

Ethnicity and Violence

A nation is formed of large community of people who share a common history, culture and language living in a particular territory under one government. In other words it can be said that a nation is a collection of individuals united in supporting a perceived interest. However, it is not sure that a nation is formed of only a large community sharing common history, culture and language. Of course a nation is formed of different groups sharing, in fact, the common politics but uncommon culture and language. In course of history, there can be different communities of people with uncommon characteristics. In this sense, there can be different ethnic groups of which a nation is formed. Most states survive with numerous significant ethnic groups, yet such nations usually face demands from ethnic groups that remain unfulfilled.

Uncommonalities between them consists of history, culture and language. If a group of people differs in history, culture and language from another group of people that is ethnicity. The term 'ethnicity' relates broadly to "the perceived shared characteristics of a social or cultural group, while the idea of religious particularity is that a group regards itself as distinctive because of its religious identity" (Haymes 92). In this sense, it can be said that ethnicity is uncommonalities between and amongst the groups of people. Ethnicity concerns the perceived shared characteristics of a racial or cultural group. A group's religion may be one of its particularistic characteristics; other characteristics include language, race, territory and/or culture.

The World Book Encyclopedia talks more about ethnic group:

Ethnic group is a group of people with characteristics in common that distinguish them from most other people of the same society. Most ethnic groups are minority groups with at least some values and

institutions that differ from those of larger society. Since ancient time ethnic groups have resulted from migrations, wars, slavery, changed political boundaries and other significant movement of people. (372)

Ethnicity can be studied more by associating it with minority group since they are almost the same. Most of the ethnic groups are minority groups and vice-versa.

The same book about minority group says:

Minority is a group of people who differ in some ways from the principal group in society. Members of the minority group may differ from the principal group, also called dominant group in speech, appearances on cultural practices. The dominant group also has greater political and economic power than the minority group. In many cases, the dominant group discriminates against minorities that it treats them unfairly. (608)

Therefore the ethnic and minority groups are almost the same. In most of the cases they are underprivileged, deprived of and discriminated groups socially, politically and economically. The dominant group is privileged and enjoys everything more than the minority groups. The dominant groups suppress the ethnic groups since the latter are in minority in many cases like the representation in the government, less or no participation in development process, and no recognition in society. The majority/dominant group treats them unfairly. Even the government discriminates the ethnic groups willingly or unwillingly. The fact is that the government of most states is formed of the representatives of dominant group. Consequently the minority/ethnic groups are intentionally or unintentionally underprivileged. Another fact is that, as already stated, most states survive with numerous significant groups. There may not be cordial relationship between the dominant and ethnic groups because of the

differences in their history, language, culture and religion and even political ideology. On the one hand, ethnic groups are dominated and on the other hand they are different from dominant groups. Since the ethnic group is in minority it does not have proper recognition and identity in the states. The ethnic problem arises in the states when the ethnic groups demand for recognition as the dominant groups have. Because of unfulfilled demands, there may appear ethnic violence and conflict in societies. The major problem between dominant and minority groups are their cultural or religious and language differences.

The domination against the ethnic groups by the dominant groups causes ethnic violence. Actually the domination is reflected by one group's control of political and economic power, land, employment and public resources to the detriment of others; in other words the dominant group benefits from development, while the others do not to the same degree. Moreover, the major problem between the dominant and ethnic groups arises from the question as to whether the first one has recognized the legitimate right of the latter one or not. Many states are suffering from this problem around the world especially, Third World countries. Religious-ethnic conflicts are common in South Asia. In Pakistan, the capital Karachi is frequently rent by ethnic conflict between Pathans and Mohajirs. Bangladesh endures ethnic conflict involving Buddhist Chakmas from the hill tracks and Muslim Bengalis from the crowded plains. In India Muslim radicals in the state of Jammu-Kashmir have been challenging the government while the Sikh minority challenges the state and riot between Hindus and Muslims is current in the region. In Sri-Lanka a long term Civil War is being fought between Buddhist Sinhalese and Tamil Hindus.

When the underprivileged – ethnic group, feels suppressed, it may raise arms against the dominant group. The mobilization of a minority group's culture may be

directed towards more than achieving development goals. Such a group may also seek political autonomy of self-government. More than the political cause, the ethnic problems may be caused by the problem of language, race and territory/culture. Politics appears on the front of ethnic problems but in depth there remain the issues of language, race, culture and so on. Concerning this issue of ethnic problem, political analyst Jeffrey Haymes writes:

Ethnic problems often stem from a basic contradiction involving the idea that each sovereign country should be filled with a nation of people sharing a common language or culture. The problem is that in reality all countries are to a lesser or greater extent multi ethnic; it is impossible for every self-proclaimed ethnic group or 'nation' – i.e. large ethnic group to have its own state. (98–99)

Ethnic and nationalist violence have certainly contributed to an increase in all political violence – that is, to what might be called the ethnicization of political violence. “The end of the Cold War has further weakened many third world states as superpowers have curtailed their commitments of military and other state strengthening resources, while the citizenries- and even, it could be argued, the neighbors – of Soviet successor states are more threatened by the state weakness than by state strength” (Holmes 30). Such weakly Weberian states or quasi-states are “more susceptible to – and are by definition less capable of repressing, though not, alas, of committing – violence of all kinds, including ethnic violence” (Desjarlais & Kleinman 9). Meanwhile, the stronger states of the West are increasingly reluctant to use military force – especially unilaterally, without a broad consensus among allied states – to intervene in conflicts outside their boundaries. As a result, weakly Weberian third world states can no

longer rely on an external patron to maintain peace as they could during the Cold War era.

Identity has become the central area of concern in today's world. In the previous eras people were not much conscious about their identity because they were not aware of their political, economic, social and religious positions in societies. But in course of time, people gradually became aware of different sectors of societies. They began to relate themselves with other groups of people or people from one culture with the people of the other culture and found out the differences between themselves. If a nation is formed of a large community or people sharing a common culture, language and territory, ethnic group is also a particular group with its own history, language religion and territory different from other groups of people. Identity therefore is a discourse of culture. It is acquisition out of power exercise. A large number of people have been culturally degraded and politically oppressed. So the oppressed group of people seeks the different identity to be recognized in societies as their oppressors. In this context, ethnic group demands a separate state (politically autonomous), which should be ruled by their own rulers so that they wouldn't be discriminated politically, economically and socially. As Claestres phrases it, "The refusal of multiplicity, the dread of difference – ethnocidal violence – [is] the very essence of the state." (qtd. in Nagengast 109). Concerning this issue of ethnic problem, anthropologist Nagengast writes:

The crisis of the contemporary state springs from its differentially successful monopolization of power and the contradiction between it and the demands of peripheralized people(s) who through resistance have created new subject positions that challenge fundamentally the definitions of who and what ought to be repressed. To phrase it

differently, the ways in which nation and state are constructed and the manner in which those constructions enter into social knowledge have to do with consensus about what is and what is not legitimate. When consensus fails, ethnic or political opposition, which is otherwise suppressed or subtle, becomes overt. The state, of course, cannot allow this to happen. (109)

Government can obviously address the ordinary demands of ethnic groups but the demand of different separate state on the basis of ethnicity is really a great ethnic problem. On the one hand, the government is formed not to fulfill the demand of a separate state of ethnic group. And on the other hand, the ethnic group is formed to obtain its demand. For this reason, it is prepared to fight against government as well as majority group even physically by preparing its own military power. Enmity grows between majority group and ethnic group that ultimately results into Civil War and violence in a state. During the Civil War period atrocities, deionization or dehumanization against the enemy groups are normalized.

The unlawful exercise of physical force is violence. It causes a kind of fear, whose purpose is violating, damaging or abusing the victims. It is an extreme form of aggression in the use of force to cause physical harm, death or destruction (physical violence), the cause of several mental torture – through humiliation, and deprivation. *Magnacarta Reference* defines violence as “‘physical attack’, especially from other person, which involves violent or a physical assault.” Violence, therefore, is beating on others and killing them. The main cause of violence is the aggression in human beings. The other causes are hatred and destructiveness. Hatred and destructiveness are the impulses, which obscure rational and objective thinking. As a result, it leads towards violent activities.

The violence and destructiveness are also found in animal kingdom but they are more frequent and intense in the human kingdom because of the specific conditions of human existence. Human beings are more reactive because of their capacity of thinking and using their conscience. Erich Fromm, in *Magnacarta Reference* says, “The most widespread type of aggressiveness is reactive or defensive aggressiveness” (4). Every animal exhibits this type of aggressiveness when it’s vital interest-life, territory, food, the young, or access to females are threatened. These threats to vital interests must constitute a clear present danger in order to stimulate an aggressive reaction. Man also reacts with aggression in defense of his vital interests, but certain specifically human characteristics cause him to experience this aggressiveness more frequently than any other animal does. Man is more aware and serious in the values, and violation of his vital interests.

Man’s vital interests go beyond those of other animals. Man is a symbol-making animal, and he needs to orient himself in life by choosing certain values, images, persons and institutions as sacred in the sense that he could not live and remain the same if he gave them up. Hence, an attack on these symbols, whether they are an idol, the tribe, mother, the nation, the idea of honor, or whatever else sustains his psychic life, is of the same nature as an attack against his life in a biological sense. It does not matter in this context whether rationally the values or symbols he defends make sense; what matters from a psychological standpoint is that for him and they are necessary in order to live and retain his psychic equilibrium and that any threat to them is threat to his vital interest.

However, it can not be predicted that man involves himself in violence because only of his conscience and rationale. Sometimes he is brainwashed and motivated by the leaders so that he is indulged into war and crime-violence. In this

sense, another factor of aggression is man's suggestibility. If his leaders try to make him believe that he is or will be threatened, and if he lacks critical judgment and is prone to accept as reality what his leaders tell him is real, he will react to a real threat. It does not matter whether he is really threatened; what matters is whether he is convinced of the threat, and this depends upon the degree of his dependence on his leaders and his suggestibility, and his lack of critical thinking.

Violence is the use of force, and most violence is social control: It defines and responds to deviant behavior. Much is self-help – the handling of a grievance with aggression, such as the beating of a child who misbehaves, the killing of a spouse who is unfaithful, or the rioting of prisoners against their guards. “Violent self-help includes everything from pushing or slapping an individual to bombing a city or exterminating an ethnic group” (Black 15).

Violence might appear to be an unpredictable explosion, but it arises with geometrical precision. It is unpredictable and unexplainable only if we seek its origins in the characteristics of individuals but rather with their social geometry, such as the social distance they span, their social elevation, and their direction from one social location to another. “No individual or collectivity is violent in all settings at all times, and neither individualistic nor collectivistic theories predict and explain precisely when and how violence occurs. Violence occurs when the social geometry of a conflict – the conflict structure – is violent. Every form of violence has its own structure, whether a beating structure, dueling structure, lynching structure, feuding structure, genocide structure – or terrorism structure. Structures kill and maim, not individuals or collectivities” (Black 15).

Legitimacy is always a central concern in the sense that violence is only violence by definition if the perpetrators fail to establish the legitimacy of their acts

against claims of others that it is illegitimate. Violence and terror are highly politicized terms embraced and elaborated by victims and avoided by perpetrators, especially if the perpetrator is a state. In fact, “state leaders everywhere claim respect for universal rights and deny that their acts constitute torture, violence, or terror, preferring to characterize them as necessary measures to insure order and respect for the law” (Nagengast 115). Nonetheless, the state is often the instigator of cycles of violent human rights abuses as it seeks to suppress change and prevent opposition movements from undermining its legitimacy.

In today’s world, fundamental interests of man lie on the economic, social and political equality and equity, which are taken as the prime elements of human development and human rights both. If a man is deprived of any one of them, he feels his vital interests threatened, consequently, he is indulged into violence. Violence creates antagonism and association. As a result there can occur Civil War in a state when the people are involved in violence.

Ethnic Violence: Terrorism or Revolution for Independence?

The beginning of terrorist violence closely followed the spread of early civilization. From ancient time to the present, rebel groups, and governments have used cruelty and force to eliminate enemies to spread fear and panic, and to achieve political, religious and other ideological goals. The term terrorism has many meanings for policy-makers or public. There is no agreed definition of terrorism. The subject of terrorism has connotations of danger about it. The term has actually become an insult. Defining a person or groups or nations as terrorist implies a moral judgment, which has led to the greatest problem of definition. Many have used terrorism and claimed to be fighting in the name of freedom. The debate on the definition of terrorism has been whether the groups are themselves freedom fighters or terrorists. The weak argue that the strong always condemn them as terrorist and they also condemn the state they are fighting as terrorists in their suppression of the innocent.

Terrorism is not a given in the real world but it is instead an interpretation of events and their presumed cause. And these interpretations are not unbiased attempts to depict truth but rather conscious efforts to manipulate perceptions to promote certain interests at the expense of others. Lists of terrorist organizations and individuals, supporters and sponsors are the result of policy decisions regarding the potential costs and benefits of including or excluding specific parties on such list. Turk, in his *Sociology of Terrorism* clarifies that “More powerful conflict parties, especially governments, generally succeed in labeling their more threatening, i.e. violent, opponents as terrorists, whereas attempts by opponents to label officially sanctioned violence as ‘state terrorism’ have little chance of success unless supported by powerful third parties [e.g., the United Nations]” (272).

The history of terrorism has appeared in many guises. Terrorism involves activities such as assassinations, bombings, random killings, hijacking airplanes, kidnapping individuals, releasing harmful chemical and biological substances, or take other violent or threatening actions. It is used for political, not military purposes and by groups too weak to mount open assaults. Terrorism reaches back to ancient Greece and has occurred throughout history. In the 20th century acts of terrorism have been associated with the Italian Red Brigade, the Irish Republican Army, the Weathermen Intifada, and Peru's Shining Path. It is a modern tool of the alienated and its psychological impact on the extensive coverage by the media. Governments find terrorism difficult to prevent international agreements to tighten borders or return terrorists for trial may offer some difference.

Like much other violence, pure terrorism is social control. It belongs to the same family as law, gossip, ostracism, ridicule, and other processes that define and respond to deviant behavior. It is self-help, the handling of a grievance with aggression. Although it partly resembles other self-help, including many homicides and assaults in everyday life, terrorism is collective violence – a group project – and in this respect resembles rioting, lynching, and vigilantism. Like rioting and feuding, it entails a logic of collective liability: Vulnerability attaches to a social location rather than to wrongful conduct by those attacked. Like feuding, too, pure terrorism is “recurrent, a series of episodes over time. But unlike most feuding, terrorism kills or maims not merely a person or two but a large number, possibly hundreds or thousands. It is mass violence. And it is normally unilateral – one-sided rather than reciprocal” (Black 16).

Terrorists typically have political, religious or other ideological goals – having to do with beliefs and ideas. They hope to achieve that goal through violence and the

creation of fear. Many terrorists represent revolutionary movements seeking a change in government or liberation from a governing power. Some of them hope to attract attention and support for particular political philosophies or religious beliefs. Others have unclear goals or simply oppose all forms of authority. Terrorism is commonly defined as the use of violence by non-state groups and so-called 'rouge state' against civilians for political purposes. This is a very selective, indeed incoherent, usage. Dictionaries define terrorism more generally, for example as, an organized system of intimidation, especially for political ends or the systematic use of terror especially as a means of 'coercion' or domination or coercion by intimidation. Terrorism is most usefully defined for empirical research purposes as "the deliberate targeting of more or less randomly selected victims whose deaths and injuries are expected to weaken the opponent's will to persist in political conflict" (qtd. in Turk 273). Terrorist acts are political, rarely involving psychopathology or material deprivation.

Turk, further clarifies that, "Indeed, the evidence is mounting that terrorism is associated with relative affluence and social advantage rather than poverty, lack of education or other indicators of deprivation" (273). The typical terrorist comes from a relatively well-off part of the world, and appears to be motivated by political-ideological resentments rather than economic distress. Research by the authors and by others in the Middle East is consistent in finding no causally significant association between social advantage and support for terrorist acts or involvement in organized terrorism. The great majority of Palestinians were found to approve of violence against Israelis and clear majority of Israeli Jew support violence against Palestinian and other opposition groups. In both sides enthusiasm for terrorist acts is unrelated to poverty and probable greatest among the more educated. In this context, Krueger and Maleckova argue that "terrorism is better understood not as a direct or indirect

response of poverty but as a response to feeling of dignity and frustration developed in repressive political environments” (qtd. in Turk 274).

People learn to accept terrorism as a political option when their experiences lead them to see truth in message that defending their way and kind cannot be accomplished by non-violent means. Turk, in his *Sociology of Terrorism* further clarifies that terrorism is the product of a blending of demographic, economic and political determinants, a panel of the National Research Council observed that “regions most likely to generate terrorist threats have a history of colonialist exploitation by Western interests, and more recently of postcolonial economic and cultural penetration” (274).

The more educated and affluent their backgrounds, the more impatient they are likely to be with the inevitable disappointments of political life – where one rarely gets all that is envisioned. Most of what is known about terrorist organizations is now outdated. Even distinctions such as ‘international’ and ‘domestic’ terrorism are decreasingly meaningful because of the technological advances. The classic models of the terrorist organization have historically been relatively simple: to overthrow an oppressive regime or system or to drive an alien force from their land. The financial resources needed to sustain terrorist organization were obtained from donations by sympathizers and sometimes supplemented by criminal acts. As the last century ran its course, the motives and organization of terrorism became less simple and local. Nationalist and material concerns receded while ideological, especially religious, and wider geopolitical concerns were in the ascendant. For most contemporary terrorists fundamentalist religious themes justify their deeds. Religious terms are increasingly characteristic of the rationales by which terrorists justify their acts to themselves and other. Religiously motivated terrorists see themselves as “‘holy warriors’ in a ‘cosmic

war' between good and evil. Their enemies include not only those actively trying to counter them, such as security forces and rival sects, but also everyone trying to live normally without involvement in the struggle. All are creatures of cosmic evil who are to be annihilated" (Turk 277).

For most of human history, social geometry largely corresponded to physical geometry. Social distances matched physical distances: The people closest in social space (relationally, culturally, and otherwise) were the closest in physical space, and those separated by the greatest social distances were separated by the greatest physical distances. Although both the social and physical geometry of terrorism are necessary conditions for its occurrence, then, neither alone is a sufficient condition. Terrorism arises only when a grievance has a social geometry distant enough and a physical geometry close enough for mass violence against civilians. Concerning this issue Donald Black in *The Geometry of Terrorism* writes:

Violence requires contact, and most occurs in limited areas of physical space where people are close in social space – within households, neighborhoods, and communities. But the greatest violence (such as bombing of cities and other mass killings of civilians) mostly occurs when military forces cross long physical as well as social distances. Civilians may also inflict considerable violence on fellow civilians when they live close together in physical space while widely separated in social space, illustrated by massacres of European Jews by Christians or Indian Muslims and Hindus by each other. Yet for most of human history, physical separation prevented mass violence between civilians separated by the longest distances in social space. It was impossible. No contact, no violence. (20)

The history of terrorism has appeared in many guises. Today's society faces not a single form of terrorism but multiple forms of terrorism. Now the terrorism has become transnational in its characteristics. Terrorism is no means militants' only strategy. It has become individual working in very small groups due to the theoretical as well as technological impact of 21st century. Over the last two or three decades, individuals have consciously or unconsciously involved in global network of communication. The significant changes have taken place in advance means of transportation and communication, which has made cultural interaction possible, and the people are affected by the global flow of information. The worldwide change in theoretical as well as the technological advancement has brought change in perception and mood.

Individuals may commit terrorist act, but terrorism is usually the work of organized networks or groups. Many groups operate within a single nation or region. Others have branches and operations in many countries. Because terrorists generally cannot match the strength of conventional military forces, they often rely on 'guerilla warfare'. Guerilla warfare involves attacks by roving bands of fighters who torment the enemy with ambushes, bombings, sudden raids, and other hit-and-run tactics. The fighters blend in with ordinary citizens, strike suddenly, and try to avoid capture.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the world has seen much dissatisfaction. Because of these consequences, they have formed many organizations in order to boost political establishment. At the same time, various anti-establishment organizations have been formed. And they have exploited these international agreements concerning the legitimacy of terrorism. In short, international terrorist groups have increased significantly in the present context. In this situation, no one can determine with confidence where, when, why or against whom their next target may be launched. The

situation is identical as Michael Ondaatje mentions in this novel “Yet the darkest Greek tragedies were innocent compared with what was happening here” (11).

The terrorism has become worldwide. There is the absence of significant international restraint in their activities. It may be one cause that many terrorist groups facilitate their operational capability. Neither the UN nor an individual state is able to restrain this new nature of terrorist activities and attacks. Hence, terrorism is the problem not only of an individual or a state but rather it has become the worldwide problem.

The nature of terrorism has shifted in number of ways in present time. In past, terrorism was taken only as a military strategy. It has changed according to geo-politico-religious and ethnological context. It has sometimes been a tool for revolutionaries and nationalists. So, it was an instrument of state power exercised by a revolutionary state. That is to say, terrorism in the past was organized, deliberated and systematic form, as have civil wars, revolutionary wars, wars of national liberation and so on. Terrorists were either nationalist or anarchist or extremists of the left and the right.

Terrorism in the present situation is quite different. It is random, indiscriminate and asystematic. It is more individual or is in very small group. An individual may possess the technical competence to manufacture the weapons; he needs for terrorist purpose. When the terrorists work alone or are in very small groups, it becomes more difficult to detect who the enemy is.

The Civil War in Sri Lanka is going on because of ethnic violence. Sri Lanka is a country formed of two large ethnic groups – Sinhalese and Tamil. The principal ethnic groups in Sri Lanka are the Sinhalese who form majority and the Tamils who form the largest minority. These two groups tend to be concentrated in different areas

of the country depending on where they settled historically. Both Sinhalese and Tamils have many uncommonalities like language, culture, religion, origin and territory. The Sinhalese constitute more than the 70% of population. They are concentrated in southeastern Sri Lanka. They speak a distinct language 'Sinhala' and traditionally practice Buddhism. On the other hand, Tamils speak the language called 'Tamil'. They traditionally practice Hinduism, and some of them Christianity. Their different language and religions are additional sources of isolation and ethnic tension, which have existed for centuries. All these disturbing eruptions have taken place since the achievement of independence by Sri Lanka in 1948. In 1983 this ethnic tension escalated into a Civil War between the Sinhalese dominated government and Tamil separatists. The most destructive of them took place in the year 1958, 1977, and 1983.

After all a question arises why the violence took place? Is it terrorism or revolution for independence? The real cause is the discrimination felt by the minority or ethnic Tamil groups. Actually Sinhalese dominated, excluded and discriminated the Tamils. English language was the widely used language in Sri Lanka before 1958 because of colonial rule. English, the official language from 1833 to 1958, continues to be widely used and serves as the 'link language' between Sinhala and Tamil. In 1958, a law was passed to make Sinhala the only official language there by requiring its use in all government offices. Tamils strongly objected on the grounds that it excluded them from full participation in civil service. Tamils now faced the dire consequences of the dethroning of English as the language of administration and education for higher employment. This discrimination became one of the causes of violence in Sri Lanka as the Sinhalese majority has persistently discriminated against the Tamils since 1956, especially in the field of education and job recruitment and Tamil objections to these injustices have sporadically been rewarded with 'violence'.

Thus the seed of violence was planted there because of discrimination and injustices against the Tamil minority. The Tamils got united and began to attack on Sinhalese ideally as well as physically. Because of discrimination and injustice against Tamils the long tradition of amity, cordiality and mutual co-operation that had characterized relationship between ethnic and religious groups in multi-racial and multi-religious Sri Lanka over many generations was broken in 1983 by open conflict between the Tamil minority and Sinhalese majority. The aim of the Tamils was to establish a separate homeland in northern Sri Lanka. The guerrilla warfare and insurgency waged by the Tamils in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka, and the efforts of the government to crush that insurgency by attacks on the city of Jaffna and the other portions of the Jaffna peninsula, resulted in more than 6,000 casualties up to July 1987.

Set in this landscape, *Anil's Ghost* is surely a novel of terrorism, but on that abandons most of the conventions of the genre. It reproduces no political rhetoric, adjudicates no political claims, projects no political solutions. Its terrorists remain shadowy, nameless figures, encountered briefly; no police, no secret agents, no journalist heroes emerge to lock wits with them, hunt them down, or play the part of secret answer.

Though most of his literary career he developed in Canada, Sri Lanka born Ondaatje has chosen to set his powerful and resonant new novel in that country during its gruesome Civil War in the mid-1980s. Written in his usual cryptic, elliptical style, much of the story is told in flashbacks, with Ondaatje hinting at secrets even as he divulges facts, revealing his characters' motivations through their desperate or passionate behavior and most of all, conveying the essence of a people, a country and

its history via individual stories etched against a background of natural beauty and human brutality.

Into this setting of intractable and largely incomprehensible violence, Ondaatje brings a Westernized outsider, Anil Tissera, a forensic Anthropologist who has spent the last fifteen years in Britain and America. As a UN Human Rights Investigator, she is grudgingly permitted to return to her homeland for seven weeks on the condition that she work with a local archaeologist, Sarath Diyasena. Anil's UN mission favors the Western notion of a unitary truth – one that is uncomplicated by internal and external politics, and one that is always ultimately 'discoverable' – Anil's mission also favors the Western notion that the 'discovery' of truth is necessarily desirable. The question of 'desirability' amounts to figuring out what the purpose of truth really is, and while Ondaatje refrains on the subject, he nevertheless suggests that Anil's UN mission to uncover the truth with respect to the Sri Lankan conflict is more about catering to a global ideology of justice than about acting in the best interests of the Sri Lankan people.

Just as critics call into question the 'universality' and 'objectivity' of a system of international law that is founded on Western philosophies and Western capitalist gains, Ondaatje's novel invites us to question the brand of justice offered to the people of Sri Lanka by a Western-dominated legal institution, the United Nations. Central to Ondaatje's critique of UN-sponsored Human Rights Violation investigations is the extent to which such an institution appears to wield significant control over the narrative of justice that will be told about the Sri Lankan conflict. The following excerpt from the end of *Anil's Ghost* serves as a metatextual comment on the book in this regard, summarizing the essence of Ondaatje's concern over what is at stake in the globalization of human rights standards:

American movies, English books – remember how they all end?

Gamini asked that night. The American or the Englishman gets on a plane and leaves. That's it. The camera leaves with him. He looks out of the window at Mombasa or Vietnam or Jakarta, someplace now he can look through at the clouds. The tired hero. A couple of words to the girl beside him. He's going home. So the war, to all purposes, is over. That's enough reality for the West. It's probably the history of the last two hundred years of Western political writing. Go home.

Write a book. Hit the circuit. (285–86)

Ondaatje's novel presents us a bitter reality, opening with the observation that "here [in Sri Lanka] it was a more complicated world morally. The streets were still streets, the citizens remained citizens. They shopped, changed jobs, laughed. Yet the darkest of Greek tragedies were innocent compared to what was happening here" (11). By invoking the Greek tradition from which Western law and politics takes its cue, and by asserting that Sri Lanka's case is 'more complicated morally' than that tradition, Ondaatje frames his text with the suggestion that justice for the Sri Lankan people may not be obtainable through a human rights mandate that is governed by cultural outsiders.

After all Ondaatje, through his novel, demonstrates that what is 'responsible' and what is 'not responsible' with respect to the politics of another country cannot always be determined through a Western perspective. Identifying an appropriate course of action, like identifying the meaning of 'truth' and 'justice' is at least partially dependent on context and culture. The Western hero of his tale notably vanishes well before the ending of the novel. Ondaatje suggests that the solution of Sri Lankan crisis is not based on politically charged motives of a Western-based

human right discourse rather than the human compassion that touches person to person.

Ironic Treatment of the Human Rights Mission in *Anil's Ghost*

Anil as a Classic Westerner

Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* is a narrative in which a 33-year old forensic anthropologist, working under the auspices of the United Nations, travels from the United States to present-day Sri Lanka to investigate the mass civilian murders occurring in conjunction with the country's ongoing Civil War. The central question in *Anil's Ghost* concerns with the issue of truth and perception of it, especially public truth versus private truth. Anil Tissera, a protagonist around whom the whole novel has revolved, represents the Western sense of holding truth above anything else. She is a Sri-Lankan born woman living in the West. She left her country Sri Lanka 15 years before and went to the West to complete her study. She did not come back to her country for fifteen years. After 15 years she gets a chance to come back to her country not as Anil of 15 years before but as a UN forensic anthropologist to investigate into war crimes there.

In this sense, she does not belong to Sri Lanka. Now she is traveling to her own native country under 'British Passport' as a formal Western, to signal her new national affiliation. Anil says to Sarath:

'Mr. Diyasena, I'd like to remind you that I came here as a part of a human rights group, as a forensic specialist. I do not work for you. I am not hired by you. I work for an international authority'. [. . .] 'We are an independent organization. We make independent reports'. (274)

For this reason it can be said that Anil is a person with the diasporic identity since she has been migrated across her homeland. Some critics have tended to comment her returning to her homeland as her quest for identity. Years of medical school in Great

Britain and years of field work in the American Southwest have left her identifying more with the West in less formal ways as well:

In her years abroad, during her European and North American education, Anil had courted foreignness, was at ease whether on the Bakerloo line or the highways around Santa Fe. She felt completed abroad. Even now her brain held the area codes of Denver and Portland. (54)

Culturally and nationally Anil is a diasporic citizen but professionally she is a forensic anthropologist. She belongs to International Human Rights Commission. Anil is teamed up with a local Sri Lankan archeologist, 49-year-old Sarath, to determine whether or not a recently exhumed skeleton can indeed provide evidence that the Sri Lankan government has been systematically killing and torturing its own people in the campaign of murder that consumes the country. Although there are at least two other political factions involved in the country's mass killings aside from the Sri Lankan government, Anil's task is to investigate state-sponsored murders. Their investigation begins with such questions. Whose skeleton was that they call 'Sailor'? Who tried to burn his bones? Who is responsible for the terror? Who killed Sailor? Anil and Sarath drive to the south and hire a miner named Ananda to reconstruct the skeleton's head, so that the victim can be identified.

Anil stands in novel as 'Western Hero' a woman who "left the island when she was eighteen and never looked back again until a halfhearted application to the Center for Human Rights in Geneva sent her home as an investigating forensic anthropologist" (15). She now arrives in Sri Lanka as a formal Westerner. Her mission is a simple one charged with the authority of the UN's office of the high commission for human rights. Her job is to investigate the complaints of government-

sponsored murder. Complaints have been done by Amnesty International and other civil rights groups on behalf of Sri Lanka.

Sarath shows Anil three prehistoric skeletons from an ancient burial ground, now a government archaeological preserve where no one is allowed without a permit. At the preserve, Anil and Sarath find a relatively new body buried among the excavations of a sixth-century archaeological preserve on government-access-only property. After examining it, she determines that it is not ancient like the others. Furthermore, it contains traces of lead, while the soil samples from the surrounding area reveal no lead. She concludes that the skeleton, which she nicknames Sailor, could prove government involvement in human rights violation to the organization in Geneva. She expresses her desire to blame the state, in her words:

‘This is a murder victim, Sarath.’

A murder [. . .] Do you mean any murder [. . .] or do you mean a political murder?’

‘It was found within a sacred historical site. A site constantly under government or police supervision.’

‘Right’

And this is a recent skeleton, she said firmly.

It was buried no more than four to six years ago.

What’s it doing here?

There are thousands of twentieth century bodies, Anil. Can you imagine ‘how many murders – ’

‘But we can prove this, don’t you see? This is an opportunity it’s traceable. We found him in a place that only a government official could get into. (51–52)

Though Anil and Sarath work together, the struggles over their philosophy are played out in a drama as two protagonists. The narrative of justice is fought among them, and there is little doubt from the onset who holds the upper hand. Sarath is aware of the fact that the political charging could cost them their lives, reluctantly agrees to go along with Anil. And so the pair, working in makeshift laboratories as far from the penetrating eye of the government as possible, begin their dangerous investigation by taking protective custody of the skeleton. Anil believes in 'truth'. At any cost, she wants to prove the skeleton as recent one. This statement gives her search for objective truth:

She began to examine the skeleton again under sulphur light, summarizing the facts of his death so far, the permanent truths, same for Colombo as for Troy, one forearm broken partial burning. Vertebrate damage in the neck. The possibility of small bullet wounds in the skull. Entrance and exit. (65)

Of assistance in their investigation is Gamini, Sarath's younger brother and one of the few medical surgeons left on the island; a blind epigraphist named Palipana, who serves as a professional mentor to Sarath; and a Buddhist statue-painter named Ananda, an artist commissioned to fashion a sculpture of Sailor's face so that the skeleton may be identified. After weeks of furtive research, Anil and Sarath successfully establish Sailor's name, profession, and date of abduction. Their teamwork falls apart, however, when Anil's underlying distrust of Sarath's political motives prompts her to take matters into her own hands. Panicked at the thought that her colleague has sold her out to the Sri Lankan government, Anil rushes to Colombo to present their evidence to a group of military and police personnel on her own. During the hearing, she is confronted by a hostile Sarath, who interrogates her from

his position in the audience because he is able to see what she cannot: that their investigation is far too incriminating for the government to tolerate and that Anil's own life depends upon his ability to discredit her as well as the entire investigation. Sarath has seen this happened before in other cases where civilian informants have been brutally retaliated against for attempting to expose the government's illegal actions. "The warden of an orphanage who reported cases of annihilation was jailed. A human rights lawyer was shot and the body removed by army personnel" (42). Towards the end of the novel Sarath is killed for his part in the investigation, while Anil has escaped the country but the narrative of *Anil's Ghost* moves forward.

Anil's Ghost troubles the idea that the 'truth' of human rights violation is both, on the one hand, discoverable, and, on the other hand, desirable. Anil represents the Western dominant version of civil and political rights. So the novel extends the discussion about the United Nations' universal mandate on human rights. It is not so much the issue of whether or not global human rights should be stipulated, but the approach by which those rights are legislated through means of international intervention.

Anil's Ghost exposes the politics working behind the function of the United Nations or such institutions. It is like Michael Ignatieff's assertion that "human right is nothing other than a politics, one that must reconcile moral ends to concert situation and must be prepared to make painful compromises not only between means and ends themselves" (qtd. in Derrickson 21–22).

Just as the critics call into question the 'universality' and 'objectivity' of a system of international law that is founded on Western philosophies and Western capitalist gains, *Anil's Ghost* invites us to question the brand of justice offered to the people of Sri Lanka by a Western-dominated legal institution, the United Nations.

Such institution appears to wield significant control over the narrative of justice that will be told about the Sri Lankan conflict. Anil's representation or her investigation is just to create the truth about Sri Lanka. The following excerpt serves as a metatextual comment concerning what is at stake in the globalization of human rights standards:

American movies, English books – remember how they all end?

Gamini asked that night. The American or the Englishman gets on a plane and leaves. That's it. The camera leaves with him. He looks out of the window at Mombasa or Vietnam or Jakarta, someplace now he can look through at the clouds. The tired hero. A couple of words to the girl beside him. He's going home. So the war, to all purposes, is over. That's enough reality for the West. It's probably the history of the last two hundred years of Western political writing. Go home.

Write book. Hit the circuit. (285–86)

It is no secret that the kind of stories we tell ourselves matter more than the other tells our stories. This fact is made plain by above excerpt where Gamini prompts us to understand that the story Anil will ultimately tell about the 'truth' of Sri Lanka is a Western story. She, like the 'tired hero' who gets on a plane and leaves will escape back to the West where her accounts will invariably reflect enough reality for that part of the world, that is to say a distorted reality, a reality commensurate with the narrative of 'Mombasa or Vietnam or Jakarta' that the West repeatedly constructs – to its own liking – through books and the magic of Hollywood. Where is the justice in this kind of telling? The passage implicitly asks. And how can the West, which has been involved in such distortions for 'the last two hundred years' be entrusted with its continued narration? Both questions, of course, are purely rhetorical. That the 'truths' Anil will take back are ultimately ones that serve the interests of the parties by whom

she has been commissioned is suggested in the comment that the information she bears might be used to 'Write a book, Hit the circuit'. The statement 'Hit the circuit' implies that there is a capitalist venture underscoring her mission after all. Justice, it would seem from Gamini's account, is fully situational. It is decided by the West, and it is meant to serve the West.

Anil's mission is a simple one, charged with the authority of the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to investigate the complaints of government-sponsored murder that have been filed by Amnesty International and other civil rights groups on behalf of the people of Sri Lanka. As the novel reveals, there is much to investigate. Anil encounters the brutality of the island's violence on her very first day, volunteering to offer a group of students an impromptu lesson in the use of forensics to determine a body's cause of death. The first corpse she examines presents a bit of a conundrum, as Anil wonders aloud how the murdered man's arms could have been broken without damaging the hands that would have gone up in a gesture of defense. One of the students offers an explanation that takes Anil aback by revealing the stoic brutality of the island's war:

'May be he was praying'.

She stopped and looked up at the student who had spoken.

The next corpse brought in had flail fractures on the rib cage. It meant he had fallen from a great height- at least five hundred feet – before hitting the water belly down. The air knocked out of the body. It meant a helicopter. (14)

Anil's introduction to the horrors of the Sri Lankan Civil War is only the first of many incidents in which we learn of the gruesome atrocities that have plagued the island. Throughout the novel we come to know many atrocities. Sarath's wife

encounters with an incident when she makes her way to the village school. Ondaatje writes:

She is ten yards from the bridge when she sees the heads of the two students on stakes, on either side of the bridge, facing each other.

Seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years old. She does not know or care.

She sees the two more heads on the far side of the bridge and can tell even from here that she recognizes one of them. (174–75)

Later in the novel, we learn about the similar atrocities, that the teacher herself and forty-six of her students are picked up in the schoolyard by trucks with no number plates, a mass abduction executed by the government to purge rebel supporters and other political insurgents from Sri Lanka's rural village. They are never heard from again. As Sarath informs Anil, both the heads on stakes and the abductions are a national commonplace:

We have seen so many heads stuck on poles here, these last few years.

It was at its worst a couple years ago. You'd see them in the early mornings, somebody's night work, before the families heard about them and came and removed them and took them home. Wrapping them in their shirts or just cradling them. Someone's son. These were blows to the heart. There was only one thing worse. That was when a family member simply disappeared and there was no sighting or evidence of his existence or his death. (184)

Sarath points out that the brazen civilian murders on the island are just as numerous as the open abductions. Rarely are either crimes reported, however. As Sarath tells Anil, "Everyone's scared. It's a national disease" (53). Ondaatje elaborates on this comment, writing:

In a fearful nation, public sorrow was stamped down by the climate of uncertainty. If a father protested a son's death, it was feared another family member would be killed. [. . .] this was the scarring psychosis in the country. Death, loss, was 'unfinished,' so you could not walk through it. There had been years of night visitations, kidnappings or murders in broad daylight. (56)

Anil is thrown into the middle of this complexity with a directive to find evidence of government wrong-doing in a place where nearly everything is wrong and where nearly everyone is implicated in its doing. Her orders on the surface, however, appear to be objective enough. Even she is convinced of her own political impartiality, emphasizing during her climactic hearing before the Sri Lankan government that she works for "an independent organization" and that she "makes independent reports" (274). The fact that Anil's mission is focused on gathering the truth about a specific kind of atrocity – that is, a state-sponsored one – signals her mission both partial and subjective. In this respect Sarath during a first meeting with Anil reflects:

The bodies turn up weekly now. The height of the terror was, eighty-eight and, eighty-nine, but of course it was going on long before that. Every side was killing and hiding the evidence. Every side. [. . .] The government was not the only one doing the killing. You had, and still have, three camps of enemies – one in the north, two in the south. [. . .] There's no hope of affixing blame. What we've got here is unknown extrajudicial executions mostly. Perhaps by the insurgents, or by the government or the guerrilla separatists. Murders committed by all sides. (17–18)

The point Sarath repeats so emphatically in this speech is that everyone has blood on their hands in Sri Lanka, not just the government. In other words, the truth of the situation may be far more complicated than Anil and her orders allow. For Ondaatje, this is a significant problem. He questions the Western assumption that the truth is patiently discoverable, just as he casts doubt on the related assumption that justice is a binary affair that offers up a tidy victim and villain. If murders are committed by all sides then no objective assessment of the situation can lead to the affixing blame.

The question of whether or not truth is discoverable is asked and re-asked throughout the novel. Anil's search for truth in Sri Lanka is somewhat troubling as many characters point out. Gamini, for example, warns Anil to keep in mind that when it comes to the Sri Lankan Civil War, "Nobody's perfect. Nobody's right" (132). The epigraphist Palipana shares similar insights, confiding to Anil that even in ancient times, "There was nothing to believe in with certainty. They still didn't know what the truth was. We have never had the truth. Not even with your work on bones. Most of the time in our world, truth is just opinion" (102). Palipana views that the truth cannot be known because truth is just opinion. The fact, the novel suggests is that the domestic and political situation Anil is asked to assess are not so easily discerned, and certainly not easily discerned without a proper understanding of the context in which such facts are situated. Sarath continues to emphasize this point, instructing Anil:

I want you to understand the archeological surround of a fact. Or you will be like one of those journalists who file reports about flies and scabs while staying at the Galle Face Hotel. That false empathy and blame. [. . .] That's how we get in the West. (44)

Sarath warns Anil to avoid easy conclusions about the situation in Sri Lanka again and again. His desperate attempt to get Anil to understand the complex nature of truth is not fully internalized by her. He insists in another moment that it was another world with its own value system:

Things were so bad in Sri Lanka that the Sri Lankan government was obliged to adopt the illegal murder of civilian to control the bloodshed: the law [was] abandoned by everyone. We would not have survived with your rules of Westminster. (154)

The fact that Sarath discounts the applicability of ‘Westminster rules’ to the situation in Sri Lanka is merely meant to invite questions about the seemingly apolitical nature of international-sponsored human rights investigations. By presenting forensic science in the identification of the Sailor, the West creates the ‘truth’ that seems beyond history, culture and politics. Anil, by doing so, wants to create ‘permanent truth’, truths that hold no political bias.

The problem with these ‘permanent truths’, however, is that they necessarily become conflated with the ‘truths’ about the situation of Sri Lanka as a whole. In the novel, the forensic truth about Sailor’s death is parlayed into a political truth about Sri Lanka’s human rights record, and not even Anil can tell the difference. When Sarath expresses hesitation about the advisability of their investigation, Anil appeals to the scientist in him, saying “You’re an archeologist. Truth comes finally to the light. It’s in the bones and sediment” (259). In these lines, Anil is no longer talking about the truth of Sailor’s death; she is talking about the truth of the broader situation in which Sri Lankans find themselves, extrapolating the former from that latter, just as others will do with the information she takes back to Geneva. But Sarath offers an alternative perspective by saying, “Truth is in character and nuance and mood” (259)

and yet it is flatly denied by Anil, whose faith in science remains resolute: “That is what governs us in our lives, [but] that’s not the truth” (259).

The UN, by relying on the ‘objectivity’ of science to impute a similar objectivity to its own strategies and practices, conceals the political nature of its work while promoting a narrative of justice about Sri Lanka that is alarmingly devoid of unvarnished politics. As the novel tells us, the president of Sri Lanka only approved of Anil’s visit in an attempt to “placate trading partners in the West” (16). This statement not only provides insight as to why the Sri Lankan government has taken a sudden interest in the human rights of its people, but it also suggests a dubious reason as to why the United Nations has followed the suit. It is clear that Sri Lanka is involved in business with West. Confirmation of this fact comes when Ondaatje writes:

It was a Hundred Years War with modern weaponry, and backers on the sidelines in safe countries, a war sponsored by gun and drug-runners. It became evident that political enemies were secretly joined in financial arms deals. (43)

The revelation that Sri Lanka is involved in business partnerships with Western industries gives way to other details that would suggest a more complicated ‘truth’ about the human rights violations Anil is sent to investigate. Sarath tells Anil, for example, that the three rivaling factions in the war have been “importing state-of-the-art weapons from the West” (17). Sri Lankan Civil War has become a big business for Western states and that those states have been capitalizing on the lucrative weapons market that sustains the island’s conflict.

This is probably not the story that will make it into Anil’s report, however. Charged with the task of investigating government-sponsored atrocities, Anil’s orders

already presuppose a truth that omits mention of US or European involvement.

Although not even Gamini can fully appreciate the complexity of the politics underlining his country's war, he knows enough to understand that Western public opinion oftentimes misses the mark:

What the f_ _ k do my marriage and your damn research mean. And those armchair rebels living abroad with their ideas of justice – nothing against their principles, but I wish they were here. They should come and visit me in surgery. (132)

Gamini's complaint against the facile judgments cast upon Sri Lanka by 'armchair rebels living abroad' suggests that the West assumes no responsibility for the situation on the island and yet still plays a role in the conflict from the sidelines, not only as merchants of weapons but as perpetrators of political propaganda. Gamini further states, "these guys who are setting off the bombs are who the Western press calls freedom fighters. [. . .] And you want to investigate the government?" (133). Again, the idea that 'truth' is entangled in politics becomes clear here, and the United Nations, by showing itself to be partial to a particular version of the truth, that is, by supporting a historical narrative that, among other things, exculpates, the West from any sort of involvement in the Sri Lankan human rights disaster, appears to deliver a brand of justice that is not fully separate from global politics and its neocolonial impulse.

The statement, the novel insists throughout is that the reason for war was war. It offers us to think why the two major ethnic groups of Sri Lanka are involved in political dispute that involves daily disappearance, torture, fears and state-of-terror. We are made to think that the justice decided by the West is meant to serve the West. The mission Anil holds has nothing to act in the best of the Sri Lankan people. Anil

represents as Western hero. In any sort of involvement in Sri Lankan human rights violation, she appears to deliver a new brand of justice. The brand of Anil's justice is not separate from global politics.

Sarath as a Classic Non-Westerner

Sarath is one of the competitive protagonist of the novel. He stands as a contrasting character to Anil within the same parameter. He is 49 years old, a local Sri Lankan archaeologist. These two characters are the carriers of their different ideologies. The tension on how West views 'truth' and its treatment from its own perspective which Anil carries and how Sarath opposes the Western version of 'truth' and its justice stands as an irony of the Western mission. This contrast is made clear while Ondaatje writes:

Sarath knew that for [Anil] the journey was getting to the truth. But what would the truth bring them into? It was a flame against a sleeping lake of petrol. Sarath had seen truth broken into suitable pieces and used by the foreign press alongside irrelevant photographs. A flippant gesture towards Asia that might lead, as a result of this information, to new vengeance and slaughter. There were dangers in handling truth to an unsafe city around you. As an archeologist Sarath believed in truth as a principle. That is, he would have given his life for the truth if the truth were of any use. (156–57)

Here, Sarath outlines reasons as to why the truth under the current circumstances is of no use. He tries to communicate to Anil that the objective truth cannot be translated to social and political realms unproblematically. The foreign journalists who break the truth up into suitable pieces and use it to create a distorted rendition of events necessarily compromise objective truth at a great cost. It is this cost that figures as

Sarath's second reason for believing the truth to be of 'no use'. He adds that the truth at the wrong time can be dangerous and Anil's revelation of 'truth' about the Sri Lankan government proves itself to be a careless gesture.

As well-trained in science as Anil is, Sarath "can read a bucket of soil as if it were a complex historical novel" (151). But as the metaphor suggests, he is much more of a humanist, considering an archeologist the "link between the mortality of flesh and bone and the immortality of an image on rock" (278). Where Anil looks for permanent truths in the chemical traces that survive in bones, Sarath insists that truth is inseparable from life; "for the living" truth is "in character and nuance and mood" (259). Anil's objection that these are only "what governs us in our lives" is meaningless for a man who sees the most durable artifacts sharing humanity's fragility, so that the "dropping off of arms and hands of rock as a result of the fatigue of centuries [. . .] existed alongside human fate" (279). He insists that Anil learn the details of Sri Lanka's recent political history, the "archeological surround of a fact that Westerners usually miss" (44). Without this context, even accurate information is dangerous, as when the foreign press publish isolated facts with "irrelevant photographs" that "lead to new vengeance and slaughter" (157).

Though Ondaatje does not take any sides of his characters, at the end of the novel it turns out that Sarath is at least partly right. He does not believe in Anil where her perspective is colored by the typical agenda of the West. Sarath finally challenges Anil. In the urge of Anil to believe in 'truth', Sarath replies her "I believe in a society that has peace, Miss Tissera what you are proposing could result in chaos. Why do you not investigate the killing of government officers" (275)?

Sarath repeatedly warns Anil about the danger of the truth. Anil is never ready to accept that the idea of truth at wrong time becomes more dangerous and it is like a

flame against sleeping lake of petrol. So oblivious is she to the danger her work places her in that she, boldly announces her incriminating findings to a gathering of Sri Lankan officials at the end of the novel. Only days or hours of her announcement a backlash of civil violence occurs, this time directed at Sarath himself, a man who knew that his own participation in protecting Anil, as well as his own participation in the investigation of Sailor's death, would surely lead to his own demise. His death underscores the irony and possible imprudence of the UN's intervention in the Sri Lankan conflict. It obviously illustrates and ironizes Western interpretation of terrorism branding others as becoming 'terrorist' and themselves as one to make the world terror free. Also, it clarifies how West in the name of investigating and probing human rights violation, is violating and sparking terrorism in the non-Western countries.

Western Parochialism and Irony

Anil, being a female, has been attributed with male's name. Closer examination of Ondaatje's construction of Anil Tissera raises a number of points, such as she is Westernized; she is a scientist and spokesperson for the United Nations. In Non Western context the name Anil generally refers to male rather than female. She is one of the competitive Sri Lankan born protagonist living in the West and a created personality to advocate just what she is designated rather than to use her discretion independently with regards to truth, justice and probing of human rights violation and terrorism. She has spent the last fifteen years in Britain and America. As a UN human rights investigator, she is permitted to return to her homeland for seven weeks. Now she has a British passport. And the UN International Human Rights Commission (IHRC) has chosen Anil to investigate, explore and expose violence and make a report about the human rights violation. Years of medical school in Britain

and Western training have turned into a person, who identifies herself more with West. She has come in Sri Lanka with mission. Her mission is to create truth. In this sense, she is a Westernized outsider.

Since Anil is a forensic anthropologist belonging to UN human rights commission, it is better to know the task of forensic anthropologist in association with United Nations. The major aim of United Nation is to create universal law or the universal truth and internationally protected code of human rights, on which all nations can subscribe and to which all people can aspire. Thus, Anil uses scientific technique of investigation. She exhumes the skeleton from the unmarked graveyard and comes to conclusion that the government personnel killed Sailor. She finds it in the place where only the government officials could have access. For her, truth is discoverable and her permanent truths that hold no political bias: she argues that “the permanent truths are same for Colombo as for Troy” (65) lurk in knowable details, and that such truths “set you free” (64).

As a forensic anthropologist, she searches for trace minerals that tell where the body was buried the first time, before it was moved; for tiny indentations in its bones that identify the parasite that stripped its flesh, for the subtle deformities that reveal the person’s occupation. But names are powerful talismans for Anil who won her masculine name by taking it away from her brother when she was fourteen. Shouting her married lover’s name from an open window, “Hey, listen everybody – I’ve got the science writer Cullis Wright in my car” (264), was more than a way to embarrass him; it was an attempt to help him break free. When Sarath’s brother, Gamini, tells her about the suicide of the lover who had also been his sister-in-law, Anil asks what her name was. Wondering if she wants to tell his brother, Gamini asks, “What would you do with her name” (253)? The question hangs in the air unanswered; we know that for

Anil, the name is a fact, a permanent truth that separates this woman from all the unhistorical dead. But what to do with this truth? Anil's medical training enables her to discover the name of the victim she and Sarath found, but what anyone will do with the words 'Ruwan Kumara' is unclear.

Anil looks for permanent truths in the chemical traces that survive in bones. But her competitive protagonist Sarath insists that truth is inseparable from life. Forensic experts like Anil, conduct the exhumation in the appropriate scientific manners. Forensic experts conduct their investigation by exhuming the graves by performing initial and second autopsies, and by assisting the unordered investigations of these suspicious deaths. Forensic scientists cite three reasons why they investigate the grave of victims of extra judicial killings. First, from the humanitarian perspective, they hope to be able to inform the families of the deceased of the fate their loved ones. Second, from a legal standpoint, they aim to uncover legally admissible evidence that will result in the conviction of those responsible for any crimes. Third, they hope to deter future violation by creating awareness through forensic documentation and subsequent litigation that those responsible will be held accountable for their actions.

To meet these three purposes, the forensic scientists carry out the difficult task of identifying the remains found in unmarked graves or any other places by employing multidisciplinary techniques involving medicine, anthropology, archaeology, sociology and law. Like all forensic experts, Anil follows all techniques to discover the truth guided by the West.

From the very beginning we come to learn that nobody was very hopeful about what she could accomplish in Sri Lanka. Nor does her partnership with the archeologist Sarath Diyasena augur well: she worries about his ties to the government

and he suspects that her fifteen years in the West will make her as useless as “one of those journalists who file reports about flies and scabs while staying at the Galle Face Hotel” (44). When Sarath insists that she have a look at some bones recently excavated from a sixth century monastic site, she is annoyed at their irrelevance: “she hadn’t come here to deal with the Middle Ages” (20).

Finally she faces different problems in carrying out her mission because of the unhelpful tendency of government officials. Army and police officers humiliate her at the day of presentation of her report about her mission or investigation.

The novel successfully avoids the Western narrative, which needs the univocal truth by showing the vanishing of Western hero. Anil, as a Western hero, never makes symbolic departure from Sri Lanka. We never learn of her possible fate and what comes out of her report, which she delivers in Geneva.

Ondaatje suggests that the solution of Sri Lankan crisis is not based on politically charged motives of a Western-based human rights discourse rather than the human compassion that touches person to person. Even after the collapse of Anil’s mission, the narrative of *Anil’s Ghost* moves further. We are left to pay witness two seemingly random events, both of them significantly located in the heart of Sri Lanka. The first event involves the assassination of the President of Sri Lanka by a man who approaches the leader with a pack of explosives strapped to his chest. The second event, which occurs well away from the violence and noise of Colombo, involves the painstaking reconstruction of an immense stature of Buddha that was destroyed in an unrelated bombing several years prior. Two events. Two bombings. Two tales of destruction. And yet out of the last one comes the promise of peace and reconciliation.

The months of labor expended in the careful reconstruction of the Buddhist statue is immanently symbolic of a rebuilding that might eventually reunite the

different factions of Sri Lanka into something whole and stable as well. It is telling that, in the final two lines of the novel, Ondaatje asserts the importance of genuine human-to-human compassion in the resolution of this internal conflict. The solution to that crisis, Ondaatje suggests, is to be found not in the ideals of liberal humanism and not in the politically charged motives of a Western-based human rights discourse, but in the material world itself, in the simple how of compassion that travels from person to person.

To prioritize the importance of human to human compassion in the resolution of this internal conflict of Sri Lanka, Ondaatje ironizes the intervention of Western mission in Non-Western countries. Without condoning the violence that characterizes the Sri Lankan Civil War, Ondaatje demonstrates that the search for justice in such situations is not unproblematic. On the contrary, to the extent that international human rights investigations invariably take sides, to the extent that they often impose Western philosophies of justice in non-Western settings, and to the extent that they broadcast an arrogance that is culturally belittling, they provide us, according to Ondaatje's novel, with ample reason to rethink the methods of adjudicating human rights violations. The United Nation's approach seems exactly how Anil intrudes in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka. The UN, by relying on the 'objectivity' of science to impute a similar objectivity to its own strategies and practices, conceals the political nature of its work while promoting a narrative of justice about Sri Lanka that is alarmingly devoid of unvarnished politics. By this approach, we cannot say International Human Rights Commission (IHRC) works freely. Certainly it takes sides.

Conclusion

Anil's Ghost, as a fictional work, is a subtle representation of violence and terrorism of contemporary Sri Lanka. Ondaatje's novel is apolitical as claimed by the critics. He seems irresponsible regarding the politics of Sri Lanka. He neither takes side of the groups who are involved in Civil War, nor does he support to the Western-based human rights agent, Anil. Michael Ondaatje very powerfully depicts the contemporary terrorism, violence and ethnic strife in Sri Lanka. Without condoning the violence that characterizes the Sri Lankan Civil War, Ondaatje demonstrates that the search for justice in such situations is not unproblematic. Besides it is an interpretation of Western universalism and truth in non-Western setting.

Anil's Ghost, as a postmodern novel, reveals quite arbitrary and ambiguous nature of terrorism. In post modern time, identity, dimensions and nature of terrorism are unidentifiable as it prevails randomly causing difficulty to interpret. It is complex to identify who the enemy is, in the same token. And even to read and thrash out solution at such juncture by UN system is under question and Anil's attempt to read the case is an irony. Neither Anil, the representative of UN, nor West can find out the true interpretation and solution of terrorism and human rights violation for it is obsessed with Westerners' perspective because it inherits underneath the terror and violence. It is how Ondaatje ironizes the Western perspective in an attempt to interpret terrorism.

As mentioned earlier the sole purpose of the present study is to find out how terrorism is interpreted from West and how it tends to view the rest of the world and how it takes itself of being the patron of civilization. The research has examined the novel from the perspective of irony in the sense that Western notion of terrorism and barbarism had blatantly exercised to have their influence or dominance over the rest.

Westerners do not realize this truth whereas the same precedence is being applied to them and they are ensnared in a trap of indecision and failure just like Anil's mission to uncover the truth collapses in the novel.

Anil's mission to discover the truth or to interpret terrorism in the conflict torn country, from the Western brand of justice is therefore denied by Ondaatje in the non-Western setting by problematizing the procedures and methods of reading and presenting the fact from Western blueprint of justice disregarding the socio political facts of particular setting is mainly to deny the interpretation of West to the rest.

Anil's Ghost, as a postmodern novel, that implies terrorism as a tool to extend the discussion about the United Nations' universal mandate of the human rights; the idea of 'truth' or 'the universal justice', which unfolds in human right violation, is 'desirable'. Ondaatje denies the independent working of UN based human rights. UN's mission favors the Western notion of unitary truth. Anil's mission also favors the Western notion that the 'discovery' of truth is necessarily desirable. Ondaatje suggests that Anil's mission to uncover the truth with respect to the Sri Lankan conflict provides a global ideology of justice rather than acting in the best interest of the Sri Lankan people.

To reveal these hidden motives, Ondaatje has used the competitive protagonists: Anil and Sarath. Anil's perspective is colored by the typical agenda of the West whereas Sarath is presented as what West can not see about the rest, has finally tension on agreeing on common ground. Anil is a Western hero. Her mission is to punish historical wrongdoing as Sri Lankan government has violated human rights. Her mission has no significance in the novel as Sarath points out that the truth under the circumstance is of no use. The novel clearly posits the insignificance and irrelevance of her mission that interprets terrorism or violation of human rights from

the Western eyes. Anil or UN does not have significance as the representative is incapable of finding an all encompassing and all inclusive truth and interpretation of justice.

Ondaatje tries to show how West, in the name of civilization and protection of human rights and war against terrorism, has indirectly invited that the assumed reason of war was war. Immediately after Anil's announcement of human rights violation, there occurs another violence, which takes Sarath's life. By this evidence, Ondaatje suggests that the resolution of Sri Lankan crisis is not based on politically charged motives of Western-based human rights discourse rather than the human to human compassion.

Ondaatje, as the analysis shows, suggests that though the UN has made significant progress in promoting social justice worldwide, its role in that effort has not been an entirely neutral and independent one. Like the Western states from which it derives the force of its authority, the UN necessarily takes sides, and promotes political, cultural and economic agendas in non-Western countries. Far from being heavy-handed in his approach, and far from indicting the United Nations for human rights work that is both good-intentioned and terribly needed, Ondaatje's goal is focused on underscoring the fact that there is indeed politics at work behind the function of the United Nations. Again his emphasis is on the need to accept and appreciate complexity and diversity, sometimes coupled with exploration of a range of concepts and approaches which may appear alien or even illogical to those from a conventional Western background.

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