. Looks as if they haven't gone to school today, here the children are good, the girls study well,... [points at the fields] These are chena, these people live by cultivating chena, grow cinnamon, tea, they are prospering, our big chena's have a disease, but these ones are good,... [we met a soldier and he aggressively interrogated my assistant for a few minutes, he is a family member of Loku Ammaa] Very dangerous where he works, his best friend died suddenly, his mother is making a lot of vows at the temple. Here (in Pein'igahakanda), two men died while serving in the army, one was not married, the other had everything arranged for his marriage. I just come here to go there [to the diviner] otherwise I don't know anything about this place... [we pass by an empty ruin of a temple] People do not develop the temple, they don't even try, even a monk does not thrive here. There must be something to make the monks dislike the place, though they came, they couldn't stay. Their mind had a bad time. There was no trouble, but they [the people from Pein'igahakanda] did not even give proper food offerings to the monks, that was the problem [they didn't feed the monks properly]... [we see some houses under construction] Now see, they even earn money to build these, all because of this road, look a power station,... [we see a slightly bigger house] That is from somebody working in Colombo, a carpenter [uses the disrespectful term for carpenter]. Before there were only small houses here, now they make bigger, better, more developed houses,... Those people are very together/ united.

I will now juxtapose my description to Loku Ammaa's presentation of the diviner's neighbourhood and the context in which this divinatory conversation took place. I add my opinion on Pein'igahakanda here, for the sake of the clarity of the argument. Indeed it was a journey to a relatively unknown area. Caste boundaries, have largely cut off the information flow from this uphill neighbourhood to the downhill areas. Moreover, a week before we undertook this journey, three men from Loku Ammaa's neighbourhood had been disembowelled and shot on this path, allegedly by people from Pein'igahakanda. As we passed the place where the shooting had taken place Loku Ammaa remained silent. Instead a steady stream of exaggerated praise accompanied our entry into the neighbourhood of Pein'igahakanda.
Parts of this praise could be called 'poisonous mouth' (*kata vaha*), a way of aggressing the enemy through jealous praise (see chapter four). Poisonous mouth is a common cause of illness, illness caused by jealous enemies who say things like: 'Oh! Your children are doing well at school!'. In that sense her comments could be seen as a form of retaliation, while she carefully avoided re-presenting or making present the violent event itself. When we were aggressively interrogated by the high-strung and quite unpredictable soldier, she expressed sympathy for him and his mother, and managed to create the sense that we all were on a rather pleasant walk after all. She reached the diviner in good spirits. *Loku Ammaa*’s comments reveal how she talked about danger on the way to the diviner, or - in our terms and literal translations - almost didn't talk about it. For an interpretation of the conversation between the gods and *Loku Ammaa* that follows, her human, ambiguous way of presenting danger needs to be taken into account. While she places words into her own mouth her account is ambiguous and indeed veiled.

Finally I want to present the gods who take part in the discussion (see figures 18 and 19). The entranced diviner, turned with her back towards the people and facing the Pattini statue in the main building of the shrine, utters high-speed sacred speech, in which about ten gods are given voice. Commonly the divination starts with a god visiting the supplicant's home. A divinatory description of the lay-out of that house precedes the description of the problems the household is suffering from. The gods do not directly address their human audience but their speech is reported by a deified ancestor, in this case the diviner’s deceased aunt who became a deity in her next birth.

In addition to this, the gods who address the deified ancestor often use reported speech. For example the deified ancestor quotes Pattini, who quotes Badra Kali, who quotes Vishnu. In English this would be: 'The ancestor says: 'Pattini said (to that ancestor that): 'Kali said (to Pattini that): 'Vishnu said (to Kali that): 'you have to make a vow'". In my interpretation of this speech style, I want to focus on the ways in which these sequences of (often double and triple) quotations are linked to the division of labour and distribution of danger amongst the gods. Amongst others, Kali and Suuniyam are located in small shrines outside the main building. They can be recruited to take revenge upon one's enemies, and as one diviner once explained: 'they are too violent to keep in the shrine of the Company of the Great

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13 See chapter 5 for a description of the strategies people use when they do not use reported speech and put words into their own mouths.

14 For this particular argument a full character sketch of the gods is not necessary. I will draw a description of them based on this specific situation at the shrine, rather than participating in a more general debate on the nature of these deities and their place within the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon.
Gods' (the main building) (see figure 18). During divination these more dangerous deities are cast in specific roles. For example the division of labour between Pattini and Kali was described by the diviner in Pein'igahakanda as follows:

[3] 'Kali is also brought in by Pattini, if you want to ask about your house/household, if you offer bulat leaves and sacred coins to Pattini, she will ... tell Kali to go to the house and look. It is like that: Pattini sends Kali to houses, in those houses there is pollution, dirt, various things. Therefore Pattini does not visit houses, she first sends Kali, telling the route to the house, Kali is sent, she looks (to see) whether the house has a sorcery spell cast on it, even if it is in the fireplace, Kali would squeeze in everywhere and find out. It is Kali who is sent to houses to inquire about the land/ the earth. If there is a grave somewhere around the house, Kali would say there is a grave, there is a well, an excrement pit, a toilet, Kali goes on and on saying those things and tells Pattini. After Pattini has been told, it is that information that she gives by means of the trance state'.

The gods addressed Loku Ammaa (LA) as follows:

[4] 
1 M: (mantra) Permission. 'The place where she stays has no trouble, or turmoil, or confusion, the confusion and suffering which that being had are solved, about the troubles by enemies, I will give a few details' (she) says' (she) says. 'The children had some confusion and troubles, some incidents' (she) says, 'in that way, things have happened that way' (she) says (refers to Loku Ammaa's eloped daughter, who married a man from Pein'igahakanda), 'there will be no trouble' (she) says, 'after you have fulfilled the vow it will be good, it will benefit you' the respected Pattini is saying' (she) says, (mantra) ...
2 LA: Don't know whether we will receive some benefit (a dowry) from them //

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15 Based on this interview material I would argue that the rapid repetition of kiwaa-kiyalaa sequences during the recitation are not mere ritual noise, words pronounced for their sound and rhythm rather than for their meaning (as suggested by M. Last). At least for the diviner the sequence of quotations has the above mentioned meaning. Whether these kiwaa-kiyalaa sequences are mere ritual noise or have the same meaning attributed to them by the diviner for the audience remains an open question.

16 In an interview the diviner explained how she has to ask permission from the gods to receive the gaze of the gods and to receive a warrant to use their power (yarama). Only then can the divination session start. She first has to ask permission from Vishnu, then from Kataragama, and then from Pattini. With the warrant she gets from Pattini she receives the warrant of about 20 other gods, of which about 10 are present in this session. She has to ask permission from Vishnu first because 'he is the god who rules the country,... he is almost equal to the Buddha, Vishnu will become the next Buddha' (despite the supremacy she attributes to Vishnu she is, both ethnically and practically, a Sinhala Buddhist). I do not know what it means when permission is asked somewhere in the middle of the session, and where one of the gods seems to ask it (e.g. line 46).

17 This repetition means that 'double reported speech' is used which I discussed above.
Figure 18: Spatial relations at the shrine: the segregation of danger (shaded areas).

3 M: "Permission' (she) says' (she) says. "While the father is there [conversational tone, louder, slower], because of the ideas of the father's side/ party [her father's disapproval of her marriage] <sacred language> she does not receive any help or aid from her brothers <sacred language> the respected Pattini is saying' (she) says. "They will remain with wholehearted affection towards her' the respected Pattini is saying' (she) says <sacred language>.

4 LA: The father does not loosen up [her husband refuses to see his eloped daughter].

5 M: "It's the same, no good' (she) says' (she) says, permission, [conversational tone, slow] "mother, because she broke the words (of) mother [because she did not obey] (she) is saying' (she) says, "because of the things she said on her deathbed he has kept anger like this in his mind' the respected Pattini is saying' (she) says. "permission' (she) says' (she) says,...

18 These passages could not be given any meaningful translation in English. They were in high Sinhala. My assistant was able to translate them word for word, but they didn't form a sentence with a referential meaning.
Figure 19: Reported speech amongst the gods.
The arrows show how a statement moves from one god to another, at least as far as one can gather from the ways in which they quote each other.

6 LA: Then how is the chief that lives in that house/ household (gedara) Meiein'iyoo? [refers to her husband as 'the chief that lives in that house'\(^\text{19}\) and makes inquiries about him].
7 M: (mantra) 'Child, that being will never surrender, nor would he accept/ believe in the influence of the planets, or faults related to the planets, he would not do anything about the behaviour of the planets, he does not believe in the work of the gods' (she) says. 'You must give only English medicine' (she) says.
8 LA: hm.

\(^\text{19}\) See terms of address I discussed in chapter 5.
M: 'Due to the behaviour of the planets, wind disease will keep on occurring' (she) says. 'He has wind disease, he might be caught by paralysis too' (she) says. 'Though it is like this, his power/ the authority in his mouth and words did not decline, the respected Pattini says' (she) says.

LA: That is quite right.

M: "He will not keep his mouth shut" said the respected Srii Vishnu'(she) says. "Cannot get his mouth to apologise' says' (she) says, "if you want I will make a vow to Deidimunda and give you a drop of oil' says' (she) says, "because of the bad planetary influence even that should not be done for him' said the respected Deidimunda' (she) says' (she) says, 'let it happen like that, let him talk to himself', the respected Pattini said, 'let him speak with himself' (she) said, "he will not harm anyone , he will not fight with anyone' (she) says' (she) says, 'even if he causes a lot of trouble to the family members, don't take it seriously' the respected Paramakandaashvara is saying' (she) says, <may all gods be worshipped>.

LA: Then, are things working out for this (my) son?

M: 'So far all the troubles he had in mind, confusion, turmoil, obstacles have been cleared' Vishnu says' (she) says, 'there is no condition of unrest, (it is the same) like before; he is not interested in his job', permission. [Suuniyam joins the conversation] "'but there is no harm either, no troubles from enemies' says Pattini' says Suuniyam' (she) says, permission [Pattini on her own again], "no trouble' (she) is saying' (she) says, (mantra), "if somebody (i.a. her son) is indebted to you, you will get it back' (Pattini) is saying' (she) says, 'you will get the money back next month' (she) says, 'permission' (she) is saying' (she) says, [Lakshmi enters the conversation], "you will receive that money' Pattini and Sryaa Meiein'iyyoo (Lakshmi) are saying' (she) says, (mantra), permission, [diviner trembles heavily], 'is that all' (she) asks, 'ask: 'is that all'?' 'what do you still have to ask?', "is that all?' (Pattini) asked' (she) says.

LA: That is all.

M: Permission, blessed, blessed, (mantra), permission [loud], [recites gaata to give merit to gods, bhuuta and all beings]

Then the Gods addressed me (A). The goddess Kali's and Suuniyam's comments on my fieldwork experience follow:

M: [slow and low] A confusion in the blood/ blood pressure has occurred [uses literary Sinhala], permission, permission, after you arrived in Sri Lanka that confusion, danger/ trouble got worse,...

A: Yes.
Photo 27: Loku Ammaa (on the right) and the diviner in front of the shrine.
M: "For this you need something to cool down your body' the respected Pattini says' (she) says, 'you understood it?' (she) says, 'because of the country [uses High Sinhala], because of the heat caused by the way the country is, you have those thoughts' (she) says,... [conversational, slow] "you should be careful with the place where you stay/ accommodation' (Pattini) is saying' (she) says,..., [louder, poetic] 'someone is scolding you' (she) said, "(he) will use various traps/secrets [secret plans]" (Pattini) is saying' (she) says,..., permission, gods, peace calm, [mantra, in which she mentions Badra Kali], 'even now, child, in the place where you live, even though you haven't any troubles' (probably Kali) says 'there is a male being who peeps in every now and again',... [slow, conversational], (she) tells (you) 'to understand' (she) says, "that male being is not that much of a person to be interested in [poetic], you should protect yourself from that person' (Pattini) is saying' (she) says, "he is like a deceitful/ fraudulent person' (she) is saying' (she) says,..., 'that person lives as if he is half asleep' (she) is saying' (she) says, it is good for you to hear this,...

A: Yes.

M: (Deified ancestor) says that now the accomplished and respected Suuniyam will tell how it all happened - in Pali language to Badra Kali with the four powers - having told her to make it clear and understandable to the people who are here, permission, [mantra, high pitched voice] "something you ate and disliked and (you) said 'yuk, yuk' to is causing an illness' (Kali) says' (Suuniyam has said), "what the female being has eaten and disliked and said 'yuk, yuk' to has caused an illness' (Kali) says' (Suuniyam has said),... "eat something you do like, child, eat something sour, child, in the way of sour things, have something sour every morning, take sour things for a day or two' (Kali) says' (Suuniyam has said), 'something poisonous/ evil happened' (she) says, "that (the evil thing/ poison in the stomach) will be cut away' said the respected Badra Kali' (she) says' (she) says,... [lamenting voice, quoting me] "Oh, I can't eat, I lost my appetite/ I don't like the food' you often said, 'you ate something you did not like and said 'yuk, yuk' to' (she) says.

A: Yes.

Loku Ammaa: Meiein'iyoo, should we charm the sour things or (give them to Alex) without charming them?

M: "Don't charm them, charming will have no effect on this person' (Kali) says' (she) says,..., (she) tells you 'eat something sour, like the juice of currants, sour or sweet oranges every morning on an empty stomach', 'the food has affected you' (she) says, 'eat some honey' (Kali) says' (she) says, (mantra),...
part the deified ancestor quotes Pattini (lines 1-10). Then Vishnu and Deidimunda are quoted to criticise the supplicant's husband (line 11). Vishnu continues to talk about *Loku Ammaa's* son, and then Suuniyam is quoted to mention the enemies (line 13). Of course Lakshmi addresses the money matters (line 13). Suuniyam and Kali are summoned and quoted to describe my misfortunes and their possible remedies (line 20). The way in which the gods voice some potentially dangerous or frightening statements stands in stark contrast with the way in which *Loku Ammaa* tends to circumvent such issues (e.g. in her presentation of the neighbourhood of *Pein'igahakanda*).

During this divination the gods' voices remain strictly separated, even to the extent of being in a different and almost inaccessible language altogether. It is often commented upon that Kali speaks Tamil during divination, but here she is asked to translate *Suuniyam*'s Pali. Kali works for Pattini, and is sent out to the houses of the suppliants. But Pattini does not appropriate the knowledge that Kali gathered, they remain Kali's knowledge and words. Kali and Suuniyam embody the most dangerous powers (like the doing and undoing of sorcery spells) and Kali comes in regular contact with pollution inherent in human dwellings. Their dangerous statements (in the majority of the examples I presented) are not directly voiced by the diviner. Pattini and the deified ancestor take up the role of intermediaries, who quote these utterances of dangerous powers. Dangerous words are not directly placed into the mouth of the diviner. Long sequences of quotes form as it were a buffer zone, through which potentially dangerous words are transmitted.

7.3. **Brave Narrative**

In contrast to the highly performative and self-conscious speech of the diviner this narrative took the form of a quick whisper; a story I was given on my first visit to *Nishanta*'s family in *Puvakden'iya*. That day I dropped in on them because *Nishanta*, a nineteen year old man, had a healing ceremony the night before, they tied a protective *yantra* around his neck. Like many young men in the village, he attempted to become a soldier, but he came back from the front terrified, angry and disillusioned. Now he leads the eerie life-style of a deserter, a life of constant suspicion and flight. Like his mother says: 'the illness he is suffering from now is unemployment and disobedience (to his mother)'. The rituals they

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20 To be more precise and to put it in Volosinov's terms (1971:167) this speech event shouldn't be called a straight 'narrative'. It is half-narration, and half-reported speech, partly direct discourse and partly indirect discourse.

21 In contrast to Maybin's observations (1996:40) I found that the use of reported speech by women in *Udaheenagama* often went along with a flat or weak voice and rapid speech. In her analysis of the use of reported speech amongst ten and twelve year old English speakers, she describes how reported speech is used at moments when speech is dramatic and accentuated, not when the voice is subdued or flat.

22 As I described in chapter four, this type of narrative was usually told during a first visit.
performed for their 'ill' son and the constant arguments between mother and son, are but two aspects of the ongoing process of finding a moral position as a family. The narrative I present here is about the suffering that has been going on for almost ten years now. Nishanta's father was murdered during the civil war of 1989-1991, and his widow speaks about how she tried to intervene, and prevent his murder:

[5] He was killed and put there, he was thrown alongside the road, killed, we brought him home, he was thrown along side the road, killed, they stabbed and stabbed him with a knife, they stabbed and stabbed him with a knife in those places [shows the places with her hands on her own body], then he was killed and put on the road, having brought him home, and having taken him to the hospital, having kept him there, had the post-mortem examination, the police said to us 'take him home', then we brought him home, after we brought him home we kept him here for three days, after that did 'the little job' [euphemistic way of referring to the funeral], that was that then, after that there wasn't anything, so, no rumours/ news [about the killers], nothing, they had beaten and killed that is all,... after that there was no rumours/news, so I searched in various ways, I went to their [the killers'] houses, I went and (I) asked 'why did (you do) this crime to me?', 'you could have broken one of his hands or legs, couldn't you?, if he had done something wrong, why did you destroy his life like this?' like that I went and (I) asked, they said 'oh, we don't know about those things, don't ask us', they spoke like this, I went to those houses, so I spoke like that, and though I spoke like that, there wasn't anything I could do, so then [before the murder], before they tried to harm us in various ways, they asked our son-in-law from us, the one that is in the army, they told us 'give the son-in-law', they told us 'bring the son-in-law and give him to us, if you want to save yourselves', then father [her husband] said 'I will not bring and give the son-in-law, it is no problem if I die, but I can't get my child killed', that is what he said, in those days (we) wouldn't bring a child and give it to them, would we?, [louder] will we give a child to be killed, will we?, we won't give, will we?... we say 'it's no problem, even if we get killed', don't we?, like that the father spoke, 'it is no problem if I die, but I can't give the child', that is what he said,... in those days they [JVP activists] came to the house at night, at about midnight they came, called us, told us to open the door, but we didn't open it, [Me: You didn't open the door.]23, we didn't open the door, kept the doors closed and stayed in, then they went away after having beaten and killed the dog, beat (it), finished (it) off and went away, it was like that, later they told my husband to come to the place where they were living, I didn't allow him to go, I went, I went and asked 'why?', then they said 'You are of no use to us'- they call my husband Black Sir, they call this one's father Black Sir , *Peemavatthi*** is of no use to us, it is Black Sir we want' they said, [faster] I told them 'there are no secrets between the two of us, and what they have to say to him, can be said

23 The interview technique used here was one of minimum intervention. There were often long pauses, or I repeated something that she had said, so as not to impose a new topic of conversation myself.
to me, anything I will go and tell him', I said, though I said this they didn't accept/ believe it, 'we need him himself', they said, [faster] I said 'younger brother*, if you are killing, kill me', 'I cannot watch you kill him' I said, 'first kill me and then do anything you want' I said, so when I had spoken like that, they said that 'No, elder sister*, there is no problem like that', after that, it was over, it is while remaining like that, [fast] that later they came and came at night but weren't able to get him killed, it was I who stepped outside/ came out before him, if they would have shot they would have had to shoot me first, after I had put them (family members) in the back, I came out first, so in those days, they couldn't do it at home, if they would have done it at home, they would have had to kill all the children and all of us,... he was killed, the fault was that he hadn't brought the son-in-law to them, son-in-law is in the army, then the daughter was married, she was married yes, therefore they said 'bring the son-in-law', (they) told us 'bring him', (they) told us 'ask and bring bullets from son-in-law' (they) told us 'ask for a gun'// to uncle [an uncle who was killed by them] also they said 'ask a gun and bring it', [fast] there is no way for us, to take those from the army, is there?, will they give us even if we ask them?, might they give us?, how can we take, how?, they don't give those to us, so he (son-in-law) said to me 'I have no way to give those to you, there is no way he said, before we had a gun, but (they) took it away, they asked for it, so after they had asked for it, we went and gave it to them, (we said) 'don't kill us, and don't give us any trouble', they said 'if the gun is not given, might come and cut younger brother's neck and bring it to older brother's place at night, to elder brother, bringing younger brother's neck (head)', (they) said '(we) will come near elder brother, if the gun is not given', we said 'don't kill anybody, there is no point in killing anybody for a piece of iron, we will give, don't kill', so then I said// I went to give the gun, yes, (I) took it to the Kalubowatta cross-roads, having tied the gun like this to my leg, I took the gun to the Kalubowatta cross-roads, [loud, stressed] there were quite a lot (of people), from the army and the police, no matter how many there were, having tied this (gun) to my leg, having dressed in a sari, I took and gave it to them [to the JVP activists], to save the father (husband) they had said that they would kill the father if the gun was not given, wouldn't they?, then because I wanted to save the father, I took the gun and gave it to them, having taken all those, later they killed, yes, later elder brother [her husband] dies, it was to save him from death that all those were given, and we weren't able to do it [save him], gave everything that was asked for, having received everything, still they killed...

To me this narrative gave the impression of being very 'objective'. The listener is as it were pulled into a field of moral tension, and is invited to make his own conclusions24. It is as if she is an outside observer of her own past. A past which is not allowed to invade and

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24 Butny (1997: 486, 500) remarks that reported speech is also a way of showing, not merely a way of telling. Direct reported speech 'involves the recipients because they are shown, rather than told'. Much like the use of zero anaphora I discussed in chapter 5, the use of reported speech is a discursive strategy which involves the recipients.

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Photo 28: 'Younger brother, if you are killing, kill me'.

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overwhelm the present. For example, she reiterates how the conversation between her and the killers of her husband had been quite a polite one. She addressed the insurgents as younger brothers, while they called her elder sister (see * in transcript). Her own opinions, emotions and current moral outrage are not placed at the centre of this testimony, something you might expect would have happened in a Euro-American cultural context (see Buttny 1997). She does not give the impression of completely identifying with the words she uttered during the civil war. These words did not merge with her present Voice, were not incorporated within her current Voice, and are carefully segregated from it by means of reported speech clauses within the narrative.

This very vivid style and way of presenting a dialogue at the most crucial points of a narrative are also commonly described amongst English speakers (Buttny 1997: 489). But in my opinion, more is going on than a mere 'dramatisation' (Holt 1996: 233) of the narrative through the use of reported speech. Her relatively direct way of referring to violence is a rare event amongst humans, and is a more common characteristic of the speech of the goddess Kali or the godling Suuniyam. In my interpretation, her use of reported speech to quote herself should be framed within this context. It is as if she is quoting a past Voice, a Voice that was engaged in a violent world, out of which she has now emerged. Through quoting herself she can create a certain distance between the dangerous and frightening utterances of a bygone Voice, and her present Voice. I would postulate that reported speech, the characteristic technique of quoting within this speech community, is a type of distance regulator. Not only does reported speech regulate the distance between the benevolent gods and the more dangerous Kali-like deities, but it also helps separate people from the dangerous statements and Voices that emerged during their life-time.

7.4. -lu: It is apparently said that...

*Kivva-kiyala*, he/she said that... is the means by which people quote others and/or put words in other people’s mouths. There is however another reported speech marker: the suffix *-lu*. The *-lu* construction cannot be conveyed directly within the basic English grammatical constructions of reported speech. It is thus more difficult to intuitively

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25 She refers to herself in the third person (see ** in transcript).

26 Other languages that are reported to have a similar verbal construction are Navajo, Kwakiutl, Hopi, Tunica and Bulgarian (Jakobson quoted in Coulmas 1986:22). For what is hearsay and not the speaker’s own experience there is a separate verb conjugation. In English, for example, an adverb is used to alert the interlocutor about the possible lack of authenticity of a reported statement (e.g. the use of 'apparently'). But in Sinhala (and those other languages which have a separate verb conjugation for what is hearsay) such adverbs can be left out. Where *-lu* is used to quote a group of people there always is a built-in connotation of doubt.
understand its meaning. Using -lu, builds in a connotation of doubt, uncertainty or critical distance into the argument. Volosinov (1971) postulated the role of culture and the socio-historical background of a community in the creation of the grammatical constructions of reported speech: 'It is the function of society to select and make grammatical just those factors in the active and evaluative reception of messages that are socially vital and constant and, hence, that are grounded in the economic being of the particular community of speakers' (151). Here the importance of the social strategy of doubt is reflected in the common use of -lu.

The use of -lu implies you were not present when the original speaker made a statement. The quotation has reached you via a third or fourth party. Since you have not witnessed the original speech event, you cannot be sure whether the quote is correct. It is often better translated as 'it seems/ appears that so and so has said that', or 'so they say' (Karunatillake 1992:182, 238, 277), or 'it is apparently said that', or 'it is allegedly said that'. I was told that the gods never use -lu, but always use kivvaai-kiyala to quote each other, because they are omnipresent and thus can witness any speech event. Using -lu, suggests that the reporter does not necessarily take up responsibility for what s/he is saying. S/he shows that the statement is not necessarily true, s/he is just quoting somebody else. In some instances the suffix -lu might even indicate that the reporter does not identify with the statement.

Events that were not witnessed and are only known to the speaker by means of hearsay are marked by using the suffix -lu:

- 'It is apparently said that (-lu) that person is at home at the moment, but I didn't go and check'.

The suffix -lu is also commonly used to talk about tradition, for example:

- 'It is apparently said that (-lu) people get better after a tovil ritual has been organised for them'.
- 'It is apparently said (-lu) that you have to make offerings to the spirits of the deceased three months and a year after the death of a person'.
- 'It is apparently said that (-lu) 'if something like that happens [the first menstruation], before you tell anybody you have to tell the milk tree', it is also apparently said that (-lu) 'if you have seen a dream, it is not good to tell others' (see transcript [4] in chapter four).
- 'It is apparently said (-lu) that it is not good to hold a yantra bandinavaa ritual just before full moon day'.

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27 In this sense the use of -lu is similar to the meta-discursive markers which connote dis-identification or counter-identification in English, such as 'so called', or 'what you call' (see Fairclough 1992: 32).
- 'They apparently say (-lu) that at that moment the offering trays have to be removed and brought to the river'.
- 'It is apparently said (-lu) that pregnant women cannot attend tovil rituals'.
- 'They apparently say (-lu) that women who dance one tovil ritual want to dance more and more tovil rituals'.
- 'It is apparently said (-lu) that people can do something to the land by using the yaksha (a sorcery spell)'.
- [about the way divination works, see TS [4]] 'They apparently say (-lu) that Kali talks to the diviner'.
- 'They apparently say that it is not good to look straight at the gods, they don't let anybody see them' [a curtain is placed in front of them].
- 'It is apparently said (-lu) that the disht'iya does not fall upon cruel people'.

Udaheenagama people narrate a common body of knowledge, in this case the tradition (saastara), as if it were something they did not and cannot directly witness. Within this way of talking about tradition they stress the fact that this is the way in which the tradition appeared to them. Other people have talked to them about it, but they did not witness the (postulated) original communicative events themselves. They position themselves within a chain of communications, and only state that a certain statement about the tradition has apparently or allegedly been said (-lu). By means of this communicative strategy they instil a distance between themselves and the statement. It is as if the voices of tradition have not been completely internalised, and are not endowed with the same status as statements which have been uttered by a specific person and were actually witnessed by the reporter (who will them report them by using the reported speech marker kivvaa-kiyalaa).

The same strategy is used to report forms of (what we would call) 'common', 'general' or 'collective' knowledge which do not belong to the tradition. For example:

- 'It is said that/ it seems that (-lu) you can't enter (the hospital) without a ticket (a prescription)'
- [a woman explaining why men drink so much liquor] 'People who work hard, are courageous, carry a lot of weight, cut trees, dig fields, do heavy work, their bodies are tired, it is apparently said (-lu) that when you drink this tiredness goes away, it is said (-lu) that then they don't feel their tired and painful bodies anymore, and fall asleep'.

Specific communicative events that weren't witnessed are typically reported by using the suffix -lu. -lu is used when people quote somebody they actually haven't heard or overheard saying something:

- [about the victims of an assault] 'It is apparently said (-lu) that even their intestines had come out' [that they were disembowelled].
- 'It is apparently said that it is V. M. who fired the gun'.
- [somebody from the Galkanda neighbourhood about the Obeyesekere family in Heendolakanda (see transcript [1])] 'They apparently said (-lu) that somebody has done something to the house' (has committed sorcery).
- [about an unpopular diviner] 'They apparently say (-lu) that all things she says are all false'.
- 'It is apparently said (-lu) that the army carried out a raid at the funeral'.
- 'It is apparently said (-lu) that my son was tortured and beaten in the army'.
- [about ragging at the universities and child abuse in schools] 'It is apparently said (-lu) that they (raggers or abusers) hit and scold'.

Communicative events which by definition cannot be witnessed, such as a dialogue between a preeta, a spirit of the deceased and a human being are also qualified as such by using -lu:
- 'My daughter died while she loved me very much, that is why she (her spirit) comes and calls me, she apparently says (-lu): 'mother, lets go', she apparently says (-lu) 'mother is suffering'.

By means of this discursive strategy the narrator presents the interlocutor with an appearance, an account of what has appeared to the narrator. An atmosphere of doubt and uncertainty is routinely evoked once a very small scale communicative context, which can be reported by means of kivvaa-kiyalaa, is transcended. In sections 7.1 to 7.3 I have described how Voices maintain their separateness by means of the strategies used to report them. Other people's words are not easily absorbed within a speaker's Voice. In this section, however, I looked at how people relate to statements that have lost their connection with an original speaker. Again a distance is maintained between such statements and the reporter's Voice. The uncertainty and doubt evoked by the suffix -lu reveal the distinctiveness between a person's Voice and the forms of knowledge about tradition and everyday life which are circulating within the community. I would define this discursive strategy as a form of dis-identification or non-identification with collective life and collective forms of knowledge.

I suggest that a comparison between this way of relating to statements that cannot be connected to an original Voice and the bourgeois notion of a public opinion proves difficult. The -lu construction corresponds better to the original meaning of the Latin opinio as an uncertain, not fully demonstrated judgement, whose truth would still have to be proven (Habermas 1962: 89). *Udaheenagama* ways of relating to what I tentatively describe as a "common", "collective" form of knowledge is certainly very different from the notion of public opinion within the bourgeois discursive public sphere as described by Habermas.
In "Public opinion - Opinion publique - Offentliche Meinung: On the pre-history of the phrase" Habermas described how the notion of public opinion as "the critical reflections of a public competent to form its own judgements" (ibid.: 90) gradually evolved out of the earlier notion of opinio. I would not even qualify the use of reported speech to convey messages whose original utterance people have not heard as the presentation of an opinio, since a distance is maintained between the reported Voice and the reporter's Voice. The use of reported speech in Udaheenagama is one more reason to refrain from using the notion of a public sphere, as we know it, to describe the cycle of violence ("domestic", "political", "public" forms of violence see chapter three) and discourses on violence in Udaheenagama.

Discussion: The excess of quotations.

I now come back to the issues raised in the introduction, where I described links between 'modes of quoting others' and processes of identity formation within Western culture. If I summarise these possible quoting strategies and modes of identification between reporter and original speaker I would call them: complete identification with the original speaker, partial identification, non-identification and plagiarism. During my fieldwork in Udaheenagama I was struck by the remarkable absence of complete identification with the Voices of others. The examples I presented in this chapter could mostly be categorised as examples of non-identification. In the West, subtle instances of non-identification, distancing and disagreement with a quoted voice are most commonly classified as the ironical or cynical mode of relating to other people's voices. The notions of irony and cynicism, however, do not satisfactorily cover the distancing discursive strategies of people in Udaheenagama.

In many of the above-mentioned examples the Voice of the original speaker is taken seriously. The subtle mockery inherent in ironical and cynical remarks seems largely absent. The strategy of non-identification is embedded in the fact that other persons are meticulously and exhaustively quoted. Other people's statements are not routinely admitted as a part of the Voice of the reporter and maintain their separate status. Quoting others can reveal a strategy of exclusion in which other people's points of view and moral

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28 See Abedi 1993, Hui 1994 for a critique of the application of the notion of a public sphere across cultures.

29 As Spencer (1990) remarked 'a pervasive spirit of irony informs so much public sociability' (165, my emphasis) and 'in place of overt challenge there is a kind of institutionalised irony' (175, my emphasis). While many distancing strategies might be experienced by the ethnographer as irony, in my opinion, much more radical forms of distancing are at play, which cannot be described within a study of ironical forms of communication.

30 In the examples I have given, there is one notable exception. In the first transcript, in line 35, Mrs. Obeyesekere's husband temporarily identifies with his wife's statements, but then quickly adds that it was his wife who told him this.
positions are not easily incorporated into the reporter's Voice\textsuperscript{31}. This is most obvious when people quote dangerous utterances: quote voices that carry danger.

The very particular use of reported speech should, in my understanding, be seen as part of the general atmosphere of caution related to the effects of Voices I described in chapter four. In that sense 'quoting another person' operates like a safety measure. This, in my opinion, is at stake, when Mrs. Obeyesekere quotes her younger brother, when Pattini quotes Kali quoting Suuniyam\textsuperscript{32}, or when Nishanta's mother quotes her own, by now dated Voice. People are careful not to forget who uttered a dangerous statement and take care not to let dangerous words merge with their own statements.

This strategy seems however embedded within a more pervasive effort to maintain both dangerous and not so dangerous statements 'in transit'. In this context I use Lyotard's image (1979) of nodal points within a flow of knowledge again (also see chapter one). By means of meticulously quoting other people, nodal points (within a stream of words and knowledge) as it were dissolve. Other people's voices remain in transit as they are not allowed to settle or merge and coagulate into the reporter's Voice. Words and statements as it were have some characteristics in common with transit passengers in airports\textsuperscript{33}. By means of kivvaa-kiyalaa and -lu constructions they are passing through people and are kept moving. This movement is certainly not unidirectional. Words do not only move outwards, from an original speaker to the various reporters. People also put their own voice in other people's mouths; attribute their own statements to others, as was most clearly revealed in transcript [1]. This is the sense in which I would like to re-define Bhabha's

\textsuperscript{31} This idea could be expressed in Bakhtin's language as 'rhetorical double-voicedness' (1981:354). He writes: 'the rhetorical double-voicedness of such images is usually not very deep: its roots do not extend to the dialogical essence of evolving language itself; it is not structured on authentic heteroglossia but on a mere diversity of voices...'. In other words, voices are not allowed to merge (For a summary on the notion of heteroglossia see Bakhtin 1981:428). Macaulay (quoted in Buttny 1997:500-501) in his work on polyphonic monologues in oral narratives shows how 'reported speech allows reporting speakers to distance themselves from the message' because (here he quotes Goffman) 'they position themselves as merely the animators but not the sources of what is being said'.

\textsuperscript{32} This sudden move from secular to sacred speech might seem a bit sudden. In this respect I would follow Winslow's example (1988). She compares worldly political organisation with the organisation of the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon, and inspired me to explore how discussions amongst the gods, might reveal some parallels to worldly conversations.

\textsuperscript{33} Johnson (forthcoming) in an argument about the limitations of the notion of bodily processes of identification for Western ethnographers uses the image of a cross-road to depict the selves of transvestites participating in beauty contests in the Southern Philippines: 'Rather it is an active imagining and experience of self and the body at the cross-roads of all possible worlds and selves (and therefore of none in particular), an act, in short, which exceeds and confounds identity' (13). Like the dangerous words in my analysis the variety of bodies that are made to appear during beauty contests seem to be in transit, passing through a self which the ethnographer imagines by means of the imagery of a cross-road.
notion of 'a strategic motion' (1994:55) I discussed in chapter one, as a multi-directional movement of Voices in transit.\footnote{The processes of giving voice I discuss are localised at the family, extended family and neighbourhood level in \textit{Udaheenagama}. My analysis greatly differs from studies in which 'multiple identities and multivocality' are described in relation to major political and national debates, in relation to debates that matter for the national middle-classes, such as state religion versus local religious practices, the issue of a national culture, or modernism versus religious fundamentalism (e.g. Wilce 1998a, 1998b, Ewing 1998). Such studies of multivocality remain open for shifting identifications, multiple identifications, 'laminated identities' (Wilce 1998b: 249), which - from a Western point of view - might seem contradictory or indeed multiple. The strategic motion I describe, however, is radically different from the development of 'multiple identities' and 'multivocality' in the sense that it derives from a strategy of non-identification, rather than from a strategy of multiple identifications.}

One could argue that all this was already subsumed under the notion of the dividual (Marriot 1976), the fluid self (Daniel 1984), or gift exchanging self (Parry 1986, Raheja 1988) in which words are but one of the substances that flow amongst people in South Asian cultures. However such analyses often limit themselves to a description of selves and hierarchies. The particular characteristics of the flow of words and statements within a community like \textit{Udaheenagama} however determine the discourses on violence, which in turn influence the local cycle of violence and the concomitant cycle of containment of violence I discussed in chapter three.

Some of the analyses of reported speech practices have made the explicit link between types of political organisation, and styles of quoting others (Lucy 1993, McKenzie 1987, Volosinov 1971\footnote{Coulmas (1986:10) comments on one of the crucial points in Volosinov's work: 'He was prepared to look for non-linguistic explanations for the presence or absence of a given kind of speech reporting in a language'.}, Wilkinson 1998). This type of analysis postulates\footnote{I use the term postulate because Coulmas (1986:13) remarked that so far 'no convincing theory about a causal nexus between the two' has been established.} a link between the socio-linguistic and the politico-ideological conditions of a speech community. As Bakhtin suggested, changes that occur in a language could be seen as part of the 'socio-ideological becoming' of its speakers (1981:295). Volosinov argues that authoritarian regimes go along with a mechanical and depersonalised way of reporting other people's speech (1971:154-157)\footnote{In an analysis of reported speech within the Russian and European literary tradition he writes that the authoritarian dogmatism of the Middle Ages went along with a monumental style of reported speech, the rationalistic dogmatism of the 17th and 18th centuries with a linear style, and the realistic and critical individualism of the 18th and early 19th century with a pictorial style of reported speech. And finally, he argues, the relativistic individualism of the present age goes along with a decomposition of the context of the author (reporter) (157).}. The voice of authority is taken seriously and transmitted wholesale. The boundaries between the original speaker's voice and the reporters voice cannot be violated. In other words, the original speaker's voice cannot be re-contextualised in cunning ways, it cannot be modified, merged with other voices, or used in an ironical way. Volosinov's
analysis presumes that within such a regime authority figures within the family or wider community are taken seriously and quoted in this authoritarian style.

Taking this to the Sri Lankan context one could see many parallels at a superficial level. People have been suffering from a succession of colonial and neo-colonial authoritarian regimes and the forms of political silencing that went along with those. These types of silence, resulting from political repression, terror and distrust within communities have been described by what I would call an 'anthropology of silence' that was often dominated by an anthropology of the body (e.g. Daniel 1994, Daniel 1996: chapters 5 & 7, Das 1986, 1995, Ettema 1994, Jaworski 1989, Martyres 1995, Risseeuw 1988, Scarry 1985, Tully 1995). Of course there are many things that cannot be spoken about in the community of Udaheenagama, and to document these silences would involve a different type of analysis and data collection (see chapter one). I however chose to describe the ways in which a discourse on violence was possible in the aftermath of the civil war. Following Volosinov (1971) the style of quoting in Udaheenagama could be interpreted as a result of the communities' oppression by an authoritarian regime. Within such an interpretation the quoting style in Udaheenagama would then be described as highly mechanical and depersonalised; a style of quotation in which voices of authority within the village are taken seriously and are transmitted wholesale.

To interpret the above discussed quotation styles as a mere response to an authoritarian regime would however not do justice to the local culture which underpins Udaheenagama people's use of reported speech. The way people (and deities) quote dangerous statements in everyday life in Udaheenagama virtually follows the rules of contextualisation and framing applied in Indian literature (see Ramanujan 1989). Sanskrit lyrics imply the whole communication diagram: who said what to whom, when, why, and often with who else overhearing it (ibid.: 49). Ramanujan gives an example of a poem which can be analysed as an account of 'what his concubine said about him, within earshot of his wife's friends, when she heard that the wife had said disparaging things about her' (49). Texts are thus firmly embedded within a communicative context of "who said what to whom". The similarities with the excessive use of quotation I encountered in Udaheenagama everyday conversations are striking. Accounts of 'who said what to whom' frame such conversations especially when dangerous topics are discussed.

Moreover, I propose to interpret the above-described quotation style as related to local attitudes towards Voicing and listening to a Voice which I described in chapter four; linked to the local definition of dangerous statements and their effects. As I documented in this
chapter, the excessive use of quotations plays a role in the regulation of a distance between the speaker and dangerous words. People avoid voicing dangerous words themselves and prefer to quote others and to maintain dangerous statements as it were in transit. The excess\(^{38}\) of quotations ultimately reflects a radical process of non-identification with other people's voices and dangerous positions. People are cautious not to allow other people's potentially dangerous Voices merge with their own voices.

This discursive strategy presupposes a 'self awareness which simultaneously experiences the multiplicity of possible voices and evades capture by them' (M. Johnson, personal communication, 2000: 2). Excessive quotation is about the containment of danger inherent in dangerous words but it is also an assertion of a self which is not determined or exhausted by dangerous words and situations; a self which exists beyond the various reported dangerous statements and situations (ibid.). In contrast to the many portrayals of victims of war in which individuals are depicted as subjected to overwhelming violence and danger, Udaheenagama people's subjectivities are not exhausted by these events and they continuously re-construct themselves as not contained or defined by the circumstances within which they find themselves (ibid.: 3).

After having taken these cultural themes of danger and its avoidance into account it becomes clear that the rationale for non-identification in Udaheenagama is different from the rationale of Western forms of non-identification such as irony, cynicism or mockery. The mere excess of quotation marks a substantial difference from the occasional quotation so typical of Western-style cynicism or irony. Non-identification as practised in Udaheenagama is primarily about averting danger and excluding the sickening wild from one's social context. Nor can this style of quotation be reduced to an authoritarian style of quotation which one might expect in this political culture. These cautious discursive strategies are not directly caused by the climate of political repression, war and violence of successive colonial and neo-colonial regimes but rather pre-date them. During the civil war and its aftermath they might however have become particularly salient since the community has had to deal with a large amount of possibly dangerous and sickening utterances.

Within the local context, dangerous utterances remain 'in transit' amongst local enemies and allies by means of the \textit{kivvaa-kiyalaa} marker of reported speech. Discourses on danger and violence are thus firmly embedded within their context; a context determined by local

\(^{38}\) This seems very similar to Johnson's description (forthcoming) of the 'excessive incorporation' practised by transvestites in the Southern Philippines. He argues that excessive incorporation 'is a transcendence of the narrative and the discourse of identity through the excessive multiplication and incorporation of all possible identities and through the conscious bodily refusal of emplacement and identification' (16, my emphasis).
relations, friendships and enmity, and by 'who said what to whom'. Once this local context is transcended such utterances are conveyed by means of the reported speech marked -lu and thus acquire a quality of doubt and uncertainty. Outside their local context and specific communication diagram such utterances rapidly become mere hearsay and rumour and can easily be contested. In this format they do not have the power to mobilise large-scale, collective forms of hatred and revenge. Dangerous statements are thereby encapsulated within a small-scale social context and are only effective at a very local level.

Such context-sensitive discourses on violence, in my interpretation, play a role in the localisation of enmity and the containment of the cycle of modernist violence. They stand in sharp contrast to the context-free categories such as 'JVP insurgents', 'deserters', or 'Tamil enemies' which fuel modernist violence in contemporary Sri Lanka.
PART III: AGENTS OF DISCURSIVE CHANGE.

An obvious question is whether the discourses on violence I described in part 2 should be interpreted as one aspect of the cultural impact of the civil war or as styles of communication which existed prior to the violent conflict. In other words, are these particular discursive styles the outcome of a violent history, are they a response to violence and war or were they normal even before the war. Considering the long history of colonial and neo-colonial violence which occurred in Southern Sri Lanka, however, (e.g. see Risseeuw 1988, Roberts 1990, 1994) the notion of an 'era before the war' is problematic. Posing the question whether a discursive culture or sub-culture is linked to a particular generation which grew up during times of war is even more so. Alternatively the question emerges whether such communicative patterns are an aspect of a pathogenic society or culture which is predisposed towards violent upheaval. Both questions concern the role of these discourses on violence within the cycle of violence, either as a consequence of violence and extreme suffering, or as one of its causes.

As I described in part 2, Udaheenagama discourses on violence are linked both to a cycle of violence and to a cycle of containment of violence. Styles of acoustic cleansing, the use of euphemisms, zero anaphora and reported speech constitute a strong cultural starting point to deal with widespread forms of violence. The links with discursive styles in other parts of South Asia (cf. Kolenda 1990, Ramanujan 1989) and ancient cultural practices (cf. Wirz 1954, Roberts 1990) I outlined above reveal these discursive styles are not predominantly a reaction to massive forms of insurgency, counter-insurgency, or more generally modernist violence that occurred in recent history. In other words, these cautious discursive strategies were pre-existing modes of communication which were deployed to deal with the effects of the civil war of the late eighties. Their role in the preservation of contexts I described above made them important in a local cycle of containment of violence which counteracted the spread of wide-scale modernist violence. At the same time, however, these strategies reduced the quality of 'spaces between contexts' and thus played a role in a local cycle of ongoing low-intensity violence.

The question nevertheless remains whether the atrocities of the late eighties had an impact on the discourses on violence in Udaheenagama\(^1\). The ways in which the recent civil war changed some people's way of speaking about and dealing with violence is the topic of this last part. In this third part I identify two agents of discursive change. On the one hand the discourse on fearlessness which some women in Udaheenagama adopted in the aftermath

\(^1\) This question was frequently suggested to me by both Nanneke Redclift and Murray Last.
of the civil war and on the other hand the discourse on trauma which was made available to survivors in Sri Lanka by the international humanitarian community. I analyse these discourses by comparing them with the *Udaheenagama* discourses on violence and their role within the cycle of violence I described in part 2. By means of this comparison I ask questions about the potential impact of this type of discursive change on the cycle of violence. Whether these agents of discursive change will have a *long-lasting* impact on discourses on violence and the concomitant cycle of violence in *Udaheenagama* however remains an open question.
CHAPTER EIGHT

'It wasn't like that when we were young': Civil war, national mental-health NGO's and the international community of trauma specialists.

Introduction.
During the civil war many *Udaheenagama* women lead an itinerant existence. At night some hid in the forest together with their children or slept in the trenches built in between the tea bushes to keep erosion at bay. If people had contacts or family members in a nearby town they would move their children to this relatively safe place at times when the war in the village became unbearable. Women whose husbands or sons disappeared spent an increasing amount of time away from the village, often travelling together with a friend or close family member. They searched for their disappeared family members by visiting local politicians, by gathering gossip in the vicinity of detention/concentration camps or by visiting the sites of massacres in an attempt to identify a body.

Most women eventually came back home, re-established a life in the village and continued to suffer. Some have been haunted by the gaze of the wild ever since. These are the women I described as suffering from life-long *disht'iya*. Women whose family members disappeared continued to take action. Almost all of the war widows in *Udaheenagama* reported their case to the Commissions of Inquiry and with the help of local politicians they acquired a death certificate and organised the paperwork necessary to receive compensation. Some women were referred to the outreach centres of national mental health NGO's, either by officials in the Divisional Secretariat or by local politicians, and started to attend training events organised by the NGO's. In this way they participate in the global flow of knowledge on war trauma.

The introduction of the discourse on war trauma and trauma counselling must however be placed within the context of much more localised agents of discursive change. In the aftermath of the civil war many women claimed fearlessness and refused to participate in the traditional discourses on fear, fear-related illnesses and domestic cleansing rituals. In order to work towards a description of the value of non-governmental mental health services for *Udaheenagama* women, this local dynamic between fearless women and women who suffer from life-long *disht'iya* needs to be taken into consideration. Ultimately I want to question the cultural impact of the discourse on trauma by describing the practices

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2 Within the contemporary context mothers search for arrested deserters and also spend a lot of time away from home (see chapter 3).
3 For a description of the Commissions of Inquiry see Appendix A.
related to the trauma discourse (*Udaheenagama* women's use of mental health NGO's) in relation to these local processes of discursive change. I therefore first discuss the implications of the presence of fearless families in the community of *Udaheenagama* before addressing the issue of the introduction of the discourse on trauma and the concomitant non-governmental (mental health) services.

8.1. Women's fearlessness.

Quite a number of people have distanced themselves from the discourse on 'fear of the wild' altogether (see map 3, 4 and 5 in chapter 3). These people claim they aren't scared of anything, and don't suffer from terror-related illnesses. This typically male attitude has extended to some women, who indulge in this discourse of fearlessness and invulnerability. Many people in *Udaheenagama* argued that this change took place during the last civil war of 1989-1991. An elderly ritual specialist from *Bamarabokka* explained:

[1] There are two ways/methods. In the past, when you visited a funeral house/ a house with a dead person in it, and you came back from such a house, you used to say '[I am] polluted', didn't you? You said 'polluted' and you were obliged to bathe. But in these days [during the civil war], there were bodies on the road, and in the forest, and near the houses. They put the corpses there, didn't they? Now when things were like that some people said 'polluted', and the gaze of the wild spirits (*disht'iya*) should have fallen [upon them]. [loud] But the gaze of the wild spirits wasn't there then! The fear had also ended. People nicely went and looked [at the dead],... [loud] When they saw those [dead bodies] they weren't afraid! So because this is something new, I don't understand it and I don't know what to say. It wasn't like that when we were young,...

There weren't any illnesses caused at the time [of the civil war]. After having seen those [dead bodies], some people fell ill. [loud] Some didn't though! There were only a few people who fell ill. [loud] The majority didn't fall ill though!

As a middle-aged woman from *Kalubowatta* proudly declared:

[2] There were 'beaten heads' in the paddy fields. When you see those you get scared, don't you? They burnt [bodies] at that cross-roads there. Because of those things you get scared. But I am not scared of anything (*Mama nam baya neiei mokakat'avat*). I am not scared. What should I be scared of? I went to see all those things, I am not scared.

A researcher operating within the PTSD paradigm would probably call this 'emotional
Photo 29: 'The fear has ended' - Ritual specialist with his granddaughters.
numbness', one of the criteria used to diagnose PTSD. It is important however to go beyond this individualistic, disease oriented approach and to look at the effects fearlessness (or emotional numbness) experienced by a large number of people has on the discourses on violence (and the cycle of containment of violence which goes along with them) within the community as a whole. During the civil war, many women walked long distances to search for disappeared family members. They were sometimes away from home for months on end, and the care of their children was taken over by their parents or siblings. Some of them, when they continued to search for too long, were called wanderers, rowdies, good-for-nothings (e.g. rastiyaadu: normally used to refer to men only). Upon their return home some fell ill and were to be regularly helped with cleansing rituals. But many of the women who had witnessed atrocities claimed fearlessness and a total lack of interest in eidurukam, 'the teachings of the ritual specialists', pilivet (small ritual remedies) or tovil (large-scale domestic cleansing rituals).

Such fearless women might just have been boasting, and their discourse is often ambiguous. Amidst assertions of a radical lack of fear, more secret fears continuously emerge. To clarify this point I present parts of a young woman's narrative. She cried as she recounted her husband's abduction and murder:

[3] The JVP came in the evening, on full moon day. They hit the cup of tea out of his hand, grabbed him and left. They made him lie down on the main road and killed him, cut the neck. I went too,... People in this area didn't even go and look when people were killed, because they were scared, I am not like that!... When they abducted him, [I] thought 'Oh god, I don't know why they take him', and my heart was in shock, I shivered and felt as if burning, very strongly. Then when they had cut his neck, I lost consciousness (sihiya neitivelaa). I stayed right next to him there, the whole night, until dawn. Now I have no fears, I can even walk over a dead body, I am not scared. Be it night or day, I have no fears,... If you want you kill us but we are going to defend ourselves as well as we can,... Now we think of biting or hitting them with a stone if they come to do anything to us, we won't back out. I won't go, I will stay put. If anybody calls me in the middle of the night, I open the door. If somebody calls me from nearby I open the door. I won't go out, but I am ready. I keep the idea in my mind of making a mark [on the murderer]. If they kill you you can't do

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4 I was struck by the similarities with Tambiah's (1975) description of types of guardianship in the pre-colonial period, when group-marriages in which a group of sisters would marry a group of brothers (involving both polyandry and polygamy) were the norm. Then siblings had parental responsibility over each other's children, and when they failed the guardianship was left to the grandparents. If the marriage pattern was matrilocal (binna), the maternal grandparents would take over the education (7). This situation is comparable to contemporary practices, in which a woman, after the disappearance of her husband, returns to her parental home, and her parents take over the guardianship of her children, who (as I encountered a few times) consider their mother as an elder sister.
Photo 30: 'Fearless women' (?) with photos of soldier.
anything. Either they kill or we kill,... I don't mind whether it is night or day when I walk on the road. I am not scared. Because I haven't done anything wrong I am not scared. If someone calls me, regardless whether it is day or night, I talk. When it is dark, I take a torch with me. I hold it in front of me and see who has called me. First I look and then I talk. If I go out at night I take a child with me. Even if I just walk from this house to that house [close-by neighbouring house] I don't go alone. I lock the door, and go with both children, or else even with only one child. At night I won't go alone, and even if I go during day time // If they come and trouble me again I won't back out. I will always go forwards. I of course, I could kill and eat the people who killed my husband. If I would be given a piece of these people's flesh I would eat it. I am so angry.

The alleged lack of fear in this statement is obviously ambiguous and laced with revelations of tremendous everyday fears (e.g. of going outside alone). But I do not consider this denial of fear as just another way of expressing fear for the following reasons. Such women do not suffer from the traditional fear-related illnesses (see chapter two), nor do they engage in cleansing rituals (pilivet, eidurukam or tovil). Compared to other women who suffer from terrified hearts, their strength and health is remarkable. If they attend tovil rituals at all, they tend to allow their younger children to attend the tovil too. Previously young children would be kept away from such terrifying rituals as they might suffer a fright and fall ill. In fact many people argue this is part of a general trend in which most women are less frightened to take their children to such rituals.

The discourse on fearlessness thus goes hand in hand with very real practical changes. Fearlessness as it is defined locally it thus not necessarily about not being frightened or terrified. Being fearless is about not allowing fear to become terror, not allowing oneself to become coerced by terror or fear. This fearlessness is omnipresent and almost (but not quite) as widespread as the discourse on frightened/ shocked hearts (hitabaayi) or the discourse on life-long yaksha dishti'iya and the feared yakaa-like people.

Some ritual specialists commented on fearless women and fearless families. During the civil war, one ritual specialist from Bamarabokka had had doubts about the long-term viability of the traditional rituals. He briefly thought the 'tradition might be over' (shastaree iva veiya kiyala hituva). With burned corpses scattered over the village, people questioned themselves as to why more people did not fall ill. This particular ritual specialist thought such questions posed a serious threat to the tradition. The discourse of some fearless women certainly confirmed his doubts. A young woman from Puvakden'iya talked about her brother who had killed many people (including his own mother) and explained:
If he comes here he is afraid of me. I hit him with anything I can lay my hands on. I am not afraid, no matter how many children I have,... Not even the little bit of life that is left [her mother], that too he crushes. After having crushed it he got the idea of killing me. That time he thought of killing me. For several days // recently he came, to our small shed, the small shed here, the small wooden shed where my husband works, came and lay down. He tells my children to kill their mother. Then I got up and roughly told him 'you come here'. He ran away, afraid that I would hit him. He ran down the hill and walked the other way,... Nowadays I step outside thinking 'Haa, there, brother is waiting to kill me'. Even that coconut tree can be seen as being my brother, understood? Then I scream 'Buddu ammee', I lament. For several days cows [approached our house]// my husband gets frightened. [softly] He is very scared. He doesn't dare to step outside [the house], thinking it is our brother. He whispers to me, whispers that cows are roaming in the garden. He says, 'Look, have cows come ?// 'I don't know whether somebody has come' he says and frightens me. I go [outside] straight-away and look. [I] go nearby and look. It might be anybody. Sometimes he doesn't even let me open the door, why? Because I am the one [my brother] would come and kill. All the time, I have an ache in my mind/heart. It occurs in my mind/ I think [it]. Though it comes to my mind I don't get scared,... Ritual healing has no effect on us, neither on me, nor on my children. Those [illnesses] are mostly in the mind. If your mind is weak you need those [rituals]. 'Oh, I need a ritual for this or that': if one thinks like that, then such a person definitely needs ritual healing,... It is in the mind that it happens, when you can't bear the problems you have, it happens, isn't it so? Now, for example, there is a sarong hanging on the washing line. So at night when you see that you think, 'There is somebody standing there'. Then you are afraid. After that you think, 'Now I need a ritual'. Then you dance [at the tovil ritual]. It would not have been like that if you would have tightened up your mind and had gone to look at it, and seen that it was a sarong. Then you wouldn't have needed any of those [rituals]. Ritual healing has no effect on us, it does not stick to our the body, it has no effect,...

A very old woman from Heendolakanda, the widow of a ritual specialist, also took advantage of our presence to reveal her lack of fear and scepticism regarding ritual5:

5 Compare her comments to a description of the same ritual episode by a young woman from Puvakden'iya in transcript 18 of chapter two.
S. Akkaa: The ritual specialists say that the more you get frightened the easier you get well? Is that true?
W: When they try to frighten us, we don't even startle! We don't feel frightened. Why should we be afraid! They are humans! Even though they jump on us to frighten us.
S. Akkaa: Do the illnesses get cured because of this fright?
W: No, no. Do illnesses get cured by [someone] jumping onto you and making you scared? [rhetorical]
S. Akkaa: They give you a burned feather, in the early morning? Do you get scared when they give it?
W: No, no, no. They give [offer] it [to you]. Though they give it, we don't take it. They burned it and then give it, but we don't take it with our hands. If that character/ appearance (paaliya) comes with the feather don't take it! If you take it they [uses irresponsible pronoun un] will laugh loudly 'baka', 'baka' [the sound of laughing ritual specialists]. Don't take it!

I am not inclined to enter the debate on the decline or demise of traditional ritual life (for example see Simpson 1997). I can only juxtapose the differing and competing local discourses, of which the discourse on fearlessness and scepticism towards the rites of the ritual specialists (whether it be pilivet, eidurukam or tovil) is but one amongst several. This discourse results in a particular life-style, and fearless families certainly relate to the wider society in quite distinct ways. I use the term 'fearless families' for families in which even women (and by extension their young children) adhere to the discourse on fearlessness (normally a discourse only favoured by young men, see section 7.2. on yakaa-like people). Such families are excluded from the above-described group dynamics which fear-related illnesses bring about. Their fearless presence in the village might alter the quality of life in the wider society for others, however. That is to say they may make non-domestic spaces harsher and more frightening for those who suffer from fears (see section on yakaa-like people and their fearlessness). Some fearless women are compared to yakshini, female yakku (see, for example, transcript 3 in section 6.1.).

Such women do not fall ill, and their lack of fear or discourse on fearlessness suggests a belonging to the contemporary society dominated by (sometimes inhumane) fearless acts (for example of yakaa-like people see section 6.1.). In such instances the gedara and its inhabitants are considered healthy and free from fear-related illnesses, but at the same time the gedara ethos is threatened from within; from within its female centre. Fear, timidity and shame are key notions for women to express (and practice) the Sinhala Buddhist moral code (see also section 3.4). Once fearlessness is proclaimed, some highly valued attitudes vanish and so do some of the justifications for the cautious discourses on violence, which help to constitute a local cycle of containment of violence.
Photo 31: 'Do illnesses get cured by someone making you scared?'
Fearlessness as an agent of discursive change?
While there is a direct link between the fearless acts of yakaa-like men and the cycle of violence (see chapter 6) the impact of women's fearlessness is more insidious. The principal question is not to what extent women's fearlessness directly exacerbates the cycle of violence. Such instances are rare and limit themselves to public verbal abuse. The question is to what extent the demise of hita bayayi might alter the discursive styles I described in part 2. On the basis of the data I gathered, I cannot directly provide evidence of discursive change in, for example, the use of euphemism, zero-anaphora or reported speech. I can only point at the relevance of the recent emergence of fearlessness as a potentially powerful agent of discursive change.

As I showed throughout the thesis the discursive styles Udaheenagama people use to talk about violence depend on fear of a terrified heart (hita bayayi) and its concomitant illnesses. The avoidance of hita bayayi (a terrified heart) underpins many of the cautious discourses on violence which play a role in a cycle of containment of violence. It is often fearless women who are said to have a sharp tongue (kat'a seirayi). Fearless women with sharp tongues are also sometimes compared to female yakku, yakshini (for example see transcript 8 in chapter 6). Like many of the words I discussed in the section on euphemism the notion of a sharp tongue is ambiguous. It can be used amongst friends for people who are simply talkative or it can be used to refer to women who use ruthless speech, which deviates from the customary cautious discourses about enemies, conflict and violence. I thus have called the thesis 'sharp tongues' while bearing in mind this ambiguity.

Once women proclaim fearlessness, their children's illnesses are less often interpreted as fear-related. A survey I conducted amongst ritual specialists in the Udaheenagama area showed that about half the time people consult them it is because of a sick child. Most ritual specialists in the Udaheenagama area talked about children's illnesses in terms of disht'iya and hita bayayi. This means that from an early age children learn about 'terrified heart' and its relation to illness and physical suffering. Fearless women do however not tend to rely on the services of ritual specialists when their children are ill. They more readily go to the Ayurvedic dispensary. Their children's illnesses are not interpreted as related to fear and a terrified heart. Such children are also allowed to attend frightening events such as tovil rituals. Moreover fearless mothers would tell the ritual specialist not to put protective, charmed oil (tel meitiriima) (see chapter 4) on their heads or the heads of

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6 I came across quite a few situations in which a woman had approached the house of an enemy and - from a safe distance - loudly scolded and insulted the person inside.
their children at the start of a *tovil* ritual. The next generation's fears are largely left unacknowledged and un-elaborated by such fearless mothers. The question is thus to what extent the relative absence of the notion of *hita bayayi* in the lives of the children of fearless mothers will affect their socialisation into the cautious discourses on violence which most people of their parent's generation adhere to.

**Fearlessness and post-war societal re-organisation.**

The question remains whether the fearlessness brought about by the atrocities of the civil war of the late eighties constitutes a radical break with the past or maintains some continuities. The latter seems to be the case. There is undoubtedly a parallel between the use of fear and terror during domestic cleansing rituals which cure fear-related illnesses and the life-history of fearless women. During cleansing rituals the afflicted person is made to startle. By means of ritual frights fear is made to leave the sick person's body (see chapter 2). This sequence of events seems to be replicated by women who search for their disappeared husbands. They experience terrifying situations and when they come home they proclaim themselves healthy, devoid of fear and fear-related illnesses. This is very similar to the discourse of women who have been healed by domestic cleansing rituals and who claim for example that the sudden fright caused by the *Veid'i Sanni Yaksha* near the end of the ritual relieved them from their fears (see chapter 2 transcript 18). Women who were healed by means of acute fear within a ritual context tend however to fall ill again and need further cleansing rituals. On the other hand women who proclaim fearlessness and health because of their experiences during the civil war claim to be cured and changed forever. They do not organise cleansing rituals and thus do not partake in the community's cycle of acoustic cleansing (see chapter 4).

Fearless women thus challenge the dominant discourse on fear-related illness while simultaneously using part of the traditional script on fear and its cure. They adhere to the paradigm of being cured by terror but refute the link between illness and the minor fears of the post-war era. They also tend to be sceptical about the value of ritual cleansing and the effects of traditional ritual forms of shock and terror. They thus offer an alternative way of constructing the post-war society (*samaadjaya*). Their refusal to partake in ritual forms of domestic cleansing means they do not participate in the organisation of well bounded, cleansed, relatively isolated domestic spheres and in the local re-distribution of the wild organised by women suffering from life-long *disht'iya*.

As I described in chapter four domestic cleansing strategies deployed on behalf of women who suffer from *disht'iya* pose a threat to people who live in the immediate surroundings of
the afflicted household. The nearby neighbourhood is as it were used as a dump, a repository for the wild. In contrast, fearless women do not engage in domestic cleansing strategies and thus safeguard 'spaces between contexts' within the near-by community from the fall out of modernist insurgency and counter-insurgency violence (the 'disappearances'). In the case of fearless women, such violence does not lead to disht'iya-related illnesses which need to be cured by means of domestic cleansing rituals potentially affecting other women in the neighbourhood.

Fearless women inhabit the spaces in between contexts in a very different way from women who suffer from the disht'iya and organise cleansing rituals. While women who suffer from life-long disht'iya concentrate on the domestic sphere and consolidate its boundaries by means of domestic cleansing rituals fearless women are pre-dominantly oriented towards the spaces in between contexts. As I described in part 2 afflicted women ultimately also orient themselves towards spaces in between contexts but do this on the basis of an altogether different premise. They operate from the base of a morally cleansed gedara and let the concepts pertaining to such a cleansed domestic space (e.g. what I called 'household vocabularies') radiate out into the wider community. As I discussed in part 2 these discursive strategies play a role in a local cycle of containment of violence. Fearless women relinquish this notion of isolated cleansed spaces as it were, and have learned to live with the breached boundary between the gedara and the surrounding samaadjaya (society). While most of the post-war society survived as a conglomerate of small-scale, regularly cleansed, well-guarded and bounded social units, fearless women advocate an alternative social re-organisation. Their strategy of post-war social organisation is therefore less oriented towards the preservation of contexts and the social isolation this sometimes brings about.

While fearless women might have averted the implosion of some social contexts they turn their backs on other cultural resources which play a role in the cycle of containment of violence. They have given up a position many afflicted women cultivate, that is of looking down upon society (samaadjaya) from the moral high ground of a woman with a terrified heart. As I described in part 1 this is often the only avenue used by women to comment upon the abnormality of the violence-ridden contemporary Udaheenagama society. To comment upon other people's illness as being fear-related is also one of the most common ways of commiserating with another person's social problems. In a context like Udaheenagama being diagnosed by family members, friends or a ritual specialist as

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7 Widespread modernist violence was only narrowly averted in the late eighties when a rigorous preservation of contexts played a role in a cycle of containment of violence (see part 1).

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suffering from *hita bayayi* can be remarkably soothing. It is the principal way in which fears can be acknowledged. Proclaiming fearlessness undercuts these strategies of survival and might constitute a move towards an acceptance of the contemporary social world as normal.

Fearless women thus play a role which is at once dangerous and pivotal in the communities' post-war transitional social re-organisation. They did not partake in the increasing social fragmentation created by domestic cleansing strategies in the aftermath of the war, but they sometimes made the spaces in between contexts more awkward and daunting for women suffering from *hita bayayi* and *disht'iya*. Their fearless presence has been compared to the fearlessness of *yakaa*-like men (see chapter 6). As I mentioned before the question for the future will be how the sons and daughters of fearless women construct their domestic spaces and the spaces in between contexts. The introduction of the discourse on trauma in the rural south of Sri Lanka needs to be placed within this already existing cultural dynamic which emerged in the aftermath of the civil war of the late eighties, and I now turn to this last aspect of the Udaheenagama discourses on violence and its effects.

### 8.2. The discourse on trauma.

It is within the context of the above-described struggle for post-war societal re-organisation in *Udaheenagama* that I will now discuss the role of the discourse on trauma. Women from *Udaheenagama* who use the services of the outreach centres of national mental health NGO's inadvertently become participants in the discourse on trauma. As I pointed out in the introduction I use the notion 'trauma discourse' for the conglomerate of nodal points in the global flow of knowledge on war trauma. I do not want to privilege any one definition, pertaining to any one nodal point but consider 'trauma' a master term which subsumes a myriad of interpretations. For the sake of brevity, I describe only three nodal points in this flow of knowledge, the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, the Colombo-based mental health NGO's, and an outreach centre in the Matara district before providing an outline of way in which *Udaheenagama* women use and conceive of these mental health or trauma counselling services.

**The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies' discourse on trauma.**

As Ramanujan (1989: 46) argued, universalisation is the golden rule of the New Testament, of Hobbes' 'law of all men' and the main premise upon which Judeo/Christian ethics are based. The debate on the neuro-biological basis of trauma precisely brings about such an

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8 This is a comment I make on the basis of personal experience rather than on the basis of Udaheenagama people's interpretations.
universalisation or decontextualisation: victims of child abuse, soldiers, or traffic accident victims are constructed as suffering from the same underlying neuro-biological disorder. For some trauma specialists 'PTSD' is a relatively universal value that can be applied across a variety of contexts. Within the International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies there is a continuing debate between biological psychiatrists and diagnosticians who work towards providing a definition of PTSD that can be applied within a variety of contexts on the one hand, and clinicians and politically engaged psychiatrists who advocate an increasing attention to the context in which the traumatic event has occurred and consequently the context in which treatment is to be provided on the other. The current composition of the ISTSS and especially the composition of its board of directors reveals a propensity to include researchers and psychiatrists who favour a relatively context-free conceptualisation of suffering. The composition of the ISTSS reflects and influences the future orientation of mainstream trauma research and ultimately influences the discourse on trauma of the international humanitarian community.

The question whether the ISTSS should include an umbrella ethical committee which addresses the issues of the future direction of trauma research and the world-wide diffusion of the discourse on trauma at a global, international level has been a sensitive issue. The proposals for such an ethical committee have so far been rejected by the board of advisors of the ISTSS on the grounds that the already existing local ethical committees of the academic institutions in question are sufficient to scrutinise any future research project on trauma. Such ethical committees include local scientists, local 'consumers' (patients), lawyers and experts in medical ethics. Certain ethical questions do indeed belong to the realm of expertise of local scientists and local 'consumers'. Underlying the refusal to organise an ethical committee that would operate at an international level however lies the opinion that little harm can be done by distributing a context-free, scientific approach to war trauma across a variety of non-Western contexts. I strongly disagree with this position and argue that, in view of the world wide diffusion of the trauma discourse and its possible cultural impact, some ethical questions require global debates in which the voices of communities of 'consumers' who do not belong to the same local cultural community as the researchers need to be heard. One obvious question is whether a context-free approach to suffering is as harmless as it might seem at first sight.

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9 For a more detailed description of this discussion during the ISTSS conference in Jerusalem in 1996 see Appendix C.
10 Also see Appendix C.
A plethora of mental health projects in Colombo.
As in many other war-torn societies, the discourse on trauma has been introduced to Sri Lanka through a variety of channels. Mental health NGO's in Colombo have formed an important 'nodal point' (Lyotard 1979) in the 'global cultural traffic' of knowledge on war trauma (Appadurai 1990:308) or constituted 'bridgeheads' (cf. Hannerz 1987:549) for the introduction of the international discourse on trauma amongst Colombo-based intellectuals and the Sri Lankan political elites. From the early nineties onwards the number of mental health NGO's steadily grew (see figure 15). International NGO's (UNHCR, UNICEF, Oxfam, SCF, IRCT) organised workshops on war trauma and invited international trauma specialists (often members of the ISTSS) to give lectures in Colombo. A decade later there seem to be more mental health NGO's in Sri Lanka than psychiatrists (approx. 30) or psychologists (4)\(^1\) (see figure 16). A struggle however developed between volunteers of the NGO sector and public servants and mental health personnel working in governmental institutions. Despite the many tensions between non-Governmental and state sector mental health professionals, a National Mental Health Week was organised in October 1997 during which 'all ideas of the entire (mental health) community were thrown together' (Balasingham chairman National mental Health Week) (see figure 17).

A precarious division of labour.
With many NGO's competing for a limited amount of funds from the international donors the competition to take up a high profile position during the National Mental Health Week was fierce. As a result many NGO's who had been less successful within this National mental Health Week struggle refused to participate. Within the state sector a very similar situation occurred with both the Ministry of Social Services and the Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medicine attempting to take the lead. In addition tensions between NGO's and the mental health services of the state sector made the organisation of such an all-encompassing forum almost impossible. It was thus no surprise that these underlying tensions and the division of labour between the different sectors became a central topic during the speeches of public servants, NGO volunteers and politicians during the National Mental Health Week.

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\(^1\) One could argue that there is roughly one mental health professional per million people.
Figure 15: NGO's working with the mentally ill and/or the traumatised (All of which are members of the Federation of NGO's on Mental Health and Well-being except for 'Sahanaya').

| Association for Health and Counselling |
| Centre for Family Services |
| Communication Centre for Mental Health (CCMH) |
| Family Planning Association |
| Family Rehabilitation Centre |
| Family Studies and Services Institute |
| Institute of Human Rights |
| Life |
| Muslim Women's Conference |
| The National Council of YMCAs of Sri Lanka |
| The National Christian Counsel counselling Centre |
| NEST |
| Sahan Sevana Psycho Therapy Centre |
| Salvation Army |
| Family Counselling Centre Sarvodaya Movement |
| Survivors Associated |
| Tamil Women's Union |
| Women's Development Centre |
| Women for Peace |
| Women in Need (WIN) |
| Young Women's Christian Organisation |
| National Council for Mental Health 'Sahanaya' |
| Sri Lanka Sumithrayo (Branch of Befrienders International) |
| Alokaya Youth Counselling Centre |
| SEDEC Relief and Rehabilitation |
| Sri Lanka National Association of Counsellors |
First of all it was clearly established that public servants or personnel of the state sector are currently unsuitable for the kind of work currently carried out by the mental health NGO's. As the Minister of Health and Indigenous Medicine (De Silva, Nimal Siripala) argued:

[6] Mental health you realise it needs very much personal attention, it is not like an operation that can be performed by a doctor and leave the patient afterwards, counselling is necessary, the counsellor has to build up a personal rapport with the patient, even to identify the person you have to have a very good rapport with that person, it is very difficult for only the paid personnel to do that, our nurses or doctors, they are paid workers, and do not have so much dedication, therefore the social workers, NGO's, non-profit making organisations are the ideal people for work in this sector, I am not saying that it should only be handled by them, but I think we can get very good results... Especially\textsuperscript{12} if mental health NGO's helped, co-operated a lot, these voluntary organisations took the responsibility, if people from the government would replace the NGO's they would not do the job so well, they would ask uniforms and shoes and too much salary, they would not be as dedicated as the people working for the NGO's. I am not saying that people in this government are not working, but people in NGO's are like brothers and sisters for the patients, government people cannot do that, it is not only about understanding pain and sadness, but you need a personal relation, that is how you must do this service, if you want to work with a mentally ill person you have to be like a friend, mother, or father, only if we employ people like that will this job be successfully done (original emphasis).

\textsuperscript{12} From here onwards translated from Sinhala.
Figure 17: List of NGO programs presented at the National Mental Health Week (both implemented as well as proposed activities).

- workshops on PTSD and trauma counselling for NGO volunteers (by international trauma specialists often members of ISTSS)
- counselling services for victims of torture, traumatised people
- mental health awareness program for village headmen, family health workers, nurses, doctors, police officers, teachers, armed forces
- mental health education/promotion at grass root level, in remote areas
- counselling training (e.g. for government officials such as police officers, prison officials, schoolteachers)
- training in befriending (suicide prevention)
- trauma centres
- stress management program
- crisis counselling centres
- workshops and seminars on child abuse
- empowerment program for women
- psycho-social rehabilitation project for mothers and wives of disappeared JVP insurgents
- play therapy
- life enrichment program
- group therapy and role plays
- art therapy (music, origami, clay modelling, theatre)
- relaxation therapy
- culture friendly approaches: music, dancing, drama, meditation
- alternative therapies: relaxation, hypnotherapy, hypno-exorcism, yoga, acupuncture, transcendental meditation
- first aid
- physiotherapy
- community rehabilitation of disabled ex-servicemen (occupational therapy)
- rehabilitation of released detainees (vocational training, self-employment schemes, loans)
- credit schemes
- half-way houses
Figure 18: Information leaflet on 'stress' produced by one of the national mental health NGO's.
Figure 19: Information leaflet on 'counselling'.

Figure 19: Information leaflet on 'counselling'.

COUNSELLING
Figure 20: Information leaflet on 'empathy'.

Empathy

* Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. It involves being able to put oneself in another's shoes and experience what they are experiencing.

* Empathy can be developed through active listening, validation, and reflection.

* Empathy is an important skill in many aspects of life, including relationships, communication, and problem-solving.

* In the context of counseling, empathy is essential for building a strong therapeutic relationship and fostering trust with clients.

Counselling

* Counselling is a professional service provided by trained therapists to help individuals address personal, emotional, or psychological issues.

* Counsellors use various techniques, such as active listening, empathy, and reflection, to support clients in gaining insight and making positive changes.

* It is important for counsellors to create a safe and non-judgmental environment for clients to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings.

* Counsellors may work with individuals, couples, or groups to address a wide range of concerns.

* Empathy plays a crucial role in the therapeutic process, as it allows counsellors to connect with clients on a deeper level and provide meaningful support.
During the debates of national mental health week one public servant made the Health Minister's message more explicit, and spoke with a frankness which would be almost unthinkable in many other public contexts:

[7] As a government official I find it very difficult to be friendly, most of the government people under pressure have this, I think that they believe that the government institutions belong to them, 'our hospital', 'our department', the patients have no rights, the hospital belongs to us, to the people who work there, not to the patient, in the NGO sector its not so bad, of course in Sri Lanka unfortunately there are other problems now, we see two hundred patients in two hours, so we cannot be friendly, but in the NGO's sometimes, we can be friendly, I think that while being in the government services we have to try to be friendly (psychiatrist working at Angoda).

While the crucial role NGO's have played in organising mental health care services is recognised by most of the officials attending the National Mental Health Week the NGO's links with foreign donors and mental health professionals is nevertheless a sore in the eye of many nationalist politicians. The Minister of Health and Indigenous Medicine continued his vibrant speech as follows:

[8] With the National Mental Health Task Force, of which I am the Chairman, we are preparing to do everything for the mental health needs of our society... a National Action Plan which will be implemented nation-wide. In the mental health sector there are the personal frustrations, the personal contact with the patient and the community that cannot purely be done by paid professionals and the paid staff of the government. It is there that the volunteers of the NGO's are really important. The NGO's, the non-profit making organisations, they are to serve the people, they have the mental capacity and ability to support the people, to talk about their problems and to thus implement mental stability, mental courage and strength, we are very happy that the NGO's are prepared to do that but I have - I will tell you what - the NGO's who work with the people without understanding the cultural, religious background of our country, without understanding the language, but I noted some of the NGO's, some are very good, most of the NGO's, they write very good reports in English and present them at international symposiums, but these symposium discussions do not bring us more results, indeed some are very good for the purpose of finding funding sometimes and also for foreign institutions to come, but our main objective is to reach the man in the village, to go into the difficult areas in the country and find what their problems are, go and ask questions about what are the problems of the mentally ill, find what their problems are, teach them, do some counselling there, so that is what is correct, so therefore I would like the NGO's to have a reorientation programme for you all NGO's because otherwise
all the effort which will be put into this action plan program will not bear very
good results (original emphasis).1

Within many of the speeches the need for improved institutional or community-based care
for the severely mentally ill is not clearly distinguished from the need to organise
counselling for the survivors of war and the 'mentally discouraged' and disgruntled people
in 'difficult areas in the country'. This is one of the important effects the introduction of the
international discourse on trauma has brought about. A forum has been created in which
the relation between the effects of past atrocities and an ongoing cycle of violence can be
discussed in veiled terms. The master discourse on severe mental illness provides as it were
a cover under the surface of which the suffering of the victims of war can be discussed
independently from their ethnicity or political affiliation. The NGO's play a dangerous role.
Not only did they 'lead' the state sector on aspects of mental health, brought the state sector
to look at mental health in a broader sense and to engage in the promotion of mental health'
(Secretary of the Ministry of Social Services, D. Dissanayaka) but they have initiated a
public discussion on the long-term effects of insurgency and state-led counterinsurgency
and/or ethnic violence by relying on foreign funds. Their position is so precarious that the
chairman of the Federation of NGO's for Mental Health and Well-being (N. Balasingham)
felt the need explicitly to reinsert the NGO's within the nation:

[9] The NGO's and the government need to work side by side, the government's
mental health plan and the NGO plan jointly will be the National Mental Health

1 In the speech he delivered in Sinhalese the message for the NGO's was even made clearer:
"Bohoovita antar djaatikava bohoma honda ripoot' hadanavaa. Pitarataval valaghilaa laksha gananakata
ee vageema eeavaa geina kataa karanaava namut djanataavata veidaa neii. Ee nisaa eeveiri sangvidaana
valin apita veidaa neii!. Aata avashaa venne gamee punghiraala langat'a, Heemavathii langat'a,
Ruupavathi langat'a, vatee Ramanaadang langat'a Lechhami langat' a gihillaa ee vayalaageee maanaski
tattvaya geina hoyalaee, ee geina yam adahasak denna puluvan, gamenma soyaagattee sweeneya seevakaayin
daalaa, gamata gihillaa ingrisiyen kataakaralaee, keidicha sinhaleen kataa kalalaee, maanaski rooga
handuwaanaganne neeiva, gamenma toraagatta sweeneya seevayakin lalaa hondin kriyakaree apee
sangskrittin pasubimata, ape aagamak pasubimata hariyan aakaarayata gamata gihilla veida karana
sandvidaana aavashayi... Ape deeshiya pasubimata, ape deeshiya sangskat'atiyat'a, deeshiya
avahyataavayant'a hariyanya aakaariyata boohoo sangvidaana pratisangvidaanaaya viya yutuyi. Mee nisaa nee
kaaryaya pilibandave mee sangvidaana tamange sangvidaana prativyuhagata kirima itaama veidasat
vaanavaa. Mee nisaa apit radjayat mee sandahaa denna puluvan siyaluma sahayogaya labaadimata
swudaamin sit'iina bava prakaasha karanna keimati, prakaashakaramin mama ingrisiyen vachana
svapayak kataa karanna keimati'.

I paraphrase: 'The NGO's write very good reports to present at international seminars but it does not help
people in the villages. Therefore we don't need those organisations here! They go to see ordinary village
people, the Heemavathis, the Ruupavathis [typical (Sinhala) names of village women], or the Ramanaadans
or Lechhamis [typical (Tamil) names of village women] and they look for mental illnesses, just to give you
an idea, they go to such villages and speak English!, or they speak broken Sinhala!, they don't identify mental
illnesses!, the work in the villages should be done by people who know our cultural background, our religion,
our local culture, therefore we have to re-organise and restructure the NGO's, our government will support
such organisations to restructure themselves, after having made this promise I will now speak some English...
plan, we are part of the nation, and the NGO's are part of the community that is trying to develop this national mental health plan, OK?, the treatment will be done by psychiatrists etcetera etcetera, but recognising, the early recognition of mental illness is an NGO activity, rehabilitation is 101%, as far as I can see, an NGO activity, there are a lot of talks about the government's plans for rehabilitation, but I think it is for the NGO's to take a lead, and the NGO's have the capacity, they have the personnel, they have the will, they are in touch with everybody in the community, so the section of recognition, treatment and rehabilitation, NGO's have to take over, the early recognition and the rehabilitation, let the government do the treatment part of it (original emphasis).

The mental health of people in 'remote areas':
In her defence of the position of NGO's, the chairman of the Federation of NGO's on Mental Health and Well-being touched upon a very sensitive issue by pointing to the fact that the NGO's 'are in touch with everybody in the community' and reach the grass-roots level. The discourse on providing services at grass-roots level and organising counselling services for people in 'remote' areas is central to the self-presentation of NGO volunteers, while in fact most of their programmes have only been successfully implemented in Colombo. They readily boast about having been taken to uncleared areas behind the frontline by Red Cross or UN convoys to organise workshops on trauma counselling for local doctors. By these means, they evoke a link between concerned and compassionate middle-class professionals and war victims in (virtually) no-go areas.

In my interpretation, the prominence of this discourse amongst middle class volunteers should be interpreted as one aspect of the way in which the political elite copes with an increasingly deterritorialised state under siege; a state which in reality has difficulties protecting central Colombo, the heart of the business community to which many of the NGO volunteers belong. In recent years the Tamil separatists have managed to move the front-line ever closer to the centre of the Sri Lankan state (as the bomb blast on the Central Bank in 1996, Dehiwala (1996) and Maradana (1997) train stations, the Hilton and Galadari hotel in 1997 and the attacks on the President and her home (1999) have shown). Moreover during the JVP insurgency of 1971 youths from rural areas formed a serious threat to the government and momentarily took over the rural police stations. In the Southern Province they forced government agents to retreat into the coastal towns (Alles, 1990, also see appendix A). Again in the late eighties the violence was seen to emerge from 'remote areas' (Alles 1990:286,301) and as I described in part I the insurgency and counterinsurgency violence was particularly vicious in such remote areas (also see map 6 in chapter 3).
It is within this context that the discourse on the implementation of counselling programmes in remote areas and the usually very brief visits of professional middle class NGO administrators to such areas become particularly salient. On the one hand such programmes and visits could be seen as an attempt by members of the professional elite to re-establish contact with fellow citizens in remote areas, on the other hand such strategies could be seen as part of the nationalist endeavour to re-integrate remote areas, seen by an anxious urban middle class as violent and politically suspect, within the Sri Lankan state.

In other words, what looks like a decentralisation of the mental health services from one angle might look like a re-annexation of remote areas by a weak post-colonial state from another angle. I summarised some of the points made by a psychologist who provides trauma counselling in the Southern Province and who made the link between counselling and counter-insurgency tactics explicit:

[10] We need people with a professional approach, most important are the war related problems, the stress mainly revolves around this, we need crisis containment and counselling, we need a professional approach towards grief, during the student unrest [euphemism for the civil war of the late eighties] there was no proper counsellor at the university, not anybody can be a student counsellor, students hate self-appointed student counsellors, there is a political problem at the university, an uprising problem, students from the Arts faculties [who do not speak English] feel inferior, they have no people to go to when they have problems, they commemorate Che Guevara, are unhappy with the successive governments, but the main problem is that there is no support system for the students, to say 'I like you as you are'. (Hewage, K, Psychologist, Karaapitiya, my emphasis).

The discourse on the necessity to organise mental health services for people in remote areas is not an exclusive characteristic of the rhetoric of the NGO's. Public servants and politicians also stress the need to organise counselling facilities 'all over the country'. The government plans to 'train ten thousand counsellors and to develop twenty counselling centres in remote areas to help rural young people with psychological disorders' (Ranawaka, D, University of Colombo). The Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Social Services (Jegarasingham, V) talked about her ministries' plans to organise counselling programmes and workshops for public servants at the provincial level and at the level of the

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2 Within this context a question typical of critical medical anthropological enquiry (e.g. Csordas 1988, Frankenberg 1988, Kapferer 1988a) can be posed: is the trauma discourse hegemonic in the Gramscian sense of the word (see Gramsci 1971: footnote on p. 55 for comprehensive definition)? The trauma discourse could indeed be seen as an instrument of nationalism and the hegemonic power of a nationalist elite. It might help the ruling elite to 'create the conditions most favourable to the expansion and well-being of their own group' (ibid: 5). The trauma discourse can be described as hegemonic if one mainly considers the short-term interests of a nationalist elite without considering the long-term, unintended consequences of the introduction of the trauma discourse at the local level and their potential impact upon this elite.
divisional secretariats in addition to a programme on 'Lining up the youth of tomorrow through mental sports'. Not only do middle class mental health professionals re-establish contact with parts of their nation which are considered inaccessible and dangerous by means of trauma counselling programmes, but politicians intend to use the same strategy. As the Minister of Health and Indigenous Medicine eloquently described his plans:

[11] We first have to educate the people employed in high levels within the government, then we must wake up the people who do not belong to the government, after that we must let that knowledge spread in villages, across the whole country in all its corners, we must spread this knowledge like a hug, an embrace³, this wakening up must be spread to towns and across villages, therefore we must have a successful plan (translated by S. Akkaa).

*The mental health of the nation.*

It is clear that the mental health professionals are dealing with something much more central to the concerns of the middle class political elites in Colombo than the re-organisation of a dated system of institutional care for the severely mentally ill. Most participants to the National Mental Health Week agree that the impetus for such a renewed attention to mental health issues comes from the mental health NGO's. In other words, this rapid growth of a previously much neglected mental health sector is linked to the recent boom in international financial support for mental health projects in war-torn societies and ultimately the discourse on war trauma within the international humanitarian community. Transposed to a context of neo-colonial, Sri Lankan nationalist politics the discourse of international trauma specialists inadvertently became a discourse on the 'mental health of the nation'⁴.

Both government officials as well as volunteers of the non-governmental sector advocate the need for 'a national perspective on what mental health means in Sri Lanka' and for 'a mental health program for our country'. Concepts such as 'national mental illness'⁵ and 'the mental health of the nation' were routinely used by many at the National Mental Health Week and politicians praised the current government's commitment to a 'National Action Plan' implemented by a 'National Mental Health Task Force'. The message from Her Excellency The President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga read out at the

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³ The question poses itself whether these are euphemisms.
⁴ Compare this with the way in which the trauma discourse has been appropriated by Palestinian mental health professionals (see appendix C).
⁵ In the words of one psychiatrist: 'the nation suffers a bereavement overload' (Ratnavale 1997).
Photo 32: 'National' Mental Health Week at BMICH (Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall), a monument of nationalist pride.
[12] The UN has now reported that SL has reached one of the highest rates of suicide in the world, 49 per 100,000 which by itself is worthy of note. The most significant aspect of this alarming statistic is the large number of school going children who have attempted or committed suicide during the recent past over relatively trivial issues often connected to their school life. Is this the consequence of the education our children receive? We must seriously examine whether our education system teaches our children to cope with stress and the problems with siblings and with maturity and whether it makes them learn to resolve conflicts peacefully. We also see youth from all walks of life resorting to violence of various degrees and styles of provocation. For me these are the roots of a society which will develop various forms of mental illness and psycho-social problems in the coming years. We also see regarding curative aspects the vast inadequacies in our health care system to counsel and to give appropriate therapy to those diagnosed as being mentally ill. The grossly inadequate institutional care facilities we have in this country stand testimony to this. *My government* is taking significant steps to address all these areas I have highlighted; education for peace and conflict resolution, promotion of negotiating skills and dialogue without resorting to violence are high on the agenda. We are taking measures to introduce these concepts to schoolchildren via the private school curricula. With the new education reforms this aspect will be implemented instantly. We have also introduced counselling and guidance into the school timetable in the junior and senior schools...

In the proposed National Mental Health policy which is being finalised right now far-reaching community based programmes of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of those affected by mental disorders are in development. Consequently, I must acknowledge the valuable contribution certain NGO's and other private organisations have made over several years.

The significant psychological trauma experienced by the victims of child abuse, children conscripted by the LTTE and those left destitute due to the war in the North and East need to be especially addressed. As a government we recognise the social obligations and responsibilities, we begin just to address these issues that affect our society and our future generations, within our process of moving into the 21st century. In this context, I wish to congratulate the organisers of this event for bringing into focus issues of such significant national importance.

Again 'issues of such significant national importance' are addressed by means of a discourse which covers the need for institutional care facilities for those affected by mental disorders while alluding to the problem of having to deal with youthful insurgents and separatists.

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*Many NGO volunteers took it badly that this NGO uses the term National to refer to itself. Because of this together with a myriad of other political issues the 'National Council for Mental Health Sahanaya' has been ostracised by the mental health NGO community and did not become a member of the Federation of NGO's on Mental Health and Well-being.*
Many people from the mental health community in Colombo do not however look at the
needs of their country from the same perspective as some of the nationalist politicians I
quoted above.

The awkwardness of the Sri Lankan public sphere.
In chapter 7 I discussed the way in which 'spaces in between contexts' are conceived of and
constructed in the aftermath of the civil war in Udaheenagama. I preferred the notion of 'a
space between contexts' rather than the concept of a public sphere to discuss the situation in
Udaheenagama. For this analysis of the ways in which semi-Westernised, Colombo based,
middle class professionals discuss the 'mental health of the nation' I will use the notion of a
public sphere for the sake of clarity. I would however postulate a continuity between the
awkwardness (or - as I argued above - cruelty) of spaces between contexts within rural
communities and the awkwardness of public spaces experienced by the middle classes in
urban centres. Many mental health professionals included 'just travelling' as a traumatic
experience. As one psychiatrist put it 'any person travelling by bus will tell you' while
another psychiatrist euphemistically referred to 'the problems inherent in public transport'.
This is a theme that emerged many times during the National Mental Health Week as well
as in articles in the national press.

Public transport or travel on the roads takes in a large proportion of the public space middle
class Sri Lankans are confronted with on a daily basis. Large buses, white vans and jeeps
eagerly compete to drive one another off narrow roads, while poorer traffic accident victims
are more often than not carelessly left by the roadside to die. Overcrowded buses also
provide a ready-made context for sexual harassment. These issues contribute to the general
grimness of the public sphere. An NGO volunteer who lived in voluntary exile in Canada
for over 30 years described his experience of coming back as follows:

[13] What is happening to Sri Lanka? When I left Sri Lanka the people were
happy, my friends were friendly. When I came back I realised that there was a
tremendous amount of tension amongst people, I mean// I wouldn't be surprised
if you would not know what I am talking about, you see it on the streets, stress!
there is an immense need in the country, we need our people to be smiling
again, and we can do it (my emphasis).

The National Mental Health Week provided a setting for a moment of self-reflexivity which
would not regularly occur within the national/nationalist heavily censured media or even in
ordinary conversation. Mental health professionals took advantage of airing their views on
the 'general deterioration in manners and lack of courtesy' and the 'pervading sense of fear,
suspicion and distrust' amongst their fellow citizens, or - to put it more bluntly - the fact
that 'people got used to increasing levels of violence'. The discourse easily slips from a position of self-reflexivity to a position of distanced spectatorship, which is especially revealed in the focus on public transport: 'one needs only to look inside a passing bus and see severe psychological distress'. One speaker however had the courage to include respected middle class people, who would not routinely partake in grim forms of 'public transport' as part of the problem:

[14] In order to deal with the problems you have to increase the mental health of the nation, you have to shift the whole mental health of the nation, we are wasting our time only working with these people [the severely mentally ill] I would like to talk about what we call normal and abnormal, the war in the North and the East and its bearing on the mental health of the nation, what have you thought? any, any thoughts? There are so many people involved in the war, on the side of the government, on the side of the LTTE. What about the people who are conditioned to see another person as an enemy and kill him. Large numbers of people are used to this lifestyle. They are used to this. A particular person came to me and said 'I don't want peace' that person said let people fight and fight, this was actually said by a very senior person, a respected person. Now, if we don't have a program for these people, that will be the norm of the day in Colombo, we need a program for all people who are kind of used to violence... I went through the international literature [on war trauma], Gulf War Syndrome and all that. I don't think that is applicable to Sri Lanka, the problem has to be tackled from many directions. (Dr. H. Jayawardene on 'Multidisciplinary planning in mental health', government official, Forensic Medicine, Sri Lankan Army, my emphasis).

In is within such a context that NGO volunteers and trauma counsellors are presented as 'brothers and sisters', 'mothers and fathers'. Much like women in Udaheenagama evoke the ethos of the house, the gedara and export it to the rather awkward spaces in between contexts (see part 2), kinship terminology is used for middle class people who have taken up the task of addressing the issue of the grimness of the public sphere and the ongoing cycle of violence. NGO volunteers are thus seen as playing a role in the re-colonisation of the public sphere by household mores. This dynamic reveals striking parallels with the ways in which Udaheenagama women deal with the high levels of violence in their immediate surroundings.

A modernist, decontextualising approach to violence.

The discourse on trauma has thus taken on a life of its own in the hands of Sri Lankan intellectuals and Colombo-based NGO volunteers. It has ceased to be a medium restricted
Photo 33: Middle class healers selling patchwork and colourful pillows at charity fair for 'Mend a Mind Fund' inaugurated by the Mayor of Colombo and initiated by the Prime Minister.
Photo 34: Participant in a workshop on cognitive behavioural therapy (organised by a psychiatrist working for VSO) in her home.
to a *Euro-American bourgeois* social movement engaging in humanitarian actions abroad\(^7\). A large amount of the energy of the NGO's goes to finding a place within this complex dynamic occurring in Colombo: the workshops delivered by international trauma specialists, the division of labour between NGO's and governmental institutions, and the tentative organisation of a forum where the 'mental health of the nation' and the role of the middle classes in the perpetuation of violence can be publicly discussed. The paradigms of the research on the neuro-biological basis of cycles of violence have been introduced to Sri Lanka by PTSD specialists through guest lectures and workshops financed by international humanitarian organisations (such as UNICEF and Oxfam), and Sri Lankan intellectuals have readily committed themselves to this modernist, decontextualising approach to violence.

Such workshops and conferences provide a much needed forum where otherwise taboo subjects such as wide-spread human rights abuses, atrocities and an ongoing cycle of violence can be addressed. Elites in Colombo have thereby acquired a paradigm by means of which they can discuss violence without having to mention its context: the caste, ethnic origin, or political affiliation of the people involved. While the neurobiology of violence has played a positive role in opening up such a debate close to the centre of a repressive regime, its cultural impact amongst the wider population is to be questioned. As a result of this recent cultural input Sri Lankan professionals have implemented (and plan to implement) nation-wide treatment programs for violence-prone *individuals* in rural areas and remote communities. Such programs play a role in the re-establishment of contact between the increasingly distrusted political elite of a violent nation-state and survivors in rural no-go areas virtually beyond the reach of the Sri Lankan state.

While fully recognising the important role the trauma discourse plays for elites in Colombo, I now discuss the altogether different role non-governmental mental health programmes play in rural areas. Despite the discourse on the importance of organising services in remote areas, the obvious problem of many of the mental health NGO's is the lack of community outreach beyond the capital. Some NGO's have already reached the stage in which outreach centres are operational and in the next section I will look at the discourse of people working in the outreach centre of an NGO as well as discuss the interaction between Udaheenagama women and such programmes\(^8\).

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\(^7\) For a similar conclusion on the basis of the use of the trauma discourse by Palestinian politicians see Appendix C.

\(^8\) On the basis of the information gathered at the National Mental Health Week I organised interviews with mental health professionals from both the NGO's and the state sector. I used the following questionnaire as a basis for these interviews, which took a further two weeks of the total research time:
The discourse of rural war widows trained by one of the mental health NGO's.

This section is based on interviews with field officers in an outreach centre. They are war widows from a nearby village trained by the NGO's head office in Colombo. In line with the paradigm of the trauma discourse this outreach centre offers mental health services for people traumatised by the civil war of the late eighties. The program is thus oriented towards a very specific target group: victims of torture, families of the disappeared and the internally displaced. One of the first questions field officers ask the clients is whether their suffering is immediately related to the civil war, whether they 'lost a family member because of the time of great terror'. If not people have to be referred to other services.

An important part of the field officer's task is to collect information⁹ and make up a file for each client. Most of the field officer's day-to-day activities consist of administration and the referral of people to other services, either governmental or non-governmental. They play a very personal and active role in these referrals. More often than not it means that they actually accompany low-status people and speak for them to government officials.

- What is 'counselling'? What is 'social work'? What is the difference? Do we need more counsellors or social workers?
- Is it worth making a 'social service effort' before starting up counselling programmes?
- Is there a need for working amongst the middle classes themselves (for example organising counselling and workshops for public servants) or is the grass-root level more important and why?
- What do people mean by a 'culturally friendly approach'?
- Is it a problem that some people playing a role in the Advisory Boards of NGO's do not know the cultural and religious background and language of the people they serve?
- Is there a cultural gap between the service providers in Colombo and the people working for the donors in donor countries?
- Should the NGO's be seen as a pressure group to lead the government services onto a particular path, or is there an inherent contradiction between the two and should the NGO's primarily focus on doing independent work?
- What are the possible roles of the Municipality, the Provincial Councils, the Divisional Secretariat.
- Why is it difficult for a person working for the government to be friendly?
- What does 'mental health of a community' and 'the mental health of the nation' mean?
- Does religion play a role in personal day to day involvement in the high pressure type of job of NGO volunteers? (Do some NGO's have a particular religious orientation?)
- How do NGO's manage their relationship with party politicians?

In addition I looked at the way in which the vocabulary of the trauma discourse has been translated into Sinhalese by analysing the information leaflets published by a number of mental health NGO's. I have chosen however not to include these data into the thesis. I have opted for an outline of the reasons why the discourse on trauma plays an important role amongst Sri Lankan intellectuals and the reasons why an increasing amount of trauma counselling services or mental health services might be expected to be implemented in rural or remote areas. For lack of space I then move directly to a description of the discourse of field officers in an outreach centre, a discussion of the way in which Udaheenagama women use the programmes of the mental health NGO's and a consideration of the possible cultural impact of such programmes.

⁹ For example the information on 'The distribution of extreme violence in the divisions of the Matara district' (see map 6 in chapter 3) has been gathered by the field officers of this outreach centre.

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about claims for compensation, war-related land disputes or problems with education. They also refer people to local, governmental mental health services or to non-governmental counselling services in Colombo.

In this sense their role is extremely similar to the role played by regional politicians in urban areas. During the evenings and at weekends one can often see large groups of people on the porch of a politician's house. These people have made an appointment, plan to discuss a problem with the politician who refers them to particular people within the government services or writes reference letters for them. It is not uncommon for politicians to have quite a few secretaries or scribes especially employed to write reference letters for followers. The field officers of the NGO argue that because of their presence during encounters with government officials low-status people, who would normally get turned down in a rude manner by the state's bureaucracy, get help. Government officials have got to know the field officers and because of this the NGO workers can get the work done quickly for their clients. By means of becoming a member of a national mental health NGO these rural war widows trained to be field officers have taken up a role which up to now was dominated by regional (pre-dominantly) male politicians.

A last aspect of the field officers task is of course trauma counselling. To introduce trauma counselling in a context dominated by the acoustic cleansing strategies I described in chapter 4, and more generally in part 2, is indeed a bold endeavour. For a more detailed description of the field-officer's activities I quote them at length. Their discourse is heterogeneous and comprises of aspects of the mental health discourse acquired during training sessions in Colombo (which I underlined) as well as a typically local way of talking about the problems of the post-war society (see bold sentences).

[15] When I send a letter to one person, I get the addresses of many people whom disappeared during the civil war. We collect information in this way. After having gathered the addresses, we go to their houses to meet them. We go into 'the field' (fiild'eeke yaavi). The fact that we go to their house strengthens them. The people living in the neighbourhood watch closely who is going in and out. Commonly these are marginal people (konvelaa). They were left alone and were marginalised. When somebody is visiting such a house [of misfortune] the neighbours watch closely, to see who comes and goes to this house. Because their neighbours were watching closely when we arrived our

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10 In one of the field officer's words: 'Not all [officials] are like that but eighty percent of the people [in the government] are people without humanity (manussakamak neiti aya)'. This is an expression routinely used by Udaheenagama people to describe yakaa-like people (see chapter 6).

11 As Fairclough (1995) argued the heterogeneity of texts (both spoken and written) is a sensitive indicator of cultural change (2).
visit strengthens them. Their mental condition (maanasika tattvaya) develops/grows because of this visit... We visit them two or three times. Sometimes a relation, a friendship develops between us and them like amongst family members... Even those who usually threaten a lot, when we go there however, they get friendly with us and talk (L)... Most often the people who get this mental thing (maanasikava meevenne) are the people who were detained in army camps and who were beaten. It is those people who most commonly suffer from mental illness (maanasikava veit'ila). Those whose brains have been through bruises and cracks, the ones whose body has been hurt. Those always suffer mentally. They can't speak about their illness. They can't even tell their mother and father what's in their minds, or their siblings. Sometimes when we get very close to them they tell us, when we keep asking/ask and ask, they tell us things they wouldn't even tell their parents.

The 'field officers' have readily taken over the discourse about 'going into the field'. Even the villages these NGO workers themselves come from and the villages they return to in the evening are referred to as the 'field' at times when they occupy their position within the outreach centre of the NGO. Despite their adherence to some aspects of the mental health discourse they readily address local issues. They allude to the fact that many households and neighbours live in complete isolation from one another (also see chapter 5 on the 'preservation of contexts') and they consider their visit as playing a role in opening up of imploded social contexts. They also mention the fact that people do not readily talk about their suffering to close family members and friends (the reasons for which I discussed in chapter 4) and again they see themselves as playing a role in this very culturally-specific reaction to violence. Their description of their roles as counsellors also very clearly reflects their dual allegiance to both the discourse of mental health NGO's\textsuperscript{12} as well as the local discourses on violence and fear-related illnesses I discussed in part 2:

\[16\] The counsellors work at the head office [in Colombo]. We also have been given the training as counsellors. A doctor called ... [a member of the ISTSS], came from abroad to train us. He also 'did counselling' to us. He did it better than we can do it. We do counselling in an ordinary way. But in Colombo, after having talked to people for a long time, they take the 'deep down mind' (yai'ihita gannavaa)...the things people usually wouldn't say, they somehow take them from them, we must take them out (el'iyat'a ganna)... We must always keep our eyes directed towards people when we do counselling to them. There is also 'the method of sitting down' (vaad'ivena kramayak) [literally the

\textsuperscript{12} They also readily include middle-class orientalist ideas about a culturally-friendly approach to mental health (see figure 17). As one field officer remarked: How they do counselling in those religions... They plead to a god isn't it? They plead near a cross, that is also like counselling, isn't it? In our religion, in Buddhism also, meditating methods belong to counselling. It is something you do alone, you collect your thoughts (hita ekalas karaganna), that is also like counselling. Yoga methods those are a part of counselling itself also.
There is a method of talking (kataakaranna kramayak). Talking with our eyes, our face, with our whole posture we must tie them to us (beindagannavaa). We put them in a position (tattvaya), in which they can't keep any secrets. We talk to them in a friendly way. If we talk to a person while doing other things, while watching our watch, while scratching our heads, while looking in all directions his attention (avadhaanaya) will not get directed towards us. Therefore we should only counsel people after having finished all our work. We listen, we don't say anything. We look straight at the client (dihaam balan). First we listen and then we say 'There are many people like you who have been referred to us. [sounds kind and slow]. It is not only you who comes to us with such problems and has talked to us. The things that have happened to them! Not half of it has happened to you!'. We say this to make their minds lighter (hit'a seiheillu). How do we do this? That client has more problems than the others, but we always put the client into a less grave situation than the others. Then the client thinks 'aa I don't I have more problems than that person!', or the client quickly says, that she too has problems like that. In this way we do counselling. We take the information out of the clients. We must be there with the client itself, we must talk, we must be friendly, we must create a familiar situation so that we can even touch/hold the client by the hand. We must build up trust, otherwise they won't speak.

Their discourse reflects the propagation of Western-style interaction by Colombo-based Sri Lankan mental health professionals; the organisation of a 'conversation' by means of eye contact, the 'sitting down on chairs method' and the use of touch. Other aspects of their description of counselling remains strictly within the sphere of village discourses on illness and suffering. Words and information have to be taken out of the client. This is expressed by means of the same vocabulary used by village women to describe how their fears are taken out of their bodies during domestic cleansing rituals (see for example transcript 18 in chapter 2). The need of Western style eye contact readily becomes the need for a 'straight gaze' (diva balanavaa, looking straight at something); a theme which regularly occurs when people discuss the nature and efficacy of the gaze of deities or yaksha (beilma, disht'iya).

Their further description of counselling made this link with indigenous concepts more explicit:

13 Consultations at the government's psychiatric hospital in the provincial town do however not follow the rules of interaction advocated by Colombo-based professionals. Commonly 20 to 30 people gather around a psychiatrist sitting at a table. Many people are served at the same time. No single dyadic interaction is maintained for a long span of time. The psychiatrist quickly moves from one person to the other, addresses the problems of one person, quickly directs the attention towards other patients before returning to the first one again. The psychiatrist thus works his way through a large number of consultations (about 200 patients an hour) in a circular way. This method of interaction is also used at the grocery stores and very much resembles the way in which the shopkeeper pleases the many customers he tries to serve at the same time. Also, these situations are very similar to the lack of focus on dyadic interactions or 'conversations' I encountered during interviews, which I described in chapter 4.

14 For a critique of the applicability of the Euro-American notion of 'conversation' in Udaheenagama see chapter 4, section 4.2.
They [the clients] have told me that **we are like deities**. They say we are their gods, when we help them a lot, they think and say we are gods. Even if we talk that is enough, they say 'even if you talk that is a relief (sahanayak) to us'... Counselling is different [from eidurukam, small-scale cleansing rituals]. In the past counselling didn't exist. It [counselling] sometimes has Buddha's (budugun'a) qualities in it. It **[counselling] is like reciting the Buddha's qualities.** These recitations (gaatha) have an effect upon the head. Usually you say those [gaatha] to gain tranquillity and benefit (setak shaantiyak). Counselling might work like that sometimes// though it isn't really like counselling, is it? That was in ancient times, counselling only came recently. Though **attagaha meitirum (small-scale domestic blessing ritual) is a little bit like counselling//** but counselling doesn't happen by doing a tovil (large-scale domestic cleansing ritual). A tovil frightens, those yakku come and jump upon you... The **moral mistake of being alone (tanikam doosha) and things like that might be cured by rituals (eidurukam), but terror (baya) or a terrified heart (hita bayayi) cannot be cured by means of domestic cleansing rituals (tovils).** The illness that has hit the mind can sometimes not be cured even if you would dance 1000 tovils, let alone one. So if you don't give counselling or medicine in the correct way that person will stay in the same condition.

The field officers discourse about tradition is not very different from the discourse of Udaheenagama women I described in part 2. Much like many Udaheenagama women they are critical of large-scale domestic cleansing rituals (tovil) and the ritual specialist's role in healing the hearts terrified during the civil war¹⁵. They easily convert their discourse into traditional illness narratives to describe the suffering of close family members. Their personal illness history again, however, reflects an intermeshing of the discourse acquired during their training as counsellors and more traditional ways of talking about illness. I quote from a conversation with two field officers who were talking to me at the same time, interrupting one another regularly:

[18] W2: Yesterday I went to the [private] hospital and had a scanner of my head, because of **a headache.** We both have no husband, disappeared during the time of terror. During that time we stayed without sleeping for a long time, we tired the brain, cried and **'this and that' happened for many years.** They said that it is because of 'that' that I am getting a headache. When you get a headache our mothers and fathers think this headache is caused by bhuuta doosha or yaksha doosha [the yakku]. Sometimes they do eidurukam [small scale healing rituals], they will dance tovils, make offerings. But in order to think that this headache is caused by 'that fact' [the civil war and the disappearances] to think that much, and to understand that much they are not developed/educated/ clever enough. So I think you can't cure it with any other

¹⁵Also see discourse on manussa bayayi, fright of humans in chapter 2.
method other than counselling. W1: Even if you dance a tovil, this headache won't get better. W2: When I have a problem, I get an unbelievable headache on this side of my head. When a problem comes to my mind, this whole side along with the eye starts hurting //W1: They [counsellors from Colombo?] told me I have another problem: tears don't flow from my eyes// W2: [about the headache] The pain goes on for a long time//W1: No matter how sad I am, I don't cry, tears don't come out of my eyes, that is very bad. I get a headache because of that. W2: It is good if tears flow. He [the doctor at the hospital asked whether I have a problem that affects me mentally and he did a brainscan.

The field officers belong to the group of fearless women I described in the first part of this chapter. They fully realise the risks involved in their job. Because of their job they belong mainly to the sphere of the 'spaces in between contexts'. When prompted they talked about threats and their fears related to visiting unknown communities. They nevertheless continued to work for the NGO:

[19] There were times I escaped maybe because of some merit (pin) I gained earlier. I think because we help other people that we have the [protective] gaze of the deities upon us. If that wouldn't be the case we would be doing a job 'holding our life in our hands' (pan'a atee tiyanan) [risking our lives].

Calling in the services of mental health NGO's from the point of view of Udaheenagama women.

Udaheenagama women's participation in the programmes of the outreach centre in Matara, the District capital is surrounded by secrecy, suspicion and competitiveness. Visits to this NGO resonate with experiences such as searches for the disappeared during the civil war, participation in court hearings against enemies, or bribing of local politicians in order to acquire a death certificate for disappeared family members and to start up the application process for compensation. Bereaved women are careful not to divulge information about NGO's to other war widows in the village in order to gain maximum advantage in the competition to receive compensation. War widows complain about one another saying 'nobody tells me anything' and receive information about NGO's through government officials and politicians rather than through their neighbours 16.

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16 I must add however that some of the war widows are too disoriented to really participate in this competition. During their hectic and panic-ridden search for their husbands they had been to so many offices and talked to so many officials that the notion of an 'NGO' had simply by-passed them. Since the names of many of the NGO's (see figure 15) have gone through a literal translation into high Sinhala the Sinhala names of the NGO's are not easy to remember. Many women thus simply talked about going to 'Matara offices' thereby lumping together governmental and non-governmental services. The distinction between GO's and NGO's - a big issue in Colombo - easily became blurred in the eyes of the clients.

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Within this already tense context the definition of a target group by the NGO created additional tension. There was anger and jealousy amongst people who do not belong to the target group defined by the trauma discourse. As I discussed in part 1, the different categories middle class elites (both in the West and in Sri Lanka) use to talk about violence are difficult to apply within the *Udaheenagama* context. Therefore it comes as no surprise that *Udaheenagama* people have difficulties coping with the way in which mental health NGO's select a target group. Families of suicide victims, the mothers of deserters who have been re-captured by the army, families of the severely mentally ill, young men who have been tortured during their training in the army\(^\text{17}\) cannot be helped by the group of NGO's which emerged in Colombo as a response to the international humanitarian communities' discourse on trauma. Their neighbours, families of the disappeared or the people who were held in detention camps and were tortured during the civil war of the late eighties do however get 'outside help', a highly valued commodity in *Udaheenagama*.

War widows proudly talked about participating in the activities at the outreach centre in Matara, their bus fare being paid and receiving a food parcel and tea during the meetings. They argued the NGO 'teaches us not to think of those' [the civil war, the disappearances] and taught them how to educate the children. The field officers also lend them money for medicines. Many women expect the NGO to provide a safe place for their children. If the violence in the village would increase they plan to send their children to the outreach centre much like other villagers would send their children to relatively better-off family members in regional towns. They also expect the NGO to help them in their quest for compensation and regret the fact that the NGO cannot help them to pay for the education of their children which they often cannot afford because of the disappearance of their husbands.

Nowadays, almost a decade after the (official) end of the civil war many women are told by their family members 'not to walk [about] any more' and to focus on developing a new life at home. Their previous efforts to search for their husbands or sons and to apply for compensation have not born any results. New partners, children or parents are therefore eager not to see them make further fruitless efforts. They therefore discourage war widows from attending the meetings or training sessions of the NGO's since these maintain their status as women belonging to the 'spaces in between contexts' and delay their re-integration within the *gedara*. As I discussed in the first section many of the women whose family member disappeared and who have searched for them have become fearless and have somehow lost their strong affiliation with the *gedara* by refusing to take up a role within

\(^{17}\) When *Udaheenagama* people bring up the topic of torture they invariably talk about the torture of young conscripts during their initial training period in the army.
domestic cleansing rituals. Most of the women who participate in the NGO activities belong to the category of what I called 'fearless women'. They sometimes inhabit an awkward position in which on the one hand their suffering cannot be alleviated by means of domestic cleansing rituals but on the other hand they cannot rely on support from home to go to the outreach centre either.

When family members withdraw their support, such women often cannot find a chaperone to accompany them on the journey to Matara and are forced to stay home. The high levels of suspicion and fragmentation within the community makes it highly improbable that war widows from different households would travel together, and above all discuss their problems in front of one-another at the outreach centre. The rationale for participating in training events organised by the NGO also somehow loses its strength once it is transposed to the village context. War widows are trained by the NGO to engage in community-based mental health care activities. They are taught how to identify people who are likely to commit suicide or develop major mental health problems. Coming from 'a house of misfortune' and operating within a community constituted by a conglomerate of well-guarded, almost isolationist social contexts (see part 2) their 'community outreach' capacities are often limited. Despite these drawbacks, the letters sent to them by the NGO and/or the occasional visits of the field officers are a much cherished source of strength and hope. Outside contacts strengthen people against the threats from neighbours¹⁸. None of the families of the disappeared in Udaheenagama claim to have received compensation yet, but continued visits to Matara re-invigorate the hope for compensation and a better life in the near future.

The trauma discourse as an agent of discursive and societal change.
The discourse on trauma put into practice in the rural South of Sri Lanka fed into a pre-existing culturally-specific change that occurred in the aftermath of the civil war: women's fearlessness¹⁹. In the case of the NGO under study, it were fearless women who became

¹⁸ That is the way in which our presence made sense locally. In order not to be seen as an agent of the NGO under study I only mentioned the NGO and conducted interviews about this NGO in the last month of fieldwork. People did not connect us with this NGO but nevertheless used our presence in very similar ways to which they use the services of the NGO. Soon enough after the start of fieldwork I had difficulties meeting new people in the community. The people I had already met regularly complained about not receiving regular visits and kept careful track of my movements. I was often scolded about not coming often enough and this dynamic dominated the fieldwork right through to the end. The presence of outsiders, be it field officers of an NGO or anthropologists, was used to make interactions with enemies living in the nearby neighbourhood less threatening.

¹⁹ This partially follows Nordstrom's (1992) statement that 'Western interpretations of suffering are mostly introduced in 'culturally destabilised spaces', where social relations are disrupted, a shared sense of reality is challenged and cultural knowledge might be heavily disabled' (268). I would not qualify Udaheenagama as a
field officers and trauma counsellors. Women from *Udaheenagama* who had been searching for a disappeared relative for prolonged periods of time, the majority of whom had become fearless, were particularly inclined to participate in the activities organised at the outreach centre of a mental health NGO.

If one looks at the ongoing NGO activities from the point of view of contemporary *Udaheenagama* debates, one could argue that these activities support the position of fearless women within the community. While the majority of the community considers fearlessness as an aberration, as a characteristic of *yakaa*-like or *yakshini*-like people (see chapter 6), the NGO activities now provide an outside legitimisation for fearlessness. In other words, whereas fearlessness would once have been derided as an aberration, the NGO's support fearlessness as a viable form of sociability. I am very much aware that this is part of the well-meant 'empowerment' programmes of mental health NGO's. However, within the *Udaheenagama* context, fearlessness represents a controversial aspect of 'empowerment'. NGO personnel however construct fearless women who participate in the training events organised by the NGO as empowered, while the women suffering from terrified hearts, life-long *disht'iya*, or the women who take up the role of the sick person during large-scale domestic cleansing rituals (*tovil*) are constructed as being in need of mental health services. What used to be normal fear- and terror-related illnesses have become war-related mental illness or trauma, while the abomination of fearlessness is constructed as empowerment in the discourse of women participating with the mental health NGO's.

The discourse on trauma has thus inadvertently taken up a role in the local dynamic between women afflicted by life-long *disht'iya* at one end of the spectrum and fearless women at the other end. As I discussed in part 2 and in section 8.1., while reacting to the same crisis situation, these two groups of women advocate a different model of post-war societal re-organisation. On the one hand, women afflicted by the *disht'iya* contribute to the preservation of contexts and the organisation of society into small-scale bounded social units. On the other hand, fearless women provide an alternative model of post-war social re-organisation. These women do not organise domestic cleansing rituals, but rather attempt to build up a life outside/ beyond the domestic sphere.

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context in which cultural knowledge is heavily disabled but do consider fearlessness as an element of cultural destabilisation.

20 In the sense that these people where neither *yakku* nor human, they were *yakaa*-like.
Women with terrified hearts, however contribute to the social fragmentation of the community and the neglect of the extra-domestic sphere, which can be associated with ongoing low-intensity violence. It is too early for me to make categorical conclusions about fearless women's contribution to the cycle of violence based upon the data presented here. Because their illnesses are rarely interpreted by their mothers as caused by terror and fear, fearless women's children might be more prone to become fearless themselves. While fearless sons might terrify the community as yakaa-vagee minissu, fearless daughters might refrain from the cautious discourses on violence of their mother's generation. As I documented in part 2, it is cautious discursive strategies which are especially vital in the containment of widespread modernist violence. This potential link between women's fearlessness and future forms of modernist violence is thus what has to be born in mind when considering the local impact of the discourse on trauma.
CHAPTER NINE
Concluding discussion: The power of ambiguity.

_UDAHEENAGAMA_ discourses on violence are often ambiguous. The notions of the gaze of the wild (_disht'iya_), the fear of the _yakku_ (_yaksha bayayi_) and of terrified hearts (_hita bayayi_) enable people to speak about a variety of forms of terror and violence in veiled terms. By means of these ambiguous terms, the reality of domestic violence and the discourses about such violence constitute a blueprint of sorts for discourses about non-domestic types of violence, including the atrocities of the civil war of the late nineteen-eighties. The ambiguous discourse on domestic violence typically arises out of a situation in which the perpetrator lives nearby; in the same household. It is an extremely cautious discourse which uses the power of ambiguity to avoid provoking the perpetrator. Escalation of the conflict is avoided, enabling the victims to continue to live with their aggressors.

The situation in the aftermath of the civil war is very similar to this domestic scenario. Insurgents, informants to the Special Task Forces, killers and their families live amidst their victims. These victims' suffering is expressed in a language and terminology which is intimately related to situations of domestic conflict, such as 'can't stay', 'the gaze of the wild', or 'the confusion of the terrified'. At a discursive level many forms of extra-domestic violence are addressed as if they were instances of domestic violence. Ambiguous idioms used to describe and interpret domestic violence are used for the description of political violence and war. As I have argued, the resulting ambiguity plays a role in post-war forms of conflict avoidance and helps perpetrators and victims to live together in the same crowded neighbourhoods.

The linguistic cultivation of ambiguity and uncertainty also contributes to the post-war social re-organisation of _UDAHEENAGAMA_ society. The greater part of this community has survived in the form of small-scale, well-bounded, regularly cleansed social units. Discursive strategies for talking about violence can be considered a form of acoustic cleansing in which people carefully avoid using dangerous words, and re-present or make present the inauspicious, the un-respectable, the unsociable or the wild. By means of the use of euphemisms, zero-anaphora and the avoidance of the names of un-respectable or sick people and those of their houses the domestic sphere is safeguarded from the intrusion of danger and the wild's linguistic form and pronunciation. The excessive use of reported speech enables people to maintain dangerous words as it were 'in transit' and to maintain a safe distance from such words and their referents. By means of this style of everyday
conversation within the domestic sphere, family members are safeguarded from illness and moral decay and the household is continuously cleansed.

The transposition from the domestic to the extra-domestic sphere of cautious discursive strategies, such as the use of euphemism, zero-anaphora, and the avoidance of personal names fosters a rigorous localisation or cellularisation of enmity and hatred. Members of the wider community typically have difficulties fully understanding such strategically ambiguous discourses. This wider audience is intensely involved in making sense of ambiguous communications and in imagining the referents (people and events) that are touched upon by a deliberately vague discourse. The degree of clarity depends on the degree of closeness to the speaker and the speaker's household. Such cautious discourses thus bring about a particular, 'cellular' distribution of knowledge within the community, in which people close to a particular household are relatively well informed while people who live further away in the neighbourhood are relatively ignorant.

The culture-specific use of reported speech is another discursive strategy which contributes to the creation of an atmosphere of uncertainty and doubt once a small-scale communicative context is transcended. When a statement has not reached a speaker via a well known friend or family member, or by a chain of known interlocutors the information is transmitted by means of the reported speech marker -lu: 'it has apparently or allegedly been said that'. Moreover, the ever-present possibility of such statements being boru, 'obvious pretence' makes people weary to take such communications within a wider context ('out of context') at face value.

Statements thus rapidly acquire the quality of hearsay or rumour and the speaker's responsibility is accordingly dispersed. These discursive techniques ensure that unambiguous information and knowledge about everyday life and a violent past remain encapsulated within a relatively small-scale context such as a nuclear or extended-family. By restricting the free flow of information and creating uncertainty amongst interlocutors in the wider community, these discursive strategies prevent local conflicts from spilling out into the wider community and mobilising larger-scale, collective forms of hatred or revenge. This feature of cautious discourses is what has led me to identify such cautious discursive strategies as a factor contributing to the containment of modernist violence: the avoidance of collective forms of action against a whole group or category of people.

I have further argued that the application of essentially domestic discursive strategies such as euphemisms used in talking about violence outside the context of the domestic sphere
also play a role in the cycle of containment of violence in the following way. Because the perpetrators of the civil war era are qualified as yakaa-like people, they are effectively lumped together with disobedient sons or abusive spouses, who are spoken of in the same way. By means of this denomination, violent people from other families and neighbourhoods were metaphorically compared to violent family members, i.a. to troublesome sons. In my analysis this euphemistic form of reference to killers is not a trivialisation of extreme violence, but rather a means of re-integrating those with blood on their hands into the moral economy of the household.

I further argued this played a role in the cycle of containment of violence. The use of the dehumanising notions of yakaa-like people (yakaa-vagee minissu) or the gaze of the wild (dishti’ya) to allude to abusive or violent family members represents and brings about a fissure within the household. A distinction is made between ordinary (samaanya minissu) and yakaa-like people and in this way people can distinguish themselves from violent family members. By using the notion of yakaa-vagee minissu for non-family members, people likewise evoke a fissure between a perpetrator and his family. In my understanding this establishes a (symbolic) link between a victim’s and a perpetrator’s household, between the fissures in a victim’s household and the fissures in a perpetrator’s household. Victims have the option of tacitly acknowledging that a perpetrator's household is suffering from the perpetrator's presence as much as they, themselves suffer from abusive or violent family members. Young perpetrators who are qualified as yakaa-like by their victim’s families are not only enemies but are thought of as causing trouble and suffering within their own families as well.

The discursive strategy of calling perpetrators yakaa-like is not in this analysis purely a form of reprobation or condemnation, but rather goes hand in hand with the limitation of violence and revenge. A local cycle of containment of violence is very much dependent upon the disassociation of a perpetrator and his family. Revenge may be taken upon an enemy but his family was largely left alone. This was the way in which the community narrowly averted a much more widespread outbreak of violence in the late eighties. In my analysis, the use of the notion of yakaa-vagee minissu for insurgents or killers of the civil war metaphorically disassociates perpetrators from their families, much like the use of this same metaphor within the family disassociates abusive sons or husbands from their families. The application of such household vocabularies or metaphors within the extra-domestic sphere and surrounding violent society might thus reflect and promote attitudes towards perpetrators and their families which are crucial for the containment of violence.
While these cautious discourses on violence and cleansing strategies undoubtedly played a role in avoiding an outbreak of widespread, modernist violence in the late eighties, their possible role within an ongoing cycle of low-intensity violence cannot be ignored and requires further questioning. The organisation of society into small-scale, well isolated social contexts has led to the creation of liveable contexts for perpetrators and to a high degree of integration of violent individuals within the community. The strategic ambiguity of discourses on violence results in a 'truth' which is located at the meeting point between individuals, and is largely dependent upon the interpretations of the listener. The diffuse types of truth which result from such ambiguous types of communication do not readily lead to a 'public outcry' against the perpetrators of the civil war, but rather lead the community into accommodating such 'perpetrators'.

I used the term perpetrator for heuristic purposes only and this is certainly not an emic category. The Udaheenagama discourse about perpetrators is context-specific and cast in the language of who said what to whom, who did what to whom and for what reason. In Udaheenagama people who are considered perpetrators/enemies within a particular small-scale, cellular context of family and neighbours can relatively easily shed this identity when entering the wider society or the spaces in between contexts. There they might be considered to be 'so and so’s enemy' or 'yakaa-like' but are not labelled as 'killers', 'deserters', or 'insurgents' against whom collective action should be undertaken. For this reason they continue to make 'spaces in between contexts' unsafe. They might be denounced to the police or the army by their local enemies but people from the wider community largely tolerate them despite the fact that they bring about further terror, suffering and fear-related illnesses.

The community's attitude of tolerance towards such perpetrators is mirrored by the fact that most people concentrate on domestic cleansing, strategies of non-identification with the extra-domestic sphere and segregation from the wider society. The most frequently practised traditional cleansing techniques in fact neglect spaces in between contexts and focus on life within the domestic sphere. Domestic cleansing rituals deployed for the rigorous protection and preservation of small-scale social units indiscriminately affect the immediate neighbourhood. During those brief moments of ritual activity the near-by neighbourhood is as it were conceived as a repository for the wild; the wild excluded from the domestic sphere. A social world is thus imagined which is the sum of a few, idealised, cleansed domestic spheres and the society in the immediate surrounding is periodically excluded from this vision. Very nearby houses or spaces in between contexts are neglected and are readily relinquished to the wild; a conception of the wild which includes the
ongoing low-intensity violence caused by perpetrators of the civil war era as well as the post-war era.

In the aftermath of the civil war, however, many women however opted out of these traditional ways of dealing with danger and terror. Such women proclaimed that the atrocities they witnessed during the civil war made them fearless. They no longer suffer from fear-related illnesses, do not need domestic cleansing rituals and argue their children do not suffer from fear-related illnesses either. Their strategy of survival is therefore radically opposed to that of women who suffer from terrified hearts, the gaze of the wild, organise domestic cleansing rituals and engage in cautious discourses about violence. Women suffering from terrified heart argue fearless women have sharp tongues, speak carelessly and without fear. Moreover, fearless women's daily activities are not restricted by fear or a concern for the avoidance of fear. They readily attend frightening cleansing rituals together with their children and embark on long journeys in search for disappeared husbands, arrested deserters, or to organise their claims for compensation.

It is especially these, fearless women who participate in the activities of the outreach centre of a national mental health NGO which operates on the basis of the trauma paradigm. I thus re-framed the question about the cultural impact of the trauma discourse in a non-Western context like Udaheenagama as a question about the way in which mental health NGO's strengthen the position of fearless women within the community. Training programmes about primary mental health care readily label women who suffer from the gaze of the wild or engage in domestic cleansing rituals as mentally ill, while the trainees (often fearless women) are considered empowered. The mental health NGO's thus take up a very clear-cut position in the debate between women afflicted by the gaze of the wild on the one hand and fearless women on the other, each advocating different forms of survival and post-war social re-organisation.

Unlike the survival/ cleansing strategies of afflicted women, fearless women's strategies do not increase the social fragmentation of the community. However, their fearlessness poses different problems. The question is whether fearless women's children - whose illnesses are not interpreted as fear-related and whose lives are not dominated by the danger of suffering from a terrified heart (hita bayayi) - will adopt the cautious discourses on violence of the majority of people of their parents' generation. Fearlessness (unlike the notion of 'memory', see introduction) has become the key term in this analysis of the cultural impact of the trauma discourse. The question is to what extent the normalisation of fearlessness in this and the next generation will bring about less cautious discourses on violence, a
concomitant erosion of social contexts and make the community particularly vulnerable to cycles of modernist violence.
Photo 35: Offering tray at the entrance of a house in Udaheenagama.
Figure 21: New year's card sold in the streets of the province's capital.
In Brief

OVERSEAS aid should be directed at strengthening the military and intelligence services of poorer countries, the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, said in a speech signalling a radical shift in policy after the Government's recent failure to intervene more swiftly in Sierra Leone and demobilise the combatants.

Figure 21: Postscript- 'In brief' (The Guardian Weekly March 3rd 1999).
APPENDIX A.
Echoes of party politics and armed struggle in Udaheenagama.
Authority, conflict and terror at the village level.

Contradictory outcomes are possible: either the old society resists and ensures itself a breathing-space, by physically exterminating the élite of the rival class and terrorising its mass reserves; or a reciprocal destruction of the conflicting forces occurs, and a peace of the graveyard is established, perhaps even under surveillance of a foreign guard (Gramsci 1971:185, my emphasis).

Introduction.
The frightful clash of 'terrorists' and 'state', 'governing party' and 'opposition' occupies the mind of a large community of distanced as well as frenzied spectators in Sri Lanka and abroad. The reality of violence is wrapped into various public discourses going from the self-justification of national political parties to Amnesty International reports and sociological analyses of political groups. Researchers gathering material from interviews with political leaders, public speeches, or media sources have provided ample evidence of 'the logic' of the struggling forces.

Another side of this reality is the phenomenon of socio-political violence as experienced by the average citizen (cf. Nordstrom 1992:260), the day to day violence related to extreme deprivation (Devisch 1995, Spencer 1990), the carnage going along with popular uprisings played out in the larger context of the life worlds of the people. In this appendix I move through the different levels of political practice - local, national and international - in order to give some background information on the dialectic between mainstream politics and popular organisation at the village level. I raise questions on the manner in which the global context is appropriated for the legitimation of local power relations. And I reflect on the interplay of the local collective imagination and political cultures of terror infiltrating into village life. This is intended as a means to convey some of the recent political history as relevant to the situation of the protagonists of the study; the people from Udaheenagama.

1. A brief view from above.
To start with, I will present the political players in the national arena as they are caste in the political categories of modernity. I will describe the current political climate seen 'from above', through the eyes of urban middle class discourses. The United National Party

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1 This appendix was written after the pilot study, before I conducted more in-depth fieldwork in Udaheenagama. It provides historical background information, as well as a brief image of the current political situation.
(UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) form the two major parties and have been competing to gain 'state power' since independence in 1947. The UNP represents the 'right-of-centre', the SLFP the 'left-of-centre'. Since August 1994 the SLFP is governing under the name of the People's Alliance (PA) coalition, receiving support from about seven minor parties (Samarasinghe 1994). The Sinhala - Tamil ethnic conflict, the war waged against the LTTE in the Northeast has been a continuing source of political instability. Not only is it driving the state towards near-bankruptcy, creating a threat from below each time subsidies are cut and food prices increased, but it takes a central position in electoral debates amongst middle-class Sinhalese nationals.

Subsequent governments have promised to make a genuine effort to 'solve' the ethnic conflict. In this quest they are often caught in a double bind, on the one hand they need to satisfy the Sinhala chauvinists among the electorate and on the other hand they value the support from minority parties representing plantation Tamils and Tamils from the Northeast. Failure to capture an absolute majority in Parliament by either UNP or SLFP means they must rely on the goodwill of these minority parties to ensure a minimum working majority. This could create some awkward situations when there is an almost equal distribution of seats in Parliament between UNP and SLFP, resulting in an all-important role of the minority parties as they are choosing their alliance during parliamentary debates. Moreover, these Tamil, minority parties are often not representative of the Tamil people as the turnout for the elections in the war zones is often minimal because the LTTE opposition to elections impedes these political parties from conducting a normal campaign and discourages the people from voting.

Apart from the UNP, the SLFP and their changing alliance with minor parties, the 'extreme left' the People's Liberation Front, the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) represents a third major political force. The JVP has been wavering, since the mid-sixties, between mainstream politics and guerrilla warfare. This youth movement grew out of the Peking wing of the Ceylon Communist Party as a political party but quickly resorted to guerrilla warfare during the 1971 insurgency in which they almost managed to topple the government. After their defeat they reappeared as a political party in the early eighties but

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3Amongst these minor parties giving their support to the SLFP are the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), the Up-Country People's Front representing the plantation Tamils, Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), and the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), all three small Tamil parties representing the Northeast (Samarasinghe 1994).
were quickly banned from political participation due to their alleged role in the anti-Tamil riots in 1983.

At the end of the eighties (1988-1990), however, they appeared in an even more violent form, deploying a regime of terror counteracted by an equally violent reaction from security forces and other paramilitary bodies. A staggering number of people - about 40,000 according to some sources (Chandraprema 1991) - were extra-judicially killed and/or have disappeared (Amnesty International 1993, 1995). At that time the UNP was in power, and they were held responsible by their opponents for the gross human rights violations perpetrated by the security forces and pro-government death squads in their struggle against the JVP.

During the electoral campaign leading to the victory of the People's Alliance (PA) coalition in the parliamentary elections of August 1994, the SLFP deployed three major electoral strategies. Firstly, they addressed the lapses in democratic practice of the previous UNP led government, secondly they gained support from some of the Tamil minority parties by promising a political solution to the ethnic problem and thirdly they took on board some of the demands of the JVP (Samarasinghe 1994). The SLFP campaign, tapping into the public outrage over the civil war of 1988-1990, promised not only to fight corruption, but as well to bring the perpetrators to justice.

After their electoral victory this resulted in the appointment of three Presidential Commissions of Inquiry Into the Involuntary Removal and Disappearance of Persons which received information on thirty thousand cases of disappearances during the first two months of 1995 (Amnesty International 1995). President Bandaranaike herself was present at the excavation of three mass graves and approximately twenty sites were exhumed in the Southern part of the country by relatives of the disappeared in the first half of 1995. During this same campaign the PA presented their intentions to prepare a base for a political settlement of the ethnic problem and work on a devolution package that would give the Tamil population of the Northeast limited forms of self-rule. When the JVP presented a candidate for the presidential elections the SLFP was aware that a considerable part of its electoral base might turn to the JVP. They then negotiated a withdrawal of the JVP candidate by promising the abolishment of the Executive Presidency by July 1995. These three promises constituted the starting blocks of the People's Alliance government in 1994.

Shortly after the PA government came to power, it embarked on a process of negotiations with the LTTE, and managed to establish a cease-fire which unfortunately only lasted until
April 1995, after which the LTTE resumed the war. An attack on two oil depots in Colombo in October 1995 attributed to the LTTE, was followed by an attack on the army headquarters in November, an attack on the Central Bank office in central Colombo in January 1996, and the bomb explosion in a passenger train in Colombo in July 1996. These attacks in central Colombo were continued on a regular basis, the last one being an attack on the President's residence in December 1999.

The large amount of civilian casualties in Colombo shocked the Colombo-based middle class and the LTTE thus managed to introduce the terror of war suffered by the masses in the Northeast into the life-world of the ruling class. Rumours were spread that hundreds of LTTE suicide bombers had been dispersed throughout Colombo and the South of the country to carry out missions of death and destruction (cf. Weekend Express, 1/9/96). In the aftermath of attacks in the capital the number of arrests of Tamil civilians are particularly high, prompting Amnesty International to express its concern about the treatment of Tamil detainees and the re-occurrence of disappearances in Colombo (for example Amnesty International 1996). People express a not unreasonable fear concerning the possibility of a repetition of the July 1983 anti-Tamil riots ensuing from the public outrage over civilian casualties in the capital (for example The Sunday Observer 25/8/96).

Besides the high toll in civilian lives, there is continuing public uncertainty about the number of military casualties in the Northeast. There have been several large military operations4 during which the government forces suffered more casualties than was to be expected from the People's Alliance's promises of a 'quick and decisive victory' (The Sunday Observer 25/8/96). The LTTE, often referred to as a guerrilla force or 'terrorists', seem to have developed the capacities of a conventional army as was demonstrated by the capture of the Mullaitivu base in the North in July 1996. Due to press censorship, there was no complete account of the events available in Sri Lanka during the month of August. Rumours circulated that there were about one thousand five hundred soldiers in the camp at the time of the attack and that very few people managed to escape (confirmed by Weekend Express 1/9/96). This gave rise to more popular unrest than was recorded at massacres of army personnel during previous operations. Protesters displaying posters expressing public discontent about 'Mullaitivu' were charged with arousing communal violence and arrested

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4The major military operations over the last two years include 'Operation Leap Forward' in July 1995, 'Operation Riviresa-I' in December 1995, when the government took control over Jaffna town, 'Operations Riviresa-II and III' in April and May 1996, and 'Operation Sath Jaya' in July 1996. Concerning Operation Riviresa-I a reporter wanted to publish that 600 men had died and 2,500 were injured, after being censored it was released as 'about 300 men have laid down their lives and close to 1,000 have sustained injuries' (The Sunday Leader 1/9/1996).
The high number of casualties in the North and East and the uncertainty about them is thus another source of ongoing grass-roots political instability.

This same (urban and rural) Sinhalese community is currently coming to terms with the massacres of the JVP insurgency of 1988-1990. By March 1996 the Presidential Commissions of Inquiry - having received information about thirty thousand disappearances in the first two months of its mandate - had not heard evidence in relation to more than half of the complaints put before them. The commissions were given a final extension by the government of three months and in June, amid widespread protests, they were given further extensions until the end of September 1996. The commissions are the motor of a massive popular mobilisation and obviously cannot cope and do not have the means to deal with the widespread demand for justice.

People critical of the Commissions attack the current 'freedom to frame' which permeates Sri Lankan society. It is suspected that grieving relatives attempt to frame political opponents for war crimes as malign opponents go public on piecemeal evidence. As one newspaper states 'Commissions today have become engines of gaining political mileage' while draining public funds (Weekend Express 1/9/96). This discourse places the politics of human rights and commissions of inquiry among the wider culture of political victimisation as it has occurred during several previous changes of government. As the opposition seizes power public servants or teachers loyal to the previous government might loose their job or be transferred to remote places. UNP politicians recently made a formal complaint to the government about the escalation of intimidation and killings of UNP supporters by powerful SLFP politicians - the 'People's Alliance thugs' (The Island 3/9/1996). One can indeed ask the question how the Commissions of Inquiry are conceiving of their task within the current climate of escalating UNP-SLFP rivalry and violence.

An additional factor of unpredictability hanging over the Colombo political scene is the rumour about a JVP re-grouping. 'JVP on comeback trail' (Weekend Express 1/9/96), 'Sri Lanka's South Still Smoulders' (Perera 1996); such headings are stirring the collective memory of UNP and SLFP politicians alike. It is widely recognised that the contributing factors that lay behind the 1971 and 1988-1990 JVP uprisings have not been sufficiently

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5 Various public rallies and meetings of the UNP have reportedly been violently disrupted by PA oriented thugs, while the local law enforcement authorities failed to intervene as they succumbed to political pressure (e.g. Negombo, Matugama, Kesbowa, Kurana and Katunayake incidents). Allegedly there is a marked increase in PA thuggery victimising UNP supporters even going to the extent of killing them (The Island 3/9/96).
dealt with; the frustration and anger of the unemployed youth in economically backward areas have not dissipated. The youth's confidence in traditional political formations and coalition politics seems to be waning again. In the Southern rural areas, there are indications of a re-emergence of the politics of extreme violence of the JVP (Perera 1996:47).

However, this time there is a basis for political negotiation as the JVP is politically represented in parliament by the MP for the District of Hambantota, of the Southern province. When asked his opinion about reports that the JVP is once again agitating to topple the government by non-democratic means the JVP MP dismissed them as utter lies (The Sunday Leader 28/8/96). Maybe, instead of focusing on the JVP one should ask a wider question (cf. Ibid.:48 ), whether in the context of the current hardships and suffering the kind of politics that the JVP once represented can emerge again. This question marks my point of departure away from an investigation of urban middle class political discourses towards an initial consideration of the situation in *Udaheenagama*.

### 2. External sources of authority\(^6\) and their local appropriation.

As a way of anticipating my analysis of local forms of political violence in *Udaheenagama* in the main body of the thesis I present below a literature-based description of local forms of authority. I build this preliminary description on ethnographic material of village political life (e.g. Leach 1961, Spencer 1990) and detailed historical accounts of the JVP movement (Alles 1990, Chandraprema 1991)\(^7\).

In contemporary village life, the most prominent secular external source of 'authority' and prestige for young men is constituted by political affiliation to the national parties. Relationships with powerful local UNP or SLFP politicians, receiving their authority

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\(^6\) Throughout this section I will use the term 'authority' instead of 'power' in order to create a conceptual space less dependent on the connotations of the traditional concept of power. The word 'power' carries along some meanings that constitute its essence in Western societies (Clastres 1989:13). Power is realised within a typical social relationship of hierarchy, subordination and even coercion or the legitimate use of violence (Clastres 1989:11). An alternative form of political leadership is referred to as appeal, charisma (cf. Deleuze, Guattari 1988:378, 383). Authority could be seen as an intermediate term on a continuum of power, authority, and appeal. The term 'the authority of appeal' seems more 'natural' and less contradictory for the Western ear than 'the power of appeal'.

\(^7\) These two authors give detailed reports of the historical events of the JVP insurgencies in 1971 and 1988-1990. Alles, while being a Judge of the Supreme Court, was appointed a member of the Commission of Inquiry that dealt with the insurgents of 1971. He thus largely draws his information from the court cases conducted in the early seventies (Alles 1990). Chandraprema, a social scientist from the Southern province closely followed the events of 1987-1989, and reported on them in the form of newspaper articles which appeared in The Island in the first half of 1990, and were subsequently published in book-form (Chandraprema 1991).
partially from their position within the party hierarchy, play a crucial role in the definition of identity and standing. The phenomenon seems to be something different than what can be covered by the term 'political patronage', which describes the interaction between politician and client as utilitarian and based on the quest for economic advantage (cf. Roberts 1994:112). Indeed, within the current economic circumstances, only a minority of the population acquires economic benefit through political affiliation.

Political parties form an external source of legitimation of social position in a local context pervaded by a sense of irony and cynicism. Social positions are rarely overtly challenged, but people are well aware that, in private, positions are not always taken too seriously and satire and irony form a merciless practice of challenging status inequality (Spencer 1990:165). As social life is dominated by the everyday insecurities of status ambiguity, the idiom of party conflict is a welcome medium for creating and expressing social differences and defining social boundaries. The choice between 'the left' and 'the right' commonly depends on family allegiances, long-standing quarrels, or current personal disputes; one belongs to the party of one's friends and opposes the party of one's enemies. Local politics are strikingly free of the ideological divisions manifest in urban discourses and the electoral bases of 'left' and 'right' are similar, involving as much poor as rich people (Spencer 1990:212). Hatred and envy are dressed up as 'political' differences and the label 'UNP-SLFP conflict' is fluid and serves multiple purposes.

The style of authority acquired through participation in party politics reveals parallels with pre-colonial and colonial techniques of appropriating external authority. In pre-colonial times the Buddhist divine kings were the locus of supreme moral authority and control; a kind of authority named the 'Asokan style' (Roberts 1994:57). The Sinhalese kings were greatly influenced by practices constituting the Buddhist state of the Asokan empire. In the third century BC, the empire was ruled by the Buddhist, god-like king Asoka based in Northern India, whose power and omnipotence resided in his moral righteousness and Buddhist devotion (Ibid.:60). The symbiosis of Buddhism and kingship embodied by the same person allowed for a god-like veneration of the king as well as for the institution of a moral order very much dependent on the person of the king.

This spirit of moral imperialism was taken over by the Sinhala kings as Buddhism invested them with immense authority (Ibid.:68). They deployed draconian measures, often involving cruel forms of torture against those who transgressed their moral rules (Ibid.:60). The notions of *siima* (translated as boundary) and *pirivara* or *pirisa* (translated as retinue) - referred to as South Asian notions of power (Kapferer 1997: Chapter 5) - were potent
symbols of monarchical authority. The establishment of the boundaries of the ceremonial centres - the cities of the ancient kingdoms - through circumambulatory processions (*perahera*) reinstating the boundaries of the city as well as the king's dominance over the whole society were crucial for the regime. Power equally meant control over people, the homage paid by acolytes and disciples, the admiration and devotion of a retinue (Ibid.:67).

At the village level similar notions of 'boundary' and 'retinue' constituted local notions of authority. Personal authority was then lived as control over paddy land, the boundaries of property being an important means of talking about personhood. Control over paddy land entailed control over people, authority was perceived as over lordship of an estate and its inhabitants, a field and its labourers, a sort of 'retinue' (Spencer 1990:102). However, this style of authority was conceived of in relation to the authority and moral order instituted by the king; it implied ratification from above (Spencer 1990:202). Being a holder of paddy land meant participating in the ritual order organised around the king, and offering services to the king in return for the trickle down of moral virtue embodied in the person of the king (Ibid.:103). The Asokan style of authority, notions of boundary, retinue and the power of the Buddhist state permeated local understandings of social position and the sense of personal authority: 'the Asokan persona' (Roberts 1994).

Apart from paddy cultivation, however, slash and burn (*chena*) cultivation was a widespread practice, with small vegetable gardens scattered around the forest areas. This practice was associated to a lesser extent with the previously described notions of boundary and retinue. Unlike paddy cultivation, it drifted across the landscape, no land ownership was involved, everybody could participate and it thus often escaped classification within the local system of authority (Spencer 1990:108). The mode of social organisation around *chena* cultivation can be described as egalitarian and inclusive (Ibid.:113), and the cultivation's lack of boundaries and the relative absence of a hierarchical organisation of 'followers' accounted for an alternative to the 'Asokan' style of social organisation in the pre-colonial era.

During the three centuries of colonial rule (1515-1947) by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British, Asokan themes were re-enacted by a new set of authority figures running the colonial administration. Village headmen and district officers were treated with extreme forms of hierarchized respect and almost god-like veneration. They have been referred to as the 'little kings' of the colonial era8 (Roberts 1994:107). Together with monks and locally

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8The practice of this type of authority was not confined to the regions falling within the former Kandyan kingdom but was equally present in low-country localities (Roberts 1994:106).
powerful men, they reproduced the style of authority of the royal state mimaetically. Common people adapted a habitus of subordination (ibid.: 58) not unlike the practices related to the Buddhist kings. This involved styles of address reflecting total subordination, ancient mechanisms of social distancing and a language of negotiation imbued with an awareness of a monarch-like moral authority. The idea of royal authority was also very much transmitted and kept alive in the collective imagination in the form of folk plays, temple iconography or popular stories (ibid.: 96) The alternative mode of social organisation was discouraged, as slash and burn cultivation was made illegal. People continued this centuries-old practice but it lost its all-inclusive character. Since it was illegal, people had to obtain some kind of 'permission' from the local agent of the colonial state who was controlling the flow of information between village and administration (Spencer 1990:219). Chena cultivation thus became dependent on relationships with these 'Asokans' and was frequently incorporated within the Asokan system of authority.

Moral authority however lay not only in the hands of these 'new Asokans' but was partly delegated to the colonial courts. Civil servants were soon overwhelmed by a deluge of legal complaints related to land disputes, and they were surprised at the 'litigious nature' of the Sinhala people. Was litigation the 'favourite village sport'? (Leach 1961: 41) Disputes were generated and worked through in the realm of land and property, and conflicts about land, boundaries, or 'followers' were played out in the arena of the colonial courts (Spencer 1990: 104). The petition became the most common mode for the expression of covert accusations (ibid.: 222) and the British institutionalised the petition as a general administrative mechanism through which people could make claims or redress their grievances (Roberts 1994:109). Through its Asokan legitimation of the authority of local civil servants, as well as through the colonial courts and the acceptance of petitions as a mode of appeal the state maintained a pivotal role and was made relevant to the daily lives of a great majority of village people.

These reflections on common themes in pre-colonial and colonial styles of state as well as local authority lead us to an investigation of the forms of authority practised by local politicians in the parliamentary democracy of the post-colonial era. Party politics provided possibilities for a new generation of 'Asokans' to emerge (Roberts 1994:109) or rather for the proliferation of new variations on the same theme. The competition for political office or links with important party members at the local level has had a profound historical significance in the sense that it was re-affirming the role of the state (national parties) as an essential external source of authority and pivotal centre of society (cf. ibid.: 110). National party discourses, in whatever form they were re-invented at the local level, form a
prominent source of moral authority. Party political practice could well be a site where aspects of the Asokan persona have been reproduced (ibid.: 90) as the politician builds on legitimisation from above while engaging in a classical relation of monarch-like superiority towards his followers.

The style of interpersonal interaction between a superior and a subordinate reveals an interpenetration of hierarchical and monarchical ideas (Roberts 1994:108). Local political leaders have, on occasions, overtly associated themselves with symbols of Sinhala Buddhist kingship (Kapferer 1988) and thus emphasised their quest for monarchical majesty. The question remains, however, as to which degree these embodiments of royal authority achieve sympathetic resonances among the populace at large (Roberts 1994:93). This calls for an analysis of the ways subordinates engage in relationships with local politicos. Western observers have been surprised at the excess of deferential behaviour and the extreme humility with which the favour-seeker approaches the politically-connected (Spencer 1990:85).

However it remains to be seen whether such styles of address involve total subordination of the self to a god or king-like moral authority, or whether it limits itself to the contemporary tactics of subordinates and pragmatics of negotiation (cf. Roberts 1994:108). Interestingly enough, the new 'potentially-Asokan' politicians engage in a rich mixture of discourses, as themes of Sinhala kingship and cosmology are used together with language drawn from liberalism, radical socialism or democratic populism (Roberts 1994:116). Empirical analysis of the popular responses to these syncretic practices might throw more light on the intricacies of this changing political culture.

Political affiliation is not only the medium for the practice of authority in the village; the competitive idiom of party politics also offers a forum for the articulation of local discontent and conflict. Party political identification has been described as the successor to the nineteenth century penchant for litigation and petitions to the colonial authorities (Spencer 1990:210). Changes in the rural economy due to industrialisation and capitalist globalisation resulted in a large number of people doing alternative kinds of work that do not involve traditional paddy cultivation or the ownership of land. This created a lacuna in the local sociology of authority based on siima (translated as boundary), pirisa (translated as retinue) and the links with the royal authorities or colonial courts mediating land disputes (Spencer 1990:104).
The mass appeal of party political rhetoric could be partly linked to this growing vacuum in the social discourses about hierarchy, authority and social boundaries. People had to look elsewhere for a social idiom based on common experience (Spencer 1990:128) to define collective and individual identities, notions of 'boundary' and 'retinue'. This common experience often ceased to be paddy cultivation and became increasingly defined by village political life. This involved retinues based on party political affiliation, the creation of politicised places (e.g. neighbourhoods) dominated by one political group and the inscription of the boundaries of these politicised spaces in the landscape by means of processions (perahera) organised by a single political party (cf. Spencer 1990).

In recent history, however, other forms of external authority were made available to the local population. During the JVP insurgency of 1988-1990, in the wake of the widespread infiltration of the JVP into the army and other government services, the state used a special police commando unit, the Special Task Force (STF) in a war which became increasingly dominated by the battle of intelligence services. The Special Task Force, was already known in previous years for its tactics of 'disappearance', torture, and its collaboration with plainclothes pro-government death squads (Amnesty International 1993:2). The 'communist' JVP insurgency and state-run counterinsurgency might have been caught up in the global machinery of cold-war politics as there are rumours that the US military together with the Israeli forces organised 'training sessions' for STF personnel. Did this involve the most modem brands of counter-insurgency techniques, 'high-tech' forms of intimidation, interrogation, community destabilisation or torture?

A detail of a recent Amnesty International report (Amnesty International 1996:22) reveals some worrying dimensions of the availability of these well-trained, up-to-date intelligence services to the general public. While the Ministry of Defence put forward arguments about the fact that people were only arrested on 'reasonable grounds', those reasons included anonymous petitions provided by the local community. Whether this has been a widespread practice during the 1988-1990 insurgency can only be speculated upon, but its possibility resonates with the historical role of petition-writing in drawing in outside forms of authority. Contemporary petitions and anonymous messages might draw in the macabre, and rely on the 'moral' authority of death squads.

From 1995 onward, another source of external moral authority - intimately linked with the institution of the state and particularly with the SLFP and the victory of President Bandaranaike - was made available in the form of the Presidential Commissions of Inquiry. The overwhelming popular participation in the use of the Commissions is, on the one hand,
a direct consequence of the widespread atrocities of recent years. On the other hand one cannot forget the historical accounts about the 'litigious nature of the Sinhalese', the excess of land disputes appearing in the colonial courts and some contemporary critical voices that address the possibility of a widespread practice of 'framing' of enemies as war criminals before the Commissions of Inquiry.

The current government has publicly announced that no persons disappeared during the latest JVP insurgency are being held in detention camps. The bodies of the disappeared are thus placeless, present in the collective memory as scattered around the landscape in mass graves or moving around the houses of their relatives as the ghosts of the never-buried. The aftermath of the war is characterised by a borderless chaos of survivors, disappeared and perpetrators living together in a community overshadowed by an atmosphere of uncertainty and suspicion. The Commissions are recruited as an external source of authority to legitimise the re-ordering of the community and to construct social boundaries between groups of perpetrators and groups of victims.

People might re-group themselves around the accusations made at the Commissions of Inquiry, political lines might be re-cut based on accusations of murder and disappearance. Local political leaders might try to re-establish their (Asokan) moral authority and re-create a retinue with clear boundaries by referring to the ongoing procedures of the Commissions. Disputes projected into these Commissions coalesce around 'the disappeared'. In the current situation, persons, human bodies form the contested materiality around which the personal sense of boundary and legitimate following are re-organised. The question remains whether this can be seen as a re-experiencing of an Asokan quest for *pirisa* and *siima* - notions belonging to the realm of agriculture and pre-colonial styles of authority or to the land disputes of the colonial era - within the contemporary context.

Another possibility is that the Asokan styles of authority of party political organisation might be challenged in this situation of scattered boundaries. The dead might not have a definite political affiliation as long as the perpetrators are unknown and followers might have become highly volatile as a result of the uncertainty going along with indiscriminate mass killings. A new generation of 'Asokans' is challenged by the possibility of bereavement and mourning without claims for revenge and the non-political atmosphere going along with it. This political culture-in-the-making could become confronted with a major section of the population that has lost its interest in politics and retreated to a private space filled with grief and directionless indignation.
Here I briefly want to touch upon the importance of the reaction of grieving women whose gossip constitutes another layer of public discourse. 'Strong, fierce' (seira) women with 'sharp tongues' (kat'a seirayi), more than men are said to be unable to restrain their tongues or contain their anger. As their malicious gossip is spreading, they are said to be fanning the flames of disputes within the male politicised world (Spencer 1990:182). Their role in the contemporary process of societal rehabilitation will be the main focus of this study.

3. People's Liberation Front: A rupture with 'state' forms of authority?
I now question the relation between village social organisation and the JVP or rather the styles of authority and social organisation the JVP stands for. I first want to reflect upon the historical continuities or rather discontinuities in the composition of the popular bases of the 1971 and 1988-90 insurgencies. In 1971 the vanguard of the revolutionary movement were the rural educated youth\(^9\) who had gone through higher education but were nevertheless unemployed. They were essentially 'village boys', who had attended rural schools, then went to university and now moved along with the landless peasants. While their education made it more difficult to follow the footsteps of their parents and take up traditional occupations (Alles 1990:254,341), it was nevertheless understood that despite their education they had no access to the close-knit, English speaking ruling elite in Colombo - a legacy of the colonial administration - who were/are monopolising the job market.

This educated, unemployed youth, living in the rural areas became organised under the JVP banner. The JVP did not follow the Cuban model of revolution, a revolution waged in the absence of a political party with a popular base, rather they advocated a fully-fledged proletarian organisation, an organisation from below. Education programmes on Marxist doctrine and training camps were organised on a wide scale. It has been stated that the organisational structure was so secretively and intelligently built that it was almost impossible to destroy (Alles 1990:315). The JVP operated on the basis of a cellular organisation at the village level (groups of five or ten revolutionaries), town and district leaders and a close-knit group of friends around the JVP leader Wijeweera.

\(^9\) Some detailed data, based on the personal history of 10,192 suspects summoned before the Commission of Inquiry dealing with the 1971 insurgency reveal that: the average age of the insurgents was 20 years, 92 % were from the Sinhala Buddhist rural sector, 20 % from elite classes (administrative positions, security services, professions), 6 % with parents in middle administrative positions (Ayurvedic physicians, middle grade in government services, clerks and teachers), 40 % from the lower middle class, 17 % were unemployed and under-employed, 12 % were students, and 10 % were from the age category between 15 and 19 (students from secondary schools) (Obeyesekere 1971).
During the 1988 - 1990 insurgency however the popular basis of the JVP was very different as members from the criminal underworld were recruited and a more dangerous group of semi-educated youth from remote villages joined the organisation (Alles 1990:286,301). The nucleus of the military wing of the JVP is said to have consisted of army deserters, thugs, criminal elements, people of low intellectual calibre, 'psychopaths' or 'sadists' (Alles 1990:301), and more often than in 1971 armed gangs were involved that had no political affiliation with the JVP but used it as a convenient cover for their criminal activities (Alles 1990:291).

There was a change of style of leadership at the top too; all the power became concentrated in the person of Wijeweera, later on accused of being a megalomaniac, murderous fanatic, leading a life-style not unlike Ceausescu or Honecker (Alles 1990:298). The general public as well as the government was used to focus on the popular basis and conceive of it as a 'youth' rebellion while by then the JVP was allegedly (Chandraprema 1991) a 'hard headed and cynical organisation under the ruthless and despotic leadership of Wijeweera' (Ibid.:246).

The JVP has not been eradicated and it was predicted that, in view of its widespread network at the grassroots level, sporadic outbursts of violence from pockets of JVP supporters are bound to continue for a long time (Alles 1990:304). The majority of the people killed by the state counter-insurgency forces were local level activists, national leaders or innocent bystanders. However hard-core cadres at the regional level remain in position (Perera 1996:47) and the future of the JVP depends on them as well as on the popular response. Here it is important to analyse how the JVP might deal with the smouldering resentment in towns and villages related to the experience of decades of a kind of authority which intrudes again and again in people's everyday circumstances (Spencer 1990:260). The styles of authority offered by the JVP are highly ambiguous and constituted by, what I would call a combination of 'Asokan' and 'non-Asokan' elements.

The JVP did offer a break with the traditional, 'corrupt' forms of appropriation of external authority. It attempted to eradicate social evils such as bribery, nepotism, political patronage and waste by offering to the people themselves moral authority based on Marxist ideology. The initial program of the JVP promoted the establishment of people's militia and people's courts (Alles 1990:338), youths had the authority to punish the corrupt, the thugs, and alcoholics within a system of summary justice (Alles 1990:319). I, however want to question the pattern of interpersonal interaction practised within the JVP. Where they defined by public display of deference and monarch-like inequality or did they reveal
'non-Asokan' aspects? In other words were they *more* than a resistance of again another generation of 'Asokans' against the old ones, embodied by party politicians?

The final aim of the JVP was to gain 'state' power, to overthrow the government and to install a Marxist political organisation: a politburo under the leadership of Wijeweera, a central committee, district, town and village committees. Especially during the second insurgency of 1988-1990 there seemed little escape but to re-install an Asokan style of distribution of authority. Monarchical ideas of leadership were re-appropriated, with JVP leaders using names of medieval Sinhala kings (Kapferer 1995: 17) and gang leaders practising an interactional style mimetic of the monarchical habitus of superiority and subordination (cf. Roberts 1994:115). Wijeweera installed an almost autocratic rule as he imprinted his own moral order on society by means of terror and intimidation. Youthful criminal elements formed a useful support and they looked more like 'a retinue' than 'a popular organisation-from-below'. In the experience of the villagers this might have resonated with the experience of local party political organisation and modern state authority.

4. Ongoing culture of terror.

After this outline of the interdigitation of national discourses and village social organisation, I will now focus on the forms of terror the current political forces embody at the village level, in everyday experience. This research is not intended to be conducted during the heights of the riots; eight years have passed since the major insurgency of the late eighties and compared to other parts of the country everyday life in the South is relatively 'normal'. Nevertheless I refer to 'ongoing cultures of terror' and I want to point out how some of these previously described 'external sources of authority' function not simply as instruments of oppression but as intrinsically violent methods of manipulation installing a regime of terror of a more subtle format.

The government army, almost exhausted by the long and cruel war against the LTTE, is counting on the impoverished population to provide soldiers (The Sunday Leader 28/7/96). In this statement is implied that the sons of the more privileged classes engaging in the nationalist discourses in the press and Colombo circles hardly ever join the lower ranks of the army or die for the Sinhala cause. People are confronted with rumours about the amount of casualties and the horror of several army debacles over the past two years (cf. footnote 3). Nevertheless thousands of young men are 'deliberately' heading for the front and in certain cases an almost certain death. Poverty-stricken families are caught between army recruitment strategies and - most importantly - poverty. The reality of the war...
permeates the village as the bodies of dead soldiers are returned to their kin in sealed coffins (cf. Perera 1996:46) but more often no news is available and families live in extreme insecurity. Due to press censorship, as 'security-related matters' are kept secret during major army operations, this uninformed public of wives, mothers, fathers and friends of army personnel are suffering from the lack of news.

These are the families of the young men perpetrating and undergoing the atrocities of the war against the LTTE. There might be some parallels with a description of the situation of the youth prior to the JVP rebellion. The soldier might be the product of the blackest despair, of a disjointed world where armed struggle seems the only thing to latch on to. In a situation where youngsters do not see a clear reason to go on living in the current circumstances, where existence is marked by a total uncertainty about the future, zest for life is found in the idea of living for the good of others and dying as a creator of history (Chandraprema 1991:313). This phenomenon has been called the collective suicide of a generation and at the rate at which the army is advertising vacancies, this does not seem an exaggerated statement. This is what I call an aspect of the contemporary culture of terror haunting the villages. The combination of piecemeal information about the casualties and heavy recruitment strategies of the army are directed at people who are still grieving about the disappeared of previous upheavals and are trying to deal with a heavily disillusioned youth they do not want to lose.

The strife of party political groups has recently been enacted in ways reminiscent of the poster and graffiti wars of the years of terror of 1988-1990. During that time the JVP and the then UNP-led government were imprinting their hatred for each other on the landscape (cf. Kapferer 1995:15). Moreover these posters portrayed messages of intimidation and terror as, for example, they warned the people they would be killed if they followed the JVP orders or, on the contrary, that their family would be at risk if they did not obey the JVP rulers. The poster campaign of the current People's Alliance Government in August 1996, consists of a picture of a crushed skull pasted up in huge (up to twenty meters long) series invading the landscape (see photo 23 in chapter 6). The captions read '17 years of UNP government: a lesson to be learned' (gloss translation). Staggering quantities of these posters are on display in Colombo and provincial towns and even in Udaheenagama they cover the village shop. For the naive Western eye they are dominating the landscape, turning streets, temples and shops into macabre places.

The question is how this is experienced by the people in the South who lived through the 1971 and/or 1988-1990 insurrections. The posters are more than a means for the current
government to consolidate its position or to discredit the opposition party in front of the electorate. Families and communities of the 'disappeared' are violently confronted with the past, terror is re-enacted in order to remind them of the reasons for which they voted for the People's Alliance. In my interpretation, the posters contain a veiled threat of violence and an assertion of power, they install a subtle regime of terror. Moreover, in the more remote areas of the Matara district posters announcing the come-back of the JVP add to the general atmosphere of uncertainty and the sense of impending hardship and terror.

Discussion.
The echoes of party politics and armed struggle in the village constitute a reality unnerving a researcher trying to adapt any kind of familiar moral stance. Without the protection of middle-class political discourses which mould this field reality into more or less coherent views my impressions do not lead to more than an experience of the sinister, the macabre. Village social organisation actively engages with the contemporary global national and international political cultures. Local party politicians cultivate the links with a centralising state. These practices of local authorities can be put in a historical perspective as they reveal some similarities with styles of relating to the pre-colonial Asokan divine kings or the colonial administration. The overwhelming popular participation in the activities of the Commissions of Inquiry organised by the government - partly under pressure of the international human rights culture - forms another instance of the immersion of villagers in a global political culture.

A more awkward side of this engagement is the provision by (impoverished) communities of soldiers, joining the national army and fighting the Tamil Tigers or their use of hyper modern intelligence services available due to the practices of cold war globalisation. Here one finds oneself in the twilight zone of an interpretation of communities as political agents (cf. Das 1995:14) and a view of communities suffering an - albeit subtle - regime of terror. The recruitment strategies of the army, the poverty of a war time economy, the forms of terror involved in the current struggle of the national parties, the press censorship on information about military casualties but reversibly the detailed display of civilian victims of the LTTE permeate the everyday experience of these communities.

In view of this context I raised questions about the possible current appeal of the politics of extreme violence or of the ambiguous styles of moral authority contemporary party politics is offering. Leadership styles at the village level could indeed mirror aspects of the syncretic discourses of national politicians mixing monarchical ideas with socialism or democratic populism. However, in the view of the extreme adversities and suffering of the
almost Orwellian social world of the last two decades one realises the volatility of this local political culture-in-the-making and questions emerge about alternative forms of post-war societal organisation. In this thesis I thus set out to look at the contributions of people who do not belong to the political elite of the village, but are nevertheless engaged in the reconstruction of a liveable, social world.
I had first proposed to question the cultural impact of the introduction of the trauma discourse in non-Western cultures through an analysis of the construction of collective, bodily memories in *Udaheenagama*. This tentative window to look at this reality is very much influenced by the contemporary academic attention given to memory. In this appendix I will further deconstruct this angle of research by re-inserting the attention given to bodily memories within contemporary anthropological theory into its wider cultural context. I asked myself which paradigm on memory is implicitly present during the development of ethnographic research questions on the construction of bodily memories to analyse the cultural impact of the discourse on trauma. An obvious question is whether it is the 'anthropological' notion of habitus/hexis or the Western 'ethnopsychological' notion of traumatic memory/PTSD? In other words, would the research tools used to analyse the cultural impact of the discourse on trauma actually belong to the discourse on trauma itself?

Bourdieu's terminology and methodology was readily embraced by an empiricist tradition, his ethnographic description of 'the interior of the Kabyle house' and its female inhabitant (1977: 90) being an exemplary text. Bourdieu conceptualises the body as 'a living memory pad, an automaton that leads the mind unconsciously along with it' (1980: 68). Habitus as incorporated history (Ibid.: 66) refers to the memory of the body; bodily memory. Kapferer's research on exorcism (1997) used this discourse on bodily memory. A detailed empirical description of the exorcism of the demon *Suuniyam* makes him conclude that the healing rite 'revitalised' the habitus of the patient. The doxa, the principles of bodily and spatial organisation of the rite become embodied by the patient and this is an essential aspect of the regenerative or healing capacities of the rite. I wondered how Kapferer's book would be read by PTSD researchers. I would like to explore this by looking at the paradigm underlying the research of Van der Kolk, an example of the avant-garde of research on bodily memories within neurophysiology, and compare it with Bourdieu's/Kapferer's paradigm. As the title of this section suggests I do not see an essential difference, and I would consider them as part of a single tradition which informs ethnographic research on 'bodily memories'.

Van der Kolk situates himself within the Western tradition of research on bodily memories (e.g. Janet, Pavlov, Kardiner, Piaget). He does research on the neurobiology of bodily memories (e.g. 1987, 1989, 1993, 1994). He makes a distinction between declarative, explicit memory and non declarative, implicit memory. Declarative memory refers to the
possibility of a conscious recall of the experience, implicit memory is the memory of the body. Traumatic events are said to give rise to 'speechless terror'; the emotional impact of the event may interfere with the capacity to capture the experience in words or symbols (1994: 258). The excessive emotional stimulation of highly stressful situations results in a failure of declarative memory, but does not inhibit the formation of implicit, bodily memories. These experiences become sedimented in the memory system that controls conditioned emotional responses, skills and habits, and sensorimotor sensations. They are 'memories' at a somatosensory level, as physical sensations, visual images, or bodily habits. Van der Kolk focuses on 'the underlying psycho-biological processes' involved in these memory disturbances (1993). It is suggested that these memories are 'indelible', timeless and unmodified by further experience (1994: 261). However, they are more easily retrieved in states of heightened arousal, the state of mind characteristic of the initial experience (Ibid.: 259). The goal of treating these disturbing bodily memories is to help people live in the present, without feeling or behaving according to irrelevant bodily states from the past. In summary one could say it is about 'forgetting' bodily memories.

Now I will come back to Bourdieu's notion of habitus and the wider cultural interest in 'the body' as a problematic. I would like to question whether the history of Bourdieu's own work, reflects this same tradition of research on bodily memories and whether his 'ethnographic data' were crucially determined by this. Before becoming an ethnographer he planned doing doctoral work with Canguilhem, on the physiological basis of emotions. He wanted to discover an empirical basis for some of Merleau-Ponty's ideas in phenomenology (cf. Harker 1990: 131). Eventually he introduced the terminology of habitus, doxa and bodily hexis as crucial components of everyday cultural reality. Has he remained faithful to Canguilhem's notion of the 'wisdom of the body' (cf. Young 1996: 40), to the tradition of Cannon and Pavlov? He states:

The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and, therefore, more precious, than the values given body, made body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy (1977: 94, my emphasis).

The implicit and the explicit are juxtaposed and the implicit is conceived of as 'mental structures' (1977: 91), 'dispositions'. In my opinion this is the same paradigm that underlies contemporary PTSD research, cast into a slightly different vocabulary. Van der Kolk could be said to be describing the biology of some of these bodily 'dispositions'. Bourdieu's
notion of habitus could be extended to include 'traumatic habitus', the bodily dispositions characteristic of long term exposure to abuse or war.

Euro-American culture has highlighted this particular manner of establishing a relation with the past, this 'body', 'dispositions', or 'mental structures' form an important modality through which a continuity with the past is established for us (cf. Casey 1987: chapter 8 for examples of this phenomenon). Critiques of Bourdieu's description of this memory system have stressed how (Connerton 1989: 94, Kuechler 1991: 6) he has assimilated bodily practices to a cognitive reality, a mental program as it were. Alternative descriptions of bodily memory assert the plasticity of bodily memories which are under continuing negotiation (Connerton 1989: 94), dependent on culture-specific strategic acts of erasure and refashioning (Kuechler 1991: 33).

Much like Van der Kolk's emphasis on the 'treatment' of trauma victims and their bodily memories, these approaches stress the continuing role and radical potential of 'incorporating' practices. Some practices create bodily, habitual memories through repetitive daily enactment (Connerton 1989: 72), others are part of the exceptional event such as a healing rite which teaches the body alternatives to the habitual bodily repertoires. This is called revitalisation of the habitus by Kapferer (1997), or "l'efficacité symbolique d'incorporation" by de Sardan (1994: 22): incorporation as a type of symbolic efficacy of healing rites. The underlying paradigm, however, remains the same.

When locating my proposed research questions within a research tradition - trauma research or the anthropology of memory - I started realising the similarities in their underlying paradigms and the disciplinary dichotomy seemed less daunting. It also became clear though that the notion of memory, and more specifically bodily memory, might not be the most appropriate key concept for a critical analysis of the cultural impact of the discourse on trauma in *Udaheenagama*. As will become clear throughout the thesis, the notion of 'fearlessness' will be the key concept by means of which I compare the discourse on trauma with indigenous strategies of post-war reconstruction.
APPENDIX C
The international community of healers in their ethnographic context: The
International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies.

The conferences of the Societies for Traumatic Stress are the only easily accessible
materialisation of the international community of mental health professionals in which the
social and political context of the negotiation of differing discourses on trauma can be
observed. The 'fieldwork' period, in which I was able to conduct interviews or record group
discussions was thus limited to two weeks1. Most of the debates, however, are presented
within the formal context of scientific papers. The literature-based research on post-
traumatic stress disorder I conducted earlier (Pillen 1994) served as a background for an
ethnographic analysis of the informal contexts of discussions at the conferences.

1. The trauma discourse in practice - Political undertows.
The ISTSS conference in the Israeli context, anno 1996.

The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies includes about two thousand mental
health professionals, clinicians as well as researchers from around the world and has been
active just over a decade. The conference in Jerusalem attracts representatives from about
thirty countries - or, in some cases, from very young or still contested nations (see figure 3
in chapter 1). The event is financed by two pharmaceutic firms, the Israel Ministry of
Tourism and the Municipality of Jerusalem as well as by the sponsors of the individual
participants - often the pharmaceutic industry or academic institutions. As the chairman of
the organising committee told us during his welcome speech, the conference is not only a
unique possibility to exchange scientific knowledge but is equally important as an
opportunity to create a community of 'friends'. He suggested from the onset that the
conference was a place not only for the production of knowledge but a moment to share as
well as to contain the suffering of the 'healers'. He did not only address the audience as a
group of 'professionals' but moreover as people who have chosen to be closely involved
with people of Rwanda, Bosnia, the inner cities of the US or Chernobyl. It is in view of
this context that I waver between using the term 'professional discourse' or calling, what I
earlier referred to as the 'international trauma discourse', a 'social movement'.

The conference took place about a week after the electoral victory of Binyamin Netanyahu,
in a large hotel in the new city of Jerusalem. Over one third of the participants were Israeli,

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1 I gathered data during the Fourth European Conference on Traumatic Stress, organised by the European
Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (Paris, 7-11 May 1995) and during the Second World Conference of the
various people I interviewed were still shocked by the murder of Prime Minister Rabin on November 4th 1995 and the Netanyahu victory. Israel was depicted almost as a natural host for this conference, 'life in Israel is life in the shadow of the holocaust', Israel has fought seven wars, 'our wounds help us to be more sensitive to their pain'. Indeed, teams of Israeli trauma specialists are deployed in humanitarian actions in conflict areas, like 'expanding circles, implementing and further disseminating the knowledge acquired in Israel' (ISTSS 1996:A71): 'the natural laboratory for the study of stress' (Lazarus). Some clinicians highlighted the essentially Jewish character of this intellectual, and technical aid, for which 'the Jewish people and the State of Israel' are to be acknowledged (Gal 1995:10, my emphasis). Psychiatrists described 'what the Israeli's experienced during the Gulf war, what the chemical and biological threats of Saddam meant for those who survived the holocaust'. An army psychiatrist, in a moment of spontaneity, talks about 'what happened to one of my soldiers ...'.

A psychiatrist from Gaza, who planned to give a paper on the 'Palestinian experience as victims of torture' (ISTSS 1996:A45) was not allowed an entry visa for the city of Jerusalem. A day before the start of the conference one of his colleagues at the Gaza Mental Health Centre was arrested (The Jerusalem Post 13/6/1996). Rumours went around at the conference that the presenter from Gaza could not attend because he has to bear testimony for this imprisoned colleague. Members of the organising and scientific committee of the ISTSS wrote a letter to the Israeli authorities to request them not to obstruct the free and open exchange of ideas on an international meeting of health professionals. The highly expected speaker did however not turn up. Other Palestinian participants presented their material, and 'expressed the feelings and fears of the Palestinian people to the international community'. As one speaker put it:

> I want to express my deep satisfaction and appreciation to the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies to give me the opportunity to speak at this meeting, our people have been fighting for decades for a peace process to guarantee their basic rights.

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2 The paper intended to present the results of a survey carried out by the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme on a sample of 477 ex-political prisoners. It is a study of the methods of torture they experienced, the effects of these methods on their lives, and the effects of torture on the social structure. The results indicated that 41% of the subjects found it difficult to adapt to family life, 44% find it difficult to socialise, 20% have sexual and marital problems and 29% have serious symptoms of PTSD (abstract in ISTSS 1996: A45).

3 Three days after his arrest the headlines say 'Imprisoned Palestinian human rights activist: My life is in danger', he is a psychiatrist at the Gaza Mental Health Centre and director of the Independent Palestinian Commission for Citizens’ Rights. 'Plainclothes police searched the Gaza Mental Health Centre which he founded and claimed to find 95 grams of hashish among his papers' (The Jerusalem Post 13/6/1996).
Another presenter is introduced as the architect of the Oslo peace agreement of 1993. He stated:

The challenge of the peace process is to overcome the trauma's of the Palestinians and especially of the Jewish settlers. ... The most interesting group from a psychiatric point of view are the radical settlers movements. ... The Oslo peace process had a dramatic impact, even the settlers movements understand that the Palestinians will stay forever. Those who do not understand this have to be put in jail.

These talks were given by expert politicians and attempted to engage the audience strongly. In the fervour of the moment, the trauma discourse-in-practice revealed its powerful potentials for re-appropriation and re-formulation by political movements of populations who experience and present themselves or others as traumatised and psychologically damaged. The trauma discourse has ceased to be a medium restricted to a Western bourgeois social movement engaging in humanitarian actions abroad.

Some sessions addressed the 'national trauma' following the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin. The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies invited professionals from departments of anthropology, sociology or geography to talk about 'the healing role of societal secular rituals', or about 'the spontaneous transformation of Tel Aviv city square, where Rabin was murdered, into a sacred space and pilgrimage site' (ISTSS 1996:A69,A207). Others presented surveys, whose methodology was clearly borrowed from more conventional PTSD research, and who 'asses the impact of this national level traumatic event on the affective well-being of people, on which the subjective well-being of a nation is essentially dependent' (ISTSS 1996:A208). The audience was enticed into the atmosphere of collective mourning of the Israeli people.

In the evening, this participation went beyond the experience of being a listener in an auditorium, as the entire group of participants was invited to visit the Israel museum. The suffering of a culture is displayed in repatriated objects and the participants entered the century-old synagogues brought back from Central-Europe or India reconstructed within the museum. Entering these once-sacred spaces filled with traditional Jewish music, after having been listening all day to accounts of violence and atrocities at the conference, certainly left a strong impression on the anthropologist. The mayor of the city of

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4 The papers dealing with the murder of Rabin are titled 'Kikar Rabin as a ritual of national mourning', 'A national level trauma: behavioural and emotional reactions to Prime Minister's Rabin assassination', 'Ritual responses to the Rabin assassination', 'The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin: its impact on the mentally ill and their therapists'.

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Jerusalem, who welcomed us during the reception at the museum, however, attempted to set another tone. His speech was a ludic performance, a presentation of rainfall charts for the city of Jerusalem (East and West), a hymn of praise to the ideal 'climate' of Israel. The context and atmosphere of the conference was converted what could have been meant and experienced as the wit of a good orator into an experience of the sadness of the clownish or the absurd. The rainfall charts moreover indicated that East-Jerusalem has less (climatological?) connections with the West Bank than generally thought. During the speech, the chairman of the conference, who was initially standing in front of the audience, next to the mayor in order to introduce him, moved further away into the crowd, as if to create at least a spatial distance.

The conference as a rite of containment and a form of activism?

Before addressing the scientific subcultures of the trauma discourse I want to focus on two interlinked phenomena, the anger and suffering of this professional community and the strains of activism these engender. The issue of 'secondary traumatisation' of mental health professionals was only indirectly addressed in a few sessions (e.g. Sironi 1996). I was very aware that the people sitting around me have had first hand experience of for example the refugee camps in Rwanda and Bosnia, the realities of tortured prisoners, refugees, or abused children. Their professional experience forms a kind of initiation into a world of cruelty that remains - more often than not - hidden from the general public. Just as has been described for victims of torture (Turner 1990) - although in a lesser degree - the therapeutic community might suffer grave existential dilemmas (Ibid.:477) and experience an inability to see the world as before. Some radically change their world view, others become cynical and withdrawn, others share their experiences at conferences on 'PTSD'. One speaker emotionally addresses her paper to 'my friends, who work in Rwanda, Cambodia, and Bosnia ... here all in front of me', evoking these three worlds as a basis for solidarity and common 'survivor hood'.

In my role as an anthropologist, lacking the initiatory professional experience of people working with trauma victims, I realised I was more an observer than a full participant to the mood states of the audience. Apart from the formal structure of the conference, in seminars and seminar halls, people shared experiences in informal contexts; the coffee breaks, the luxurious lobby of the hotel, the 'meet-the-expert lunches' and I took advantage of these moments to listen to the comments people made and to interview people.

Forms of activism in this context took the form of 'building community among professionals'. These meetings constituted an effort to build working relations between for
example Israeli and Palestinian colleagues (ISTSS 1996:A177) or otherwise, as attempted in Paris in 1995, to provide a forum in which Serbian, Croatian or Bosnian mental health professionals could share information. Frequently emphasised at the conference was a commitment to link research efforts with sensitive approaches to intervention.

2. The current composition of the ISTSS as related to recent developments in trauma research.

The professional and scientific orientation of the participants at the conference gave an initial overview of the contemporary discourses on trauma. I will first introduce these in order to be able to place the people, constituting the Organising Committee, the Presidential Advisory Committee, the Scientific Committee and the Advisory Board of the ISTSS, within this broader perspective.

Biological psychiatry

Biological psychiatrists formed a strong presence at the conference, and presented research material on the pharmacological treatment of PTSD and the hormonal alterations or neurophysiological abnormalities underlying PTSD. The first generation of research on PTSD was dominated by the question whether PTSD was a 'biological reality as well as a political, social, and clinical one'? The goal of these biological studies was to validate the disorder as different from normal states or from other psychiatric disorders. This follows a general trend in modern psychiatry to attempt to find an independent validity (Young 1996:105), a close match between the findings of psychiatry and actual reality, by identifying an underlying biological process that can be verified. It was soon confirmed that trauma is essentially different from stress and is constituted by a distinct neurobiological reality.

The second generation of research tried to find a model to explain this biology of trauma and link it to clinical findings in various populations. In 1993 a major breakthrough ensued (Yehuda 1993): a conceptual framework for the neurobiology of trauma was discovered. These same researchers presented predictive thoughts about the third generation of research at the conference. Three research questions have emerged: How do the various biological factors interact? What are the (neurobiologically detectable) risk factors for the development of long-term post traumatic illness - PTSD? And what could become a specific biological treatment of PTSD (currently the pharmacological treatment

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5 This included the study of 'the acute cortisol (a hormone) response to rape and motor vehicle accidents', 'basal cortisol and dexamethason suppression of cortisol in Armenian children surviving the earthquake', 'the cortisol responses of holocaust survivors exposed in the lab to video's about the gas attacks in the underground in Japan'.
mainly consists of anti-depressants and tranquillisers) or even 'a pharmacological preventive measure against the development of psychiatric illness following traumatic events'.

One researcher concluded 'PTSD is so complicated that we should give up the hope for a magic bullet combination treatment, but we need more research...'. The 'leaders of the future of neurobiological research on PTSD' presented their ideas on 'anti-stress drugs', 'anti-emotional numbing drugs', 'drugs influencing the initial encoding of the traumatic memory' and finally a relatively new idea about a new generation of drugs, the 'ADA's' (the anti-dissociative agents), only experimented upon in the lab at the moment: 'CNQX' being one of the possible candidates.

Diagnosticians
Akin to the project of biological psychiatry, the 'diagnosticians' presented discussions about the current criteria for PTSD, or the nomenclature within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM). Their concern was with the correct diagnosis of PTSD on the basis of observable clinical symptoms, according to the universal standard of the DSM. This - although on first sight it might not seem immediately relevant for the individual patient - has important political and research implications. It allows claims for financial compensation for 'psychiatric injury' (PTSD), to be based on objective indications (e.g. claims of Vietnam Veterans, Gulf war soldiers, or Falkland war veterans). At the same time it allows for comparison of the results of different research teams conducting drug trials or assessing the efficacy of differing treatment methods as they are measured against the same objective standards outlined in the DSM manual.

A pressure group amongst 'the diagnosticians', clustered around the term 'complex trauma reaction' or DESNOS (Disorder of Extreme Stress Not Otherwise Specified) (cf. Herman 1992), envisaged an illness category 'beyond PTSD' and they had hoped it would feature in the updated classification of psychiatric disorders in 1994 (DSM IV). This campaign is interesting in the sense that they recognise that 'PTSD does not capture the full range of reactions to traumatic events' (ISTSS 1996:A85) and they try to account for the enduring personality changes or the changes in beliefs, world view or attitudes towards the self, others, or politics following complex traumatic experiences (Turner 1993,1995).

Interestingly enough, the British lawyer, taking up the court cases of a group of Falkland war veterans in their claims for financial compensation from the British government, was present at the conference in order to collect information about PTSD. An Israeli trauma specialist and consultant on the matter for the British Ministry of Defence presented his research, maybe without realising that some of his statements were eagerly consumed by a member of the audience and could be used in the near future in a quiet different context.
Far from promoting questionnaire-based studies checking upon the symptoms of PTSD outlined in the manual\(^7\), they called for diagnostic interviews paying attention to the context in which the traumatic event occurred, the meaning of the event, or the causes to which the victims are attributing the event (emphasis on personal responsibility versus global factors beyond the individual's control). They called for 'a shift of the focus of research' from the observable symptoms to the attributions of people and the meaning context and argued that 'this may help to explain some of the diversity in treatment outcome research between different populations' (ISTSS 1996:A85).

One prominent PTSD researcher rhetorically contextualised the discourse on PTSD as belonging to 'our culture of complaint and expression of personal grievances, to a world increasingly devoid of serious political utterances caught up in the descending spiral of cultural trivialities': the triviality of 'PTSD' or more generally 'trauma' research? A very critical speaker posed the question whether PTSD research does not wear 'the wrong pair of glasses', or is 'sacrificing common sense'? This position grew out of his clinical work and research on the effects of violence exposure on children's development and adjustment. He raised questions about the de-sensitisation of some children chronically exposed to violence, or the meaning of forms of violence in particular social and cultural contexts. Most research in this area, however, is designed to quantitatively measure the symptomatic reactions and does not capture the complexities of the influence of the quality, meaning, intensity, and duration of violence on the children's functioning (ISTSS 1996:A4, cf. A35). These traditional research methods\(^8\) 'loose all this contextual information and build upon empty data, emptied out by the methodology'.

**Clinicians**

Beside the papers of 'diagnosticians', clinicians involved in the individual or collective treatment of trauma survivors presented case material or treatment outcome studies. These include psychoanalysts, family therapists, cognitive-behavioural therapists, conflict-

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\(^7\) The diagnostic criteria for PTSD in the DSM-IV refer to the following symptoms: re-experiencing of the traumatic event (e.g. nightmares or intrusive thoughts, acting or feeling as if the event was recurring), avoidance of stimuli associated with the event, numbing of general responsiveness, or increased arousal (DSM 1994:209-210).

\(^8\) An example of the concern with PTSD symptomatology is demonstrated by one of the papers presented at the conference: 'Step by step to recovery: Outline and impact of a complex art therapy programme for war traumatised children from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina'. I quote: 'The program has been followed up by standardised measuring instruments, including diagnostic tests for PTSD, symptoms checklists for parents and teachers, as well as by extensive qualitative analysis of children's art and literary productions prior, during, and after the program' (ISTSS 1996:A70). The above mentioned comments would question the cost-benefit or intrinsic meaningfulness of diagnostic tests for PTSD and symptom checklists.
resolution practitioners and community psychiatrists. Here the diagnostic evaluation was more focused on the resources available to the survivors rather than on observable symptoms or signs of pathology. These include, for example, the personal resources necessary to benefit from psychoanalytic treatment, family resources and social support, or community resources. The value of the Conservation of Resources theory is presented during a plenary lecture. This paper advocated an analysis of the cycle of loss of resources of a community after a catastrophic event - how the initial loss of resources cascades into the loss of other resources - and provided guidelines for community interventions to limit resource losses and initiate gain cycles, in collaboration with local political or religious leaders of the differing 'communities within the community' (ISTSS 1996:A1). Conflict resolution projects\(^9\) are presented and critically assessed during group discussions. Trauma professionals function as outside facilitators and organise workshops for mental health workers from different sides of a conflict, or run conflict study groups with people from conflicting ethnic groups in which 'the participants encounter both their victims and aggressors, and simultaneously they are perceived as both' (Ibid.:A154). One speaker argued that familiar phenomena in victim/aggressor group processes can be better understood if seen as formed and based on the 'trauma' of both sides (Ibid.:A154).

**Politically engaged psychologists and psychiatrists**

Another group of participants was constituted by people whose political engagement takes the lead over the more traditional tasks and presentations of mental health professionals. An example was the presentation of a member of the Psycho-Social Unit of the European Community Task Force in Croatia (ISTSS 1996:A127). The 'ugly side of the aid business' and the question of 'what can trauma specialists do' were re-considered. There was a clear concern with the possibility of humanitarian interventions in areas that are continuing to be politically unstable. The trauma specialist's relation to the causes of the traumatising situation and his/her possible political impact were explored. 'To provide a therapeutic setting for testimony, and to teach human rights under war conditions is our challenge'. Here post-traumatic therapy for victims of war ceased to be perceived as a purely professional task using traditional clinical methods, but becomes a political task.

Another example of a political mission is the use of PTSD research methodology to address the current procedures asylum seekers are subjected to in the West. Delays in processing

\(^9\) These include 'Working with adversaries' in the former Yugoslavia (ISTSS 1996:A151), 'Trauma and group conflict: victim/aggressor relations in Jewish-Palestinian workshop' (Ibid.:A154), 'Examples of mid and post conflict reconciliation in India, Curacao, Cyprus, and South Africa' (Ibid.:A178), 'The effects of violence and trauma on the perception of the relevant other: the Palestinian-Israeli experience during the peace process' (Ibid.:A179).
refugee applications, difficulties in dealing with immigration officers, obstacles gaining employment, or racial discrimination are presented to the public and the government in the language of post-migration PTSD statistics (ISTSS 1996:A13).

Similarly, the conference provided a forum for the discussion of the healing value of the truth and reconciliation commissions in South Africa (ISTSS 1996:A46). Trauma and political discourse were intertwined and borrowed ideas and concepts from each other. A quite slogansque presentation argued that the 'psychological process' of the truth commission concerns the 'national psyche', currently in a state similar to 'Multiple Personality Disorder', seeking for the truth of the traumatising past in order 'to integrate different parts' of society. 'The commissions begin to repair the psychological damage created during the apartheid era, so that the nation can begin to move beyond the past, to leave it behind, and begin to look towards the future'. The nation is addressed as if it were a patient.

However, another speaker presented material that could be interpreted as a first exploration of the dangers of this cross-fertilisation between trauma and political cultures. He stated:

> The literature on trauma is replete with indications about the need for disclosure. Much less has been written about how to achieve closure, how to put an end to the forceful preoccupation with the traumatising events, and how to set limits to the therapists and clients inclination to go on with the abreactive process (ISTSS 1996:A27).

Activists taking their background knowledge on trauma and therapy with them into their political discourses and careers, might indeed suffer from the lack of insights on 'rites of conclusion to the abreactive stage' or on 'narrative solutions that create bridges between the trauma and normal life' which the trauma discourse offers them only to a limited extent (cf. Ibid.).

**Military psychiatry**

Army psychiatrists and psychologists, the majority from the Israeli army, formed a strong presence at the conference. What I would call the US-Israel axis of the ISTSS, is largely constituted by Israeli army psychiatrists and personnel of the Vietnam Administration in the US. This could incite the critic to observe that the suffering of 'perpetrators' and 'victims' is presented side by side under the common denominator of PTSD. As has been noted before 'trauma' is a neutral label of misfortune in which the locus of moral responsibility is shifted away from the self, with the result that the past of the victim and perpetrator alike become
medicalised and depoliticised (Young 1993): Are the therapists of soldiers of conventional armies, of guerrilla warriors, of militant refugees in the camps or in host countries representing the voice of perpetrators or victims?

Instead of only focusing on the analytical distinction between perpetrator and victim it might be fruitful to look at the realities of people, both patients and therapists, experiencing themselves as being both victim and perpetrator during the therapeutic encounter. The dual role of being both victim and victimiser is familiar to people living under dictatorships or in extreme circumstances (cf. Pick 1996). During a plenary lecture, the issue of empathic strain within the therapy and the possibility of being overwhelmed by feelings going along with the perpetrator or victim selves of patients were addressed (ISTSS 1996:A191). Indeed how do therapists deal with the image of their patients as war criminals (cf. Young 1996:259)? How do they deal with the possible emerging doubt about taking part in morally unacceptable activities by treating what they might perceive as war criminals? While being confronted in detail with the perpetrator selves of their patients, are they not inclined to view their employers as criminal (Ibid.:261)? Simply being critical of the fact that the ISTSS is hosting both the healers of victims as well as perpetrators seems too superficial a statement and the discourses of the therapists of what are called 'soldiers', 'guerrillas' or 'terrorists' form an undeniable, although awkward, dimension of the trauma discourse.

**The committees of the ISTSS.**
The broad spectrum of the above mentioned discourses and competing approaches were all presented at the conference under the auspices of the Organising Committee, the Presidential Advisory Committee, a Scientific Committee and the Advisory Board of the ISTSS, who selected the papers. The people in these committees can be viewed as the leading group within the trauma sector, making decisions that mould the international trauma discourse into a particular direction. This discourse is greatly influenced or partly constituted by master-presentations such as this conference and in this sense decisions about which papers will be excluded or who will be giving the plenary lectures, or will preside the 'meet-the-expert lunches' are not without consequences. I gathered from interviews that some people experience the society as a quite hierarchical organisation, with a hard core of neurobiological researchers from Israel and the US as a powerful lobby within this leading group.

Interviews with the current and past presidents of the ISTSS, the president of the European Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ESTSS) and some other eminent members gave me
an initial view on the ethos surrounding 'the leadership'. The task of the society is not political but is 'to provide scientific evidence and to promote empirical research'. 'One of the major implications of trauma work is that it is apolitical, people are finding a common ground that transcends politics and permits them to do the necessary work'. However the society is still to reveal its mission and the current president of the ISTSS designed a questionnaire to find out how the membership feels about the current composition of the ISTSS. A crucial question is whether it should remain a society of scientists and clinicians or whether 'non-professionals', public policy makers or law enforcement people should be included. This issue is crucially linked with the future characteristics and practical applications of 'the international trauma discourse' and will be open for debate at later conferences.

3. Ethical committees and the international trauma research industry.

As an eminent PTSD researcher remarked 'We are in a business, certainly not without a market'. The demand is perceived as endless. Unlike other social movements, this one is well funded, partly through its link with academic institutions, partly through a mutual collaboration with the pharmaceutic industry. Ethical questions about the political economy of trauma research, the final aims and direction of the movement, its cultural impact or the practical modalities of research and intervention projects are continually looming under the surface. Over the past three years there has been a controversy within the ISTSS whether there should exist an umbrella ethical committee within the organisation to address these issues at a global, international level.

Several proposals were rejected by the Board of Advisors of the ISTSS and currently ethical questions are conceived of as a local issue. Each research project is scrutinised by a local ethical committee of an (independent) academic institution (e.g. the Institutional Review Boards of the universities in the US), which includes scientists, 'consumers', special users groups, lawyers, or experts in medical ethics. However, in my opinion, while certain ethical questions\(^{10}\) do belong to the realm of expertise of local scientists and local consumers, in view of the world wide diffusion of the trauma discourse, most ethical questions require global debates in which the voices of the 'consumers', who do not belong to the same local cultural community as the researchers, need to be heard.

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\(^{10}\) These include questions about the ethics of the relation with the subjects: the issue of re-traumatisation during experiments (as mentioned above), issues of confidentiality, the activation of 'false memories' by the therapist (ISTSS 1996:A72), the responsibility of researchers of violence to intervene when necessary (Ibid.:A7), etc.
The most crucial ethical question concerns the aims envisaged by the trauma movement. During an interview, the president of the ISTSS said 'during my presidency the society will reveal its mission'. This mission was partly revealed during the presentations of the contemporary research methodologies and intervention practices at the conference, at the same time the controversial aspects of this mission became apparent. Questions arose about the target population of the trauma discourse, whether this is not intrinsically oriented towards well-resourced populations, the middle classes of the West as well as the non-West, or towards psychologically minded people with a strong sense of mastery and personal agency. This brings along doubts whether the currently available financial resources for trauma research are allocated to projects best dealing with the demands at the international level. Some people advocated a redirection of resources to research more directly related to the design and implementation of large-scale intervention projects.

Another ethically debatable aspect of this mission is the discourse on prevention and the research going along with it. Biological psychiatrists stress that early intervention is crucial in order to prevent the development of serious psycho-pathology following a traumatic event. 'The timing of the intervention is crucial, there is neurobiological evidence that if you get in early the success rates are higher. The point of action may be pharmacotherapy'. If the financial and intellectual resources are directed towards the development of drugs - such as CNQX mentioned above - the future use and possible role of these drugs need to be speculated upon. Another urgent ethical question is whether these anti-dissociative drugs might become distributed on a wide scale, just like anti-depressants or tranquillisers reach the slums in the Third world today (cf. Scheper-Hughes 1991).

Another question is whether a more topical and specific use envisaged? Are these drugs to be used as an early intervention in the curative treatment of soldiers, first of all the victims of the enemy but as well the perpetrators of cruel wars? Will these drugs play a role in the preventive treatment programmes designed by army psychiatrists and psychologists that form a part of the training programmes for soldiers yet to be sent to the front? The research related to the design of preventive measures for military contexts, oriented towards the preparation of soldiers for capture, interrogation, or torture is the most hidden side of the trauma discourse. In this context it seems justified to think about the links between trauma research, such as the development of anti-dissociative agents and the military establishment developing biological and neuro-chemical arsenals. The cyanide culture of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the cyanide pill to be taken when captured alive, might one day find its more modern and humane counterpart, as for example CNQX.
The last ethical question I want to mention is the issue of the cultural impact of the trauma discourse. This question concerns the ways in which local people, such as the people from Udaheenagama appropriate and re-interpret the discourse on trauma. Furthermore this question also concerns the appropriation of the trauma discourse by the national elites of war-torn societies. The trauma discourse allows for a nationalist discourse and a renegotiation of a post-war identity vis-à-vis the international community in which 'trauma'\textsuperscript{11}, 'PTSD' and justice are rhetorically highlighted, while revenge, militant discourse and the reconstitution of political power as patterns of healing are tactfully understated.

Finally the cultural impact of the trauma paradigm is not limited to its introduction in non-Western cultures. The rapid progress made in the trauma research industry might produce results that thoroughly shake the fundamentals of our own popular culture. This issue has been touched upon by one of the top researchers on the neuro-endocrinology of PTSD. While she explained her recent discoveries she moved back and forth between her own perceptions and those of her subjects:

So do I have to tell them all this fancy stuff (the results)? Then they'll ask 'so what does it to my life?'. I would say, forget about explaining them about the possibility of pharmacotherapy bla bla bla... I want to link it with something that matters in their life, how it (the hormonal alterations) plays out for the patient. When I am explaining the (PTSD) symptoms to the people, I am using these (research) data. Take for example hyper vigilance ...

This is one example of how this high-tech research gets diffused into the general knowledge of the public and popular culture in the West. Maybe one instance of our slowly changing conceptions of memory, self, and the nature of suffering?

4. Culture-specific societies for traumatic stress studies?
The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, founded in the US in 1985, is now described as the 'mother organisation' of the European, Australian, Russian and (incipient) African Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. The foundation of the European STSS in 1990 is by some experienced as 'a split, the creation of an unnecessary local chapter, a

\textsuperscript{11} A participant from Colombia, the director of the department of psychology of the 'Programa Presidencial para la Defensa de la Libertad Personal' came to Jerusalem to learn more about PTSD. She presents a very well made booklet, a detail of the Guernica on the cover, details about the presidential program to safeguard human rights and humanise the internal conflict inside. On the first page the slogan 'El respeto al Derecho Internacional Humanitario nos enaltece como nación.' Participation at the conference has a double meaning, on the one hand, as an employee of the Colombian presidency, she presents the goodwill of her government to alleviate suffering in front of an international audience, on the other hand she takes home pieces of the trauma discourse maybe to be applied or mentioned in the program.
European reaction against the alleged Americanisation of the ISTSS'. Others support the creation of a forum with a typically European character, directed towards European problems, the status of traumatic stress work in European countries, European studies and literature, publications written by European professionals (cf. ESTSS Bulletin). At the moment the Australian and European STSS are the two strongest regional societies. The Russian STSS was founded by a group of mental health professionals in 1991 and received an official status as a section of the Russian Psychological Society in June 1995. Its members work in different governmental and non-governmental organisations in Russia and the Republics (cf. ESTSS Bulletin).

At the conference in Jerusalem lunch meetings were organised to discuss the modalities for the constitution of an African STSS (ASTSS). In February 1996 an international delegation of trauma specialists visited South Africa and suggested the idea. The president of the ISTSS, eight mental health workers from South-Africa and two from Rwanda participated in the discussion. The president started with an outline of his thoughts; 'the ISTSS is like a mother organisation, it does not want to be intrusive but only facilitate the processes in the regional societies'. The ISTSS is 'involved in trauma issues at all levels, and wants to create something that has meaning for all of us, for people of all walks of life, and it wants to encourage activities to find commonalties in other regions. We have to open up the society, continue to grow because the field is growing'.

The Rwandan participants described their situation: Rwanda has one psychiatrist, two psychologists and eight psychiatric nurses, currently involved in training programmes for trauma counsellors. They described their experience as 'sitting on a bomb', looking at the 'new complex society' that is forming itself, a social fabric built on the intermingling of perpetrators and genocide survivors. The other participants empathise explicitly and the discussion moves towards the practicalities for the organisation of the ASTSS.

The society wants to be as inclusive as possible, 'there are lots of pockets of people working with trauma victims in different places but up to now there is no connector, no community that can sustain people doing work that is difficult to do by yourself'. The president of the ISTSS remarks: 'that is were we were in the United States twenty-five years ago', people working in different areas, with Vietnam Veterans, Holocaust survivors, abused children, without a common framework. A main concern is to find a way to launch the society that reaches 'grass-root people'. Plans are discussed for press-releases, internet messages, announcements in magazines distributed in rural clinics, messages for
humanitarian agencies, informal networks and local universities. The ASTSS will be a reality soon.

The value of these culture-specific societies for traumatic stress studies has to be put against the background of the influence of the ISTSS and the international community of trauma specialists on humanitarian policies. The paradigms permeating the rehabilitation programs for victims of war of NGO's or UN bodies are often directly provided by this professional community. In 1993 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees hosted renowned trauma specialists\(^\text{12}\) and drafted guidelines for the evaluation and care of victims of trauma and violence (DeMartino 1994). In accordance with these guidelines, attempts have been made to design a culturally sensitive approach; in ex-Yugoslavia a pilot project was carried out that emphasised self-empowerment, self-management and community-oriented rehabilitation. Interventions are to focus on the mobilisation of economic, political, and cultural resources available in the local community, and it is argued that 'if such preventive measures do not occur, in many cases the post-traumatic response may be imprinted, become chronic, and result in psychological disorders or functional impairment'. These guidelines will be finalised and implemented on a world-wide basis for populations affected by violent conflict, 'with the necessary cultural adjustments' (DeMartino 1994).

The formulation of these policies reveals the combination of language and ideas directly derived from the conventional trauma discourse on PTSD, with concerns about the cultural applicability of the trauma paradigm and the design of community based approaches. The relation between the ISTSS and the UN has further been strengthened through the publication of a book - written by trauma specialists together with UN personnel - on the contributions of the UN and Non-Governmental Organisations to the rehabilitation of various traumatised populations (Danieli 1996). The foreword stated:

(\text{The book}) demonstrates the need to focus specifically on questions of traumatic stress, an area too often neglected... Securing mental health for the people of the world must be one of the foremost objectives of the United Nations in its second half century (Boutros Boutros-Ghali 1996).

\(^\text{12}\) The authors of the guidelines include: A. Kos (Director Counselling Centre for Children, Adolescents and Parents, Slovenia), G. Perren-Klinger (Institute of Psychotrauma, Switzerland), M. Groenenberg (PHAROS Foundation, Mental Health Section, The Netherlands), R. Mollica (Director, Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma, and Chairman World Federation of Mental Health Commission on Refugees and Migrants, USA), R. Demartino, Director, International Projects, Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma, Harvard School of Public Health, USA), M. Petevi (Senior Resettlement Officer and Focal Point Mental Health UNHCR, Switzerland) (DeMartino 1994).
Other less direct ways in which the ideas of the international community of trauma specialists permeate into practices in non-Western contexts involve the provision of training manuals for NGO workers and local health professionals (e.g. Buus 1988, Staehr 1993, Arcel 1995). What will be crucial in the development of the ASTSS or other regional societies is the negotiation of a relationship with UN bodies, NGO's and their donor organisations. The ISTSS' credibility has been strongly established, maybe partly through their direct connection to leading academic institutions in the West, the funds of the pharmaceutic industry, and their mainly scientific output. The new possibilities created by the organisation of regional societies, the addition of regional chapters to the mainstream PTSD discourse, will have to be weighed against the advantages of remaining active within the very influential ISTSS and discuss cultural controversies within this international organisation.
APPENDIX D

Operationalisation of the international mental health culture at the national level.

Non-Governmental Organisations and state-sponsored mental health workers.

Indeed, that there is humane and effective care for a number of mental health problems is important news that needs to reach many more people in low-income societies... Progress will be made when the world community openly acknowledges them as problems, develops a blueprint for addressing them, and works together in a focused and co-ordinated way to implement that blueprint (Jimmy and Rosalind Carter in Desjarlais 1995: viii).

... Castro and Saddam, those are my people ... consumerism is the war of the people ... (counsellor, Colombo 1996).

Introduction.

As in many other war-torn societies the discourse on trauma has been introduced through a variety of channels; large-scale UNHCR projects, international trauma specialists training local NGO workers, or psychiatrists often trained abroad. The international trauma discourse becomes remoulded within the national political context and penetrates the discourses of the ruling left-of-centre People's Alliance coalition (PA) as well as the paradigms of the international financial institutions such as the World Bank or IMF. Sri Lankan intellectuals or mental health professionals present statistics on, for example, the prevalence of suicide or PTSD to an international audience. These presentations of traumatised selves and nation can be viewed as an aspect of the effort to 're-establish a position in the world after the troubles' (cf. Spencer 1990: 236) and atrocities; a way of presenting the suffering of one's own people and addressing the public opinion of the international politico-financial community (also see appendix C).

The international trauma discourse forms one instance which places issues such as mental health, economic development, and international security within a single framework (cf. Desjarlais 1995:12). Within the World Bank discourse (IBRD 1993:217-219) mental health is now recognised to constitute a significant part of the global burden of disease1. The need for the alleviation of 'mental suffering' is formulated in these contexts as 'an advance of the human potential of a population' needed for growth and development, or a

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1 'Mental illness' constitutes 8% of the global burden of disease (more than tuberculosis, or cancer, or heart disease), if taken together with intentional injuries the total constitutes 15% of the global burden of disease for women, 16% for men (Desjarlais 1995:34). The categories used by the World Bank study for the collection of data are: neuropsychiatric diseases subdivided into depressive disorders, bipolar affective disorders, psychoses, alcohol dependence, drug dependence, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and intentional injuries subdivided into self-inflicted injuries, homicide and violence, war (IBRD 1993:217).
reduction of the monetary costs going along with 'chronic mental illness' (cf. Desjarlais 1995:4,6). Surveys of patients attending primary health care clinics in the Third world indicate that for as many as one-fifth to one-third of the cases 'depression' is the principal reason for seeking care (Desjarlais 1995:45). Within these discourses the need for adequate 'mental health care' provision is related to the enormous costs of this help-seeking behaviour to the already overloaded primary health care infrastructure as well as to notions of national and international 'security' and economic development.

It is to be analysed how this same discourse operates within the national political arena as part of the SLFP-UNP-JVP conflict. In the current public debates under the auspices of the PA/SLFP government Jayasuriya (1996:10,12) argues that:

the gradual dismantling of the welfare state (intimately connected with the dismantling of social democracy) in Sri Lanka was hastened by the advent of a Centre Right conservative government (1977-1994) promoting neo-liberal policies of economic liberalisation hostile to state welfare. This new ethos was to a large extent inspired by agencies such as the World Bank and IMF which encouraged the practice of a free market economy to maximise investment and encourage growth... It was the view of the World Bank pundits and free marketeers who came to power in 1977.

These issues were central to the 1994 regime change and new policies related to the reconstruction of the welfare state and the amelioration of living standards were strongly expected (cf. Jayasuriya 1996:14). Although primary health care is certainly the most salient issue in this debate, the stress on the importance of mental health programmes in low-income countries by international agencies, might have a substantial influence on the allocation of public funds in Sri Lanka (cf. Desjarlais 1995:59).

However the deployment of mental health services in the Southern Province is a particularly sensitive issue. 'Psychiatric' care and rehabilitation might implicitly refer to the atrocities of (what is portrayed as) the UNP-JVP conflict of the late eighties and needs to be evaluated within the context of the ongoing SLFP-UNP violence, the war in the North and East, threats from the JVP and the extreme poverty. This appendix gives a brief introduction on the implementation of a mental-health-culture within this context.


The hero will always have one traumatic experience in the beginning, to which he has flashbacks during moments of stress. Though in the case of 'Sudden Death' we have the surreal experience of seeing Van Damme go through a
Apart from being propagated by the PTSD-afflicted heroes of the video culture, the discourse on trauma is cultivated as well as questioned by a close-knit group of professionals in Colombo. The LTTE bomb blast outside the Central Bank in the economic centre of Colombo in January 1996 was a crucial event boosting the trauma discourse within the urban middle classes and government-related institutions. The victims were the employees of the Central Bank and the surrounding prestigious offices, 'the heart of the Sinhala bourgeoisie was under attack'. In sharp distinction with official reactions to disasters occurring in other segments of the population (e.g. Dehiwala station bomb blast 23/7/96) counselling services and compensation schemes were installed for the bereaved, all financed by the Central Bank\(^2\).

A project was set up by a foreign trauma specialist together with local psychiatrists called 'Training for health personnel in psychological counselling to victims of disaster in Colombo'. Fifteen thousand pamphlets were printed in English, Sinhalese and Tamil, a training manual on PTSD was distributed amongst psychiatric residents and psychologists. Workshops were organised for representatives from different NGO's working within the field of counselling, medical students, divisional leaders from affected institutions and medical doctors in general practice. During those workshops PTSD symptoms featuring in the DSM-IV were reviewed and the principles of debriefing, crisis intervention, pharmacotherapy for trauma victims and counselling explained. A questionnaire\(^3\) was distributed to assist counsellors and institution leaders in detecting possible victims at risk for long-term post traumatic stress disorders.

The above mentioned reaction to the Central Bank bomb blast is only one instance of the wider mental health culture in Colombo. This subculture is constituted by NGO's; their local board of directors and international advisory board of trauma specialists, and local mental health professionals active in government-sponsored or private institutions. Sri Lanka with a population of 17.8 million has about 30 consultant psychiatrists who mainly

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\(^2\) At the same time large-scale Buddhist as well as Christian religious ceremonies were performed by the employees and their kin. The senior managers of the bank organised a small ceremony in Anuradhapura, the once-sacred city of the ancient Sinhala kings, which they did not divulge to the national press nor made public to the rest of the employees before the event.

\(^3\) The questionnaire allows health workers to diagnose PTSD if six of the questions are answered positively after the four initial weeks following the disaster. The questions include: Do you have sleeping problems? Do you have nightmares? Do you startle easily? Do you isolate yourself from others? Do you get irritated easily? Do you suffer from emotional storms? Do you feel guilty, or have self-reproaches? Have you got any phobias or special fears? Do you feel very tense? Do you feel depressed? (training manual)
work in Colombo and Kandy. Interviews with residents in psychiatry revealed some aspects of their experience of 'being transitional'. While viewing oneself as highly Westernised due to a medical training some interviewees described their feelings of discomfort when taking a culturally-alien counselling attitude towards patients or when experiencing the culture-specific construction of their selves within the gaze of the patient. As one psychiatrist in Colombo told me 'we are of a different order, not like another human being uttering his words'. They reflect on the dangers this power, this relationship of veneration and submission, entails as to the introduction of new psychiatric diagnoses. 'People would all too easily agree with new diagnoses, and believe in notions such as PTSD or grief reaction'.

This Westernised medical elite actively participates in public debates and divulges ideas about trauma and stress to the urban middle classes (e.g. Special issue on panic, trauma, stress, anxiety of the Communication Centre for Mental Health) (CCMH 1996). 'Trauma' has become a master term in a global ideoscpe allowing world wide communication between elites (cf. Appadurai 1990:299). It is a key term for the negotiations between Sri Lankan NGO's and Western donor organisations (e.g. IRCT or UNHCR) and facilitates communication between these disparate frameworks. Despite this obvious global movement of terminology on trauma, however, the connotations of these concepts in the local context are less evident. Beneath the surface of homogeneous and global terminology, one assumes a dynamic of indigenization manifesting itself in the discourses of a semi-Westernised elite employed by NGO's and a specific role for Western psychiatry within the context of the Sri Lankan political situation. As one interviewee, an NGO worker in a clinic for torture victims stated:

> Between 70,000 and 100,000 people have disappeared in this country, there is a cultural collapse, the normal rituals performed after death cannot be performed... Now people cannot go through the process of burial and mourning... This is a big confusion or trauma or something... Like the DSM says; the problem of PTSD... Trauma is due to the fact that people cannot forget and cannot say their men are dead. This is that confusion...(counsellor, Colombo 1996).

2) The burden of minor psychiatric illnesses and state-sponsored interventions.
Policy makers in charge of developing mental health services are confronted with the fact that Sri Lanka has the second highest rate of suicide mortality in the world⁴ (La Vecchia

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⁴Hungary had the highest rate of suicide for men over the period 1955-1989 (52 per 100,000) followed by Sri Lanka (49 per 100,000). For women the highest values were found in Sri Lanka (19 per 100,000) followed by Hungary (17 per 100,000) (La Vecchia 1994:53).
From the mid-1950s to the mid-70s the rate of suicide more than tripled\(^5\) (Kearney 1985:81). Within the discourse of mental health professionals these data beg questions about the epidemiology of psychiatric illness\(^6\) in Sri Lanka and the development of psychiatric services. Most psychiatric morbidity surveys carried out in India and Sri Lanka use standardised psychiatric screening instruments and an internationally recognised definition of 'caseness' (WHO). It has been noted that 'increasing scrupulousness in case finding hardly alters the prevalence of schizophrenia, but makes an enormous difference to the prevalence of neurotic disorders' (Leff 1988:100).

Questions about the 'true prevalence' of 'minor psychiatric illnesses' were a recurring theme in interviews with Sri Lankan mental health professionals. These data are argued to be crucial for a critical assessment of the needs of the population and the subsequent planning of mental health care services. Statistics on the prevalence of PTSD, using orthodox DSM criteria and symptom checklists, amongst combat-exposed soldiers in Sri Lanka could be seen as part of this project (cf. De Silva 1995). 'Strictly objective criteria', such as the loss of working or social capacity, which have been suggested to be more appropriate to measure war-related suffering in non-Western contexts (cf. Summerfield 1993) seem only

\(^5\) The rise in suicide mortality has been related to the recent disruptive and destabilising societal changes; the rapid population growth, unemployment amongst highly educated youths necessitating postponement of marriage, and the high rates of internal migration (Kearney 1985). In the description of an anthropologist suicide in rural Sri Lanka typically follows a minor domestic dispute. A young member in his/her teens or early twenties leaves, ingests agrochemicals and returns to the family so that they have to watch the slow and agonising effects. It is aimed at causing extreme pain within the family and is overtly aggressive towards them, which in other circumstances would not have been possible (Spencer 1990:186). In Northern Sri Lanka there has been noted a marked drop in suicide rate during the war, mainly amongst men. An inverse relationship between homicide and suicide rates is found and it is hypothesised that war may function as an alternate to suicide (Somasunderam 1995:1). 'Clinically' speaking, patients in a 'mental state' caused by severe family conflict or environmental stress, that would have led to suicidal attempts in normal times, now rather join the militants and die in combat. The current social ethos is one where intensely frustrated adolescents will threaten or carry out two possible alternatives: one is suicide and the other is to join the militants (Ibid.: 3). In one example, the manner in which an adolescent becomes a conscript in the army bears some similarities with the suicide-script as described by Spencer (1990): the sister of one of the few soldiers that survived the Mullaitivu debacle in July 1996 says: 'one day in 1987 he had left home telling his mother that he was joining a technical institute. But he came later that evening and announced that he had joined the army' (The Sunday Leader 28/7/1996). The ways this discourse uses terminology such as 'mental state' or - as has been argued by some - 'mental illness' of youth engaging in suicide attempts or suicide-like missions to the North and East needs further exploration.

\(^6\) The data on the link between suicide and mental illnesses collected in the West are being used as a provisional guideline in view of the absence of this type of data for the Sri Lankan context. It is estimated that between 40% and 70% of all suicide victims in the United States suffer from 'major depression' (Desjarlais 1995:40) for which psychiatric treatment can be provided. Hence the discourse of mental health professionals links the data on suicide mortality in Sri Lanka and the need for a more elaborate network of psychiatric care. Modern psychiatric epidemiological research carried out in a semi-urban community in Sri Lanka revealed that the prevalence rate of psychiatric disorder was 45 per 1000, the prevalence rate for alcoholism was 6 per 1000 and the prevalence of 'neuroses' 25 per 1000 (males:9; females:40) (Wijesinghe 1978:438).
to be suited to the identification of serious psychiatric disorders, mainly psychotic disorders. 'Severe subjective distress, requiring psychiatric intervention', cannot be adequately assessed by using social functioning as the single dimension of severity (Wijesinghe 1978:437).

Interviews with policy makers and WHO personnel in Colombo revealed that currently the priorities for the establishment of services are based on 'global' data of the WHO using Western psychiatric criteria. 'Depression', psychosis, alcoholism and suicide are priority areas but they stress that the real needs of the population should be assessed through field studies. Furthermore, they propose that a data bank on these culture-specific priorities should be constructed for funding agencies in order to influence donor fashions. Within this discourse research is justified when directly linked to the planning of psychiatric interventions. As one example demonstrates:

In the concluding stages of the survey, all chief householders were informed that the health survey had revealed an inadequacy of psychiatric services in the area and that it had been decided to hold a psychiatric clinic twice weekly at the health centre. The common psychiatric symptoms were listed to facilitate the recognition of psychiatric disorders, and the residents were welcomed to use the facilities placed at their disposal. The residents were reassured regarding the benign nature of most psychiatric disorders and the availability of effective modern remedies (Wijesinghe 1978:419, my emphasis).

Currently a national resource centre on mental health7, located in Colombo, is being further developed (cf. Mendis 1986). One of its important fields of action is mental health education, involving the publication of newspaper articles, and the organisation of training programmes for primary health care workers. This parallels the mental health policies developed by the WHO, emphasising decentralisation and psychiatric care as a part of primary health care. Training and awareness building concerning mental health issues provides family health workers with the capacity to undertake preliminary counselling within the community and select patients for referral to psychiatric services. Within the district of Matara 30 family health workers have been trained.

These efforts to provide local mental health workers have to be put within the context of the urban discourse on 'traditional medicine and its progressive domestication'. Both Wirz (1954) and Kapferer (1996) have noted the increasing unaffordability of the traditional

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7 This community mental health centre became registered in the Ministry of Social Services in 1984, while the then First Lady of Sri Lanka agreed to be the Patron of the organisation. The government granted generous tax concessions and the centre was incorporated through an act in Parliament (Mendis 1986:51).
large-scale healing rites for the majority of the people. As major rites become 'too expensive' they are no longer performed for the whole village but retreat to the domestic spaces of the local elites and politically powerful, as a religious practice of the dominant groups (Kapferer 1996; Chap.3: 10). These arguments are frequently reiterated by mental health professionals, it is often said that people travelling long distances to seek psychiatric care spend less money than would be spent for traditional healing rites.8

This discourse needs to be interpreted while considering the current financial situation of state-sponsored health service delivery in Sri Lanka. The current doctor-patient ratio in Sri Lanka stands at 1: 5,700 compared to India where the ratio is 1:2,700 (The Sunday Observer 28/7/96). This situation has been alleviated by training AMP's (Assistant Medical Practitioners) which costs less than one forth of producing a medical doctor. However, due to increasing unemployment of medical doctors in the government sector, a strong campaign against the training of AMP's has taken root and the competition and animosity between the two groups has led to widespread strikes by medical doctors demanding job security (Daily News 3/9/96). In view of the current central government expenditure on health it cannot absorb all the new medical graduates within the government sector and arguments in favour of training AMP's are gaining ground. It is within this context that the middle class discourse on traditional medicine, the funds provided by the UNDP (United Nations Development Project) for the development of traditional medicine9 and the recommendations of the WHO for the training of traditional healers10 need to be placed.

Here the role of medical anthropological research is to be questioned. An example of one type of collaboration between medical anthropologists and mental health professionals has been demonstrated by Desjarlais, Eisenberg, Kleinman and Good (Desjarlais 1995). 'Culture-specific provision of mental health services' and the 'integration of traditional healers into mental health services' are often recurring keywords. The outline of future research agendas includes 'the evaluation of local systems of mental health care', 'the

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8 Astronomical sums are mentioned by Colombo based intellectuals: 'a village rite can easily cost 50,000 rupees (the salary of a school teacher being more or less 7000 rupees a month), while a visit to a psychiatrist in Colombo, bus fare included, costs about 200 rupees'. That large scale village rites are performed less frequently might be a fact, the reason of them being 'too expensive' could be part of this urban middle class perspective and needs to be investigated further. Changing attitudes towards indebtedness and trust within extensive friendship networks might be underlying this opinion about the excessive costs of major rites (D. Miller, personal communication).


10 For example the plans of the IRCT (International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims) to provide 'training programs for traditional healers on the rehabilitation of torture victims' in Sri Lanka (I. Genefke, personal communication).
determination of the strengths and limitations of the informal sector, or the effectiveness of these treatments. An ethnographic method would provide descriptions and construct a map of the structure of local systems of mental health and their relationship to formal sectors of care. Subsequently, 'models might be developed to link these practitioners to the formal primary health care system' (Ibid.:286).

However, within this framework research questions are intrinsically related to the practical utilisation of their results by mental health professionals. A Kleinmanesque type of medical anthropology, stressing the efficacy of the 'therapeutic milieu' of traditional healing techniques (Kleinman 1979:11) seems to apply notions of well-being directly derived from or compared to individualised 'mental health'. In this comparative exercise 'mental health' or 'community empowerment' form the yardstick for comparison and the appraisal of similarities and differences. Traditional medicine is seen to fulfil a complementary task to Western mental health services or humanitarian actions. Within this type of development of research questions, the supplementarity of traditional healing practices - which cannot be conceived of in relation to the hegemonic discourse of 'mental health' - is not explored. They become the 'relative Other', relative to the Western mental-health-culture, not the radical or absolute Other, with their own validity (cf. Lacan in Mitchell 1982:144,151). As has been stated:

> I have no doubt as to the contribution Sinhalese exorcism could make to psychiatric knowledge. However, such contribution is reduced when exorcism in both its ethnographic description and in its understanding is subordinated to the authority of Western psychiatric knowledge (Kapferer 1988:428).

The discourse of medical anthropology in itself can thus be described as hegemonic, as it gives a 'mental health' significance to a variety of practices and observes them with a gaze borrowed from mental health professionals (cf. Kapferer 1988:429). Medical anthropological interpretations belong then to the wider tendency to 'therapeutize' phenomena, that cannot be easily assimilated and reduced to 'therapy' (De Sardan 1994:7). However radical these positions might be vis-à-vis the mental health profession one has to take into account the possible 'death of the author', whose critical writings might lead a less radical life style within the current circumstances (see below).
Sri Lankan mental health professionals are engaged in the everyday creation of 'therapies' for severely affected people, within extreme circumstances. During the insurgencies, severely affected people were treated in private psychiatric hospitals. Mental health professionals acted as a repository for personal accounts of the atrocities of which no case-records could be made. Their memories form an important part of a silent collective memory. Recently the Sri Lankan Psychiatric Association attempted to organise a lecture on the treatment of torture victims, nobody admitted to have experience in this area, all refused to speak. In the meanwhile Western 'specialists' on torture and PTSD are creating a master discourse at conferences in the West, and are providing a model for presenting such realities.

Some mental health professionals are locked within the frameworks of their Western training, and 'feel isolated from the community'. When repertoires and helpers are reaching exhaustion they are looking towards more modern, advanced strategies delivered by specialists from the West. According to trauma specialists based in Colombo, 'mental health workers in Jaffna or Batticalao are eager to attend lectures on PTSD they provide, as they are desperate and need urgent support from experts'.

Other highly Westernised professionals rediscover links with the subcultures of the community, sometimes by consuming the work of anthropologists. For example, *A celebration of demons* (Kapferer 1983) put into practice by a reader forms an - albeit exceptional - bridge between psychiatric knowledge and local practices. 'Hypno-exorcism', the combination of hypnosis and exorcism ('nicely explained in Kapferer's book') is being practised successfully and is now taught at the local university as part of the curriculum in psychiatry (Harischandra 1986).

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11 A psychiatrist trained by the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims in Copenhagen described her sense of alienation when attending lectures on the management of torture victims within European resourceful countries.

12 This makes one think of Fanon's comment: Quite apart from the pathology of torture there flourishes in Algeria a pathology of atmosphere, a state which leads medical practitioners to say when they are confronted with a case they don't understand: 'This'll all be cleared up when this damned war is over' (Fanon 1963:234).

13 An interview with a psychiatrist specialised in hypno-exorcism revealed his mixed feelings and the tensions involved in taking part in what other psychiatrists described as 'a transitional culture'. His description of his own experiences while treating a teenage girl haunted by the blood thirsty big cemetery demon demanding a human sacrifice are telling. 'The difference between a doctor and an exorcist is that the exorcist believes that the demon is really there, contrary to the hypno-therapist who stays in control... *Mahasohona* (the demon) wanted a human sacrifice but he hesitated to kill me for half an hour... The unconscious mind is very forceful, very powerful... Sudden death is possible, our *kodivina* (sorcery spells) can be like African voodoo death... We are very much under control of suggestion and the effects of the autonomous nervous system cannot be eliminated in modern medical ways. That is why an exorcist would die if *Mahasohona* would be unleashed on him! In England people have died under hypnosis... *I took the risk, knowing there was no Mahasohona...* However usually demons have respect for doctors!' (refers
To end these brief reflections on the possible roles of medical anthropological research within ongoing debates on mental health amongst Sri Lankan health professionals and international donors, two - albeit contradicting - quotes have resonance when one is envisaging and imagining a readership of - sometimes Fanonnesque - intellectuals dealing with the needs of the Sri Lankan people:

The culture the intellectual leans towards is often no more than a stock of particularisms. He wishes to attach himself to the people; but instead he only catches hold of their outer garments. And these outer garments are merely the reflection of a hidden life, teeming and perpetually in motion (Fanon 1963:180).

Or more constructively, a thought about the uncolonized mind or rather the process of uncolonization:

In order to accept oneself, one must learn to hold in trust 'weaknesses' to which a violent, culturally barren and politically bankrupt world some day may have to return (Nandy 1983:112).

3. The implementation of donor and NGO rehabilitation cultures.
The NGO culture in Colombo is thoroughly dependent on the judgements of foreign specialists advising the international donor bodies. A favourable image projected towards the international community of mental-health professionals is often an essential token for financial survival. National mental-health NGO's provide various clinics for torture victims throughout the country, they organise income generation schemes, conduct training programmes in counselling, management of torture victims, self-awareness building, 'befriending' and offer legal advice. In the description of NGO workers based in Colombo, they are creating a space to talk, foster long term community links and offer emotional support.

'War widows' are highly active within these organisations and run the meetings and training sessions at the regional and village level. Finding an acceptable position within the current political situation depends on depicting a purely a-political image. Previous organisations have been more politically overt and were publicly depicted as a reaction to particular atrocities of the JVP insurgency, they did not survive up to date. Widows in remote villages are recruited and trained so that they can operate as 'counsellors' or 'befrienders' for jokingly to the fact that the national press has lost all its respect for doctors). One could ask oneself whether the psychiatrist, after a long negotiation with the demon, is experienced and viewed as having taken a position within the cosmic hierarchy.
their communities and disseminate their knowledge at the grass roots level. They create a link with the NGO/ mental health culture in Colombo and furthermore with the international trauma discourse. I will describe the role of such women in *Udaheenagama* in order to discuss the cultural impact of the discourse on trauma in the rural South of Sri Lanka.
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