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Samal Vimukthi Hemachandra*

Introduction

Chandra Perera, also known as *Chandrakka*,[1] now in her 70s, did not spend her 20s as any ordinary youth would have done. An ordinary youth in his/her 20s would imagine having good education, a prospective job, a family, a car, etc. But Chandrakka was no ordinary youth. She escaped this materialistic dream unlike her fellow youths. Instead, she was training herself to use weapons and practise karate, participating in residential education camps in the rural areas, introducing new youth to the movement and making explosives. Though she successfully completed her university education in 1969, she turned down job opportunities and became a full-time cadre. She was imprisoned for 6 years at Welikada prison. She did not have a fancy wedding in a hotel for the benefit of relatives and friends. She had a small wedding ceremony inside the prison where she wed her fiancé[2] who was also in the prison at that time for conspiring and rebelling against the 'queen's government'. She believed her actions would lead to a better future, not only for her but for everybody. A society of equals.

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Today her story is unheard or forgotten. Only a few people who are family members, former rebels or friends remember her story. This does not confine only her. In fact, this was the fate of every female rebel who fought for a cause, either collective or individual in 1971. According to available statistics on this theme, there were 216 female rebels in the detention out of a total of 10,192 who either surrendered or was arrested (Obeyesekere 1974: 368). One can argue by pointing out to these statistics that the role of female rebels is insignificant compared to their male counterparts. Further Gananath Obeyesekere observes that these numbers can be misleading or might not reflect the general composition of the rebels and have to be considered cautiously (Obeyesekere 1974: 367-368). Nevertheless, if we accept the fact that female participation in the 1971 revolt is minimum compared to males, it is still surprising that the role of female rebels has not been analysed considering the substantial amount of academic effort vested on the 1971 revolt.

For instance, there is a wide range of literature that discusses different themes of the revolt by various academics, former rebels and others. The general knowledge perceived on the 1971 revolt is that it was an unwise reaction against the state by unemployed youth led by the opportunist Rohana Wijeweera of Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front or JVP) (De Silva 2007 (1971), Alles 1979). The base of this argument is that these youth were depicted as mentally unstable or irrational (Bandara 2012) who were manipulated by a leader (Alles 1979) or a group of individuals who by nature had an 'identity crisis' and a psychological engrained rebellious attitude. (Fernando 2002). Also, there are structural or macro-level analyses on the causes of the revolt. Fred Halliday (1971) gives a historical analysis from colonialism to the economic crisis of the 1960s when discussing the 1971 revolt. Politicus (1972) emphasizses how the rural youth were affected by unemployment and the expansion of education. Gananath Obeyesekere (1974) has done a statistical examination on the social background of the 1971 rebels where he questions the caste and class aspect of the revolt. Robert N. Kearney (1975) also tackles the 1971 revolt in a similar way, stating that

the education expansion created youth unemployment due to the stagnated economy. In another article, Kearney (1980) makes a comparative analysis on the youth as a category in the 1971 revolt and Tamil militant groups in the north. Former rebel, Victor Ivan (2006) discusses the caste oppression as a major cause for the revolt. Among these themes, the use of violence has been a common theme when analysing the 1971 revolt or the post-1970 period. Nira Wickramasinghe (2014: 246-263) analyses the political violence during the period between 1970 and 1990 covering both JVP insurrections in the 1971 and 1987-89 period. Gamini Samaranayake (1997 and 1999)attempts to locate JVP violence in a broader context by bringing the LTTE to his analysis.

Apart from this academic literature, there are many publications, mostly biographies, on the stories of former rebels. Lionel Bopage (2019), who was a top rank leader of the movement and D.M. Karunarathne aka Kalyananda (Jayasinghe 2019) are important. Ruwan Jayathunga, in his *71 Kerella* (2011), has compiled approximately 100 interviews of former rebels. These publications provide individual stories and perspectives of former rebels. Finally, there are a few publications by the JVP which can be understood as the JVP official story of the 1971 revolt. Udeni Saman Kumara's *71' Aprel Nadu Wibhagaya: Wijeweerage Harda Sakshiya* (2016) stands out as a concrete example where it defends its activities in 1971 and has paid more attention to glorify and protect Wijeweera dogmatically from his critics.

As illustrated above these literatures cover a vast area of the 1971 revolt. However, the most significant element which is missing in these literatures is the role played by women in the revolt. The fact is there is no such research on this theme apart from three brief accounts. Manisha Gunasekera's MA thesis titled 'Gender in Counter-State Political Practice of the JVP 1987-1989' (1994), consists of stories of three female rebels and Neloufer De Mel's *Women and the Nation's Narrative* (2001), one female rebel's story has been discussed. In *71 Kerella* (Jayathunga 2011), though there are approximately 100 interviews of former male rebels, it only has 5 stories of female rebels. This missing aspect of the revolt has not been invisible to feminist scholars. "A full-length feminist

study of the JVP movement in Sri Lanka has yet to be written, and the experiences of its women cadres yet to be recorded" (De Mel 2001: 210).

For most radical movements in South Asia or in Latin America, a vast literature can be found on analysing and/or criticising the status of women. Analysing the Naxalite movement, Akanksha Narain (2017), Sneha Kulkarni (2018) and Seema Shekhawat and Chayanika Saxena (2015), by analysing the use of violence by these women, have argued that patriarchy has been exercised or reinvented in the movement. Henrike Donner (2009) has explored the change of ideals and norms of masculinity among its middle class activists. By taking both the Naxalite and Tebhaga movements into consideration, Debal K. Singha Roy (1995) discusses in what ways women in these two movements became empowered. Peter Custers (1986) points out how the male dominance in the Tebhaga movement remained despite an effective role played by women. Kavita Panjabi (2010) gives a lucid description of the charismatic female leader of the Tebhaga movement, Ila Mitra, placing her in a broader political context. Mallarika Sinha Roy has conducted important research on collecting oral histories of the Naxalbari movement. In one research, she attempts to unveil the multiple meanings of the phrase, 'magic movements of struggle', used by women in the Naxalbari movement (Sinha Roy 2009). In another research, she discusses the importance of bringing caste and gender dimensions to the analysis of the Naxalbari movement which has been overshadowed by class analysis (Sinha Roy 2016).

Revolutionary movements in Latin America, especially the Zapatista movement, have been heralded by revolutionaries all over the world. Though the Zapatista movement followed the same trajectory on gender inequality, Zapatista women have been represented positively compared to the women in the above mentioned Indian movements. The Zapatista movement, in this context, was more conscious on the gender equality as there have been a number of women's conferences in the 1970s in Mexico which have paved the way to the creation of political spaces for women in the 1990s (Garza and Toledo 2008). Discussing the Zapatista movement, Neil Harvey (1998) and Karen Kampwirth

(2002: 83-115) have focused on the positive changes that took place in the movement in relation to the gender equality and Rosalva Castillo (1997) analyses the advances and setbacks of indigenous women in the Zapatista movement.

The role of women in radical movements has been observed as a widely versed topic. In this context, the most important question is why there is no research conducted on the role played by the women in the 1971 revolt? Is it because these women did not play a significant role compared to their male comrades? Or did the JVP's patriarchy sideline the contributions of these women? Having these questions in the backdrop, this paper discusses how the experience of Chandrakka can be used to highlight the importance of exploring the role of female rebels in the 1971 revolt and locate it within a broader political, cultural and social spectrum. By doing that, the paper encourages scholars to appreciate the activism of these women and in future, bring this forgotten aspect of the 1971 revolt to the forefront of their research on the 1971 revolt.

The Proletariat or the *Demos*

"I don't belong to the working class",[3] said Chandrakka. This was true. Her father was a headmaster (principal) and mother was a school teacher. These were socially well accepted occupations with economic benefits. She attended Visaka Vidyalaya, one of the most prominent Sinhala Buddhist schools for women, where she studied with the daughters of prominent politicians. "We had lands. Since we are from the Govigama caste, we never felt caste oppression. If we consider my class status, I belong to the middle class [...] I had never been oppressed and had no economic difficulties. Otherwise, I would have gone to a job […] Therefore, I must say that I did not join JVP because of oppression." This was true. She did not belong to the working class or she was never subjected to caste oppression. "In this context, we belonged to the middle class."

How did a young girl who belonged to the bourgeoisie be attracted to a movement of "the exploited and oppressed proletariat?" (Wijeweera 1974: 85). Was she an exception? If we look into the figures quoted by Obeysekera (1974: 375) in Table 1, it is clear that this movement was attractive to people from

all walks of life and therefore, Chandra was no exception. Then is there an alternative way to understand Chandra joining this revolutionary militant group?

TABLE 1: Occupational Statuses of the Fathers of the Suspected Insurgents

Occupational Status	*Number*	*% of total (n = 10,192)*
Elites	47	4
Middle positions	553	5.4
Lower middle	1979	19.4
Underemployed	4969	48.7
Unemployed	260	2.5
Unspecified	2214	21.7
Unspecified but employed	168	1.5
Clergy (Christian? Hindu?)	2	0
Total	10,192	99.6

To understand that, it is important to discuss the term 'the proletariat' which has been the most popular word to describe oppressed social groups in radical movements. In the Sri Lankan context, Marx's concept of the proletariat has mostly been narrowed down to an economic dimension. The proletariat is widely understood as "the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live" (Marx and Engels 1976: 108). In the analyses of the rise of the labour or leftist movement of Sri Lanka (Goonewardene 1960, Jayawardena 2004, Lerski 1968), the approach has been to analyse the political activities of urban workers and plantation workers. These social groups, even though they were not a carbon copy of classes as in industrial Europe, can be termed as the proletariat according to the above definition. In these writings, the terms, the proletariat and the working class, have been used as synonyms. Therefore, as Lerski suggested, "whenever the term 'worker' is used by a Marxist publication, one should be prepared to accept its most extended meaning" (1968). Yet, this 'extended meaning' has not expanded beyond the above definition of the proletariat.

The central part of the islands' social groups has been neglected in Leslie Goonewardene's and George Jan Lerski's writings on the rise of the Leftist movement in Sri Lanka. Low caste social groups in Rathnapura region, especially in Ruwanwella and other surrounding areas, have been neglected. This region had been a fortress for the leftist groups for decades. Since the caste system is a feudal structure and low caste groups did not fall into the above definition of the proletariat, more focus had been given to the social group which has been characterised as the economically most dynamic social group in the society which was the urban working class in Colombo.

Narrowing down the proletariat into wage earners, both locally and globally, has been mainly due to the influence of the literature of Soviet Russia. In this literature, the Russian Revolution has been described as a revolution of the proletariat due to the pivotal role played by the urban working class in Russia. Since the Russian working class has been understood as a category which fulfils the characterisation of the aforementioned definition, it has become the official definition of the proletariat. As a result of the Sri Lankan leftist movement's strong affiliation with Soviet Russia and its political philosophies (including both Trotskyism and Stalinism), this definition has been used to include and exclude social classes to the proletariat.

To complicate the term proletariat even further, the 'class' dimension has been mostly neglected in the literature on the 1971 revolt. It is mainly due to the lack of support received by the rebels from the social composition of urban workers and workers' trade unions which is traditionally called the proletariat class. In fact, during the revolt, the government received the complete support from this social composition against the rebels. Even the JVP's official version of the 1971 revolt which is a compilation of testimonies given to the Criminal Justice Commission, has coined it as a "people's uprising" (Kumara 2016: vi) and interestingly, not a single word was used to link the proletariat with the revolt.

Yet why did Wijeweera use the term proletariat over and over again in his speech to the Ceylon Criminal Justice Commission in November 1973? For example, he began his speech in an

iconic way. "A representative of one social class is addressing the representatives of another social class. That is what is happening here. A representative of the exploited and oppressed proletariat is addressing the representatives of the exploiting and oppressing class" (Wijeweera 1974: 85). And he concluded his speech in a similar fashion. "In fact, gentlemen, the capitalist cause has no real reason to celebrate its success. For in the class struggle victory is a see-saw until the proletariat finally emerges victorious. That is our belief. I have concluded my evidence" (Wijeweera 1974: 104). Did Wijeweera not realise that the term 'the proletariat' cannot be applied to the social composition he was organising? Or did he have a different reading about the term?

The above definition of the proletariat is not the only one Marx has had in his baggage. In *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* which was written in 1844, Marx describes 'the proletariat' as "a class of civil society which is not a class of civil society". Commenting on this definition, Peter Osborne states that 'the proletariat' is a class of civil society "because it is an essential part of the capitalist economy" and at the same time, it is not a class of civil society because "civil society exceeds the economy, and includes both the administration of justice (property law) and the political representation of economic interests, from which the proletariat was excluded" (2006: 68). Thus, 'the proletariat' is not the labouring class of society but the 'excluded' class from society. Therefore, the problem arises; did Marx contradict himself with these definitions? In Europe during Marx's time, 'the proletariat' or the excluded class of society was "the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live". In this regard, 'the proletariat' as the excluded class can be termed as the generic understanding as the proletariat and the understanding of the proletariat as class of wage labours is a secondary meaning which originated in order to understand a specific social context. As a result, Marx did not contradict himself. Instead, he provided a broader understanding of 'the proletariat' which can be used in different geographical and temporal contexts. However, due to the development of capitalism since Marx's period, the difference

between these two concepts has expanded. In other words, in the contemporary society, the labouring class is no longer the excluded class.

If we apply this definition of 'the proletariat' to the Sri Lankan context, an interesting picture arises. The urban workers during the 1930s can be considered as 'the proletariat' because it was the excluded class during that time. Yet the low caste groups in the Sabaragamuwa region which played a key role in the rise of the left movement in Sri Lanka cannot be considered as the proletariat because even though these low castes were excluded from the civil society, they did not play any role in the capitalist system and remained as a part of the feudal system. In the composition of the 1971 rebels, there were a sizeable number of teachers, government clerks, government servants of middle grades, estate workers and the unemployed (or the reserved labour force) (Obeysekara 1974: 373) who have been an essential part of the capitalist system yet excluded from the civil society due to their low class and caste statuses. This makes these groups 'the proletariat'. Groups such as students (Obeysekara 1974: 373) who were yet to take part in the capitalist system, the unemployed youth in the villages, the chena cultivators, sharecroppers and groups from low castes such as Bathgama and Vahumpura did not fall into the category of 'the proletariat' owing to their lack of relationship with the capitalist economy. Due to Sri Lanka's social context, young Marx's concept of 'the proletariat' cannot be applied to understand the totality of the rise of the leftist movement during the 1930s or the 1971 revolt.

In terms of the 1971 revolt, young Marx's concept of 'the proletariat' provides us the space to criticise the traditional understanding of the proletariat. The urban working class or the traditional understanding of the proletariat did not fall into the category of young Marx's 'the proletariat'. On account of the strong leftist movement and trade unionism, the urban working class had received several benefits from the state sector and the private entrepreneurs. This had increased the social status of this social group and can no longer be considered as an 'excluded' class of society. The urban working class, unlike in the 1920s and

30s, during the 1960s and 70s was no longer 'the proletariat', as young Marx envisioned.

Compared to the Sri Lankan traditional leftist leaders during that period, Wijeweera has understood the limitations of the traditional Marxist definition of the proletariat for his cause of organising the oppressed to revolt against the capitalist state. He realised that the proletariat in the traditional Marxist meaning has already been integrated into the order of the society. As a result, he expanded the meaning of the term proletariat by including the unemployed youth in the villages, the chena cultivators and sharecroppers. His argument was that though these groups do not contribute to the capitalist economy, they can still be considered as proletarians because they "don't have any chance to sell their labour and earn their living" (Samaranayake 1990: 270) in the capitalist economy.

Table 1 illustrates, though the 1971 revolt, from its leader's point of view derived from a Marxist theoretical application, the Marxist connotation of the proletariat does not include other groups who are outside these oppressed or excluded social groups. If we specifically look at Chandra's social background, as she too has expressed, she does not belong to that social category. Yet there was something common that she can relate of herself with others irrespective of her middle class and upper caste background. Jacques Ranciere's reading of *demos* can help us understand the social composition of the rebels as a whole which goes beyond 'the proletariat'.

In ancient Greek, the *demos* referred to the poor. Here, the 'poor' "does not designate an economically disadvantaged part of the population, but simply the people who do not count" to rule because it has been presupposed that they have no entitlement to exercise power (Ranciere 2010: 32). The entitlement to exercise power is determined by "seniority, birth, wealth, virtue or knowledge" (Ranciere 2010: 32). In other words, the *demos* are "the count of the uncounted" (Ranciere 2010: 33).

The reading of the *demos* when applied to the 1971 revolt can be argued that the urban workers and trade unions were participating

in the exercise of power through leftist political parties. They have been 'counted' in the society which is a complete turnover of status compared to the beginning of the 20th century. It is evident that the individuals who were involved in the revolt have been 'uncounted' owing to their low caste status, lack of knowledge of English, lack of political power or gender. Caste played a key role in the revolt. The most intense resilience during the revolt came from areas such as Elpitiya in Galle district (Vahumpura caste) and Kegalle district (Batgama Caste) which the most oppressed castes inhabited (Obeysekara 1974: 372). Even though, the education expanded to the rural areas since the late 1950s, it was quite evident that this expansion made visible the social divisions in the society. There were privileged schools in Colombo and in some of the major provincial capitals. The lifestyles promoted by these schools were unreachable for most of the society. The proficiency of English language, in this context, played a pivotal role in 'uncounting' people from the society because it was used for social interaction among elites (Obeysekara 1974: 379). The political leaders of all the major political parties, including leftists, came from these elite schools and had Western education which gave them power to rule or in other words, they had a part in ruling. Finally, since every social aspect had been politicised during this period, political power was essential to have a place in society. Obeysekara points out a recommendation from a MP, most of the time, had been the only requirement to obtain a government job. To get that, either you had to be a henchman of the MP or had to bribe the MP (1974: 381). In the next section, gender played a prominent role in Chandra's case of becoming a rebel. These factors reveal the process which makes a group of people 'uncounted' in society or in other words, excluded from exercising power. As illustrated, Ranciere's reading of the *demos* has included individuals from various social strata into the radical politics of 1971.

A Women's Revolt

What is the rationale behind the configuration of the count of the uncounted? Or if we ask this differently, what made Chandra, a middle class, upper caste girl a count of the uncounted?

> When I was debating in school on the topic of the constitution, I always used the facts presented by people like N.M. Perera [a prominent leftist politician and the leader of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party] from the Hansards of the parliament [...] By reading those [N.M. Perera's writings and parliament Hansards], I became conscious of the suffering of others. Otherwise, I had no political influence from my family. This feeling increased when I attended the campus […] when I went to the campus, I saw the suffering of my fellow students. Their problems helped us to attract them to our movement. This is why I got so much into politics.

Any young girl can be socially aware of the suffering that others are subjected to but that does not make her a count of the uncounted. What makes Chandra a count of the uncounted is that she did not stop from seeing the suffering, instead she was willing to 'act' against this oppressive social order and end suffering. Padmalatha Rajapaksha's[4] experience in getting recruited to the JVP elabourates this attitude of the willingness to act. Padmalatha is the spouse of Nayanananda[5] and as a teenager, she used to come to his house to meet his sister, Indrani who was her friend. "One day she [Indrani] told me, 'we will all die one day. So do you want to die by doing something [noble] or do you want to die like an ordinary woman?' I said, 'I want to die by doing something'. Then she told me to come to their political classes [*panthi*]." Generally, the whole movement, from its outset, was designed to achieve the revolutionary goals. This attracted individuals who were willing to act for the betterment of society. Wasantha Dissanayake,[6] a second level leader, elabourates:

> Everyone felt that the revolution was going to happen [this time]. Everyone was convinced that what we talked about was going to happen because of the way we worked and what we discussed […] On the one hand, we talked about a revolutionary militant movement. On the other hand, we were collecting things that were necessary for our cause. That means from the very beginning, we had started the process of collecting gunpowder and bullets. But not on a large scale […] Also, things happened secretly. Therefore, people who participated in these activities felt that they are moving towards their goals.

As discussed above, this movement targeted to fill the vacuum that was created by traditional leftist political parties on account of their inability to attract new individuals. One of the main reasons for this inability was that people began to think that these traditional political parties have distanced themselves from their founding goals. The JVP, in this context, was able to address the urge to do something noble for society and that is what made these rebels and the JVP different from the rest of the society.

Therefore, Chandra and her fellow rebels' actions to change the society made them 'a count of the uncounted'. Chandra, as a count of the uncounted, was acting on a different space and time which was disrupting space and time of the existing social order. What was space and time of the existing social order that she was supposed to act upon? "Every girl wanted to have a job and get married. Campus female students wanted to complete their degrees, go back to their village and do a job. That was the common feeling." This was the context where the nationalist political campaign of 1956 was still determinant in the sexual division of labour which assigned roles and activities as well as human behaviour that men and women are entitled to. The emergence of Sinhala Buddhist women as opposed to Westernised Christian women during the British colonial period has been a well-researched area. Discussing the Sinhala Buddhist revival during the British period, Kumari Jayawardena argues that with the close knot between the Sinhala Buddhist ethnicity and gender norms, the control of women has been specifically seen in women of "child-bearing age whose tasks are to reproduce the ethnic group and socialise children into their ethnic roles" (Jayawardena 1994: 113). She further elabourates,

> The process of control starts from puberty and a girl's first menstruation signals the event. She has grown up; she can be sexually active and get married and have children. She can be a great asset and prise to the community if her virginity and chastity are ensured, if she is married to a carefully selected partner and produces and brings up the next generation according to the demands of law and social custom. On the other hand, she also personifies a threat of disorder to the ethnic group if she disobeys the tradition; she will then risk 'going astray' and shame the community by producing children of

> mixed ethnicity who will defile the purity of the ethnic group. After menopause, women are of less concern, and while they are expected to assume the role of the 'good' grandmother, they have some space and mobility denied to younger women (Jayawardena 1994: 113).

Having identified the electoral victory of 1956 as "an event where the Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalism became a hegemonic force in the formation of a post-colonial state" (2008: 19), Shanika Wijesinghe illustrates how the aforementioned characteristic of women have been reiterated in *Maname* (in 1956) and *Sinhabahu* (in 1961), two Sinhala dramas that marked the birth of modern Sri Lankan theatre. These two dramas are highly influential in establishing the gender norms in the Sinhala Buddhist society and are still being staged regularly and have been included in school syllabuses a number of times. By analysing these two, Wijesinghe points out how certain stereotypes of gender roles are engraved to the society. In *Maname*, the protagonist, a woman, makes the heterosexual and patriarchal familial tradition to collapse due to her free will.

> The existing traditional society or order does not allow the woman to take a decision of her free will and the threat to the order comes when she makes a free choice against the rationality of family/ tradition. In *Maname*, the order is always constructed and maintained by male characters […] Order, tradition, state, stability or honesty is associated with the man while ambiguity, dishonesty, doubt or disorder with the women" (Wijesinghe 2008: 32).

In *Sinhabahu*, "The woman's status has been portrayed as a supportive, secondary, weaker position by using terms such as innocence, purity, dedicated, compassionate, etc. The woman places herself under the shadow of the man, her father/husband/son or master" (Wijesinghe 2008: 35). As we have seen, these dramas reiterate the subordinate position of the woman in society.

This subordinate position of the woman was clearly illustrated in an article titled 'Is this Dress Bad?' in the newspaper *Vanitha Viththi* (Women's News) of April 19, 1957.

> A true woman will never ever compete with a man or try to absorb the male habits and customs. Although she excels in her status or education, she will never destroy her femininity. However, the girls nowadays tend to be enthusiastic about doing difficult sports that were for men only before. Hence, they need a new dress that would protect them from shame and fear. It is vile to wear short dresses like divided skirts and take part in sports like volleyball because the imagery and the feelings it generates are vile and are not suitable for the culture of the country to show the bodies of young grown-up girls in public, shamelessly and without fear. (In Jayawardena 2006: 103)

Women's subordinate position to men and their relegation to the domestic sphere has been not only a regional but also a global phenomenon. Discussing the women's role in peasant movements in India, Singha Roy has elabourated that:

> The social and economic roles of women in a peasant society are essentially structured by age-old traditions, beliefs, values, customs, and by the processes of education and socialisation. Such roles are gender- based, and gender largely determines the ways in which men and women participate in social interaction. In the process of such structuration and gender roles stereotyping, women are relegated to a lower social status" (1995: 2306).

The characteristics of this lower social status are pointed out by Steffen W. Schmidt who was analysing the gender politics in militant movements in Latin America, a different geographical context, has summarised the patriarchal attitudes in Latin American society as follows:

1. The sexual division of labour reflects natural differences between men and women.
2. Women's identity comes through their relationship with men.
3. Women achieve their highest fulfilment as wives and mothers.
4. Women are childlike.
5. Women are apolitical. (In Reif 1986: 148)

This illustrates the women's subordinated position regardless of them being in Sri Lanka, India or Latin America. Considering the above characteristics, it is important to point out that public/

private dichotomy is not the only dichotomy that dictates women. "Another is that of the nature/civilisation divide. The identification of women with 'nature' has been seen not only as the cause for their exclusion from the 'civilised' public domain (Grant, 1991), but also as the explanation of the fact that in all cultures women are less valued socially than men" (Yuval-Davis 1997: 05). Similarly, these dichotomies position women in the private sphere and excludes from the public sphere.

Therefore, when considering space and time of the existing social order, it is clear that space is designated for women in mostly the private sphere, home and time is assigned to look after children and husband. Women are allowed to do jobs such as teaching which do not threaten the harmony of this space and time of the existing order.

Interestingly, Chandra and other female rebels were working on a different space and time contradicting the existing space and time where other ordinary women were subjected to. Thus the 1971 revolt can be termed as a women's revolt as well. "If we take the village [as an example], females engaged politics were never accepted in villages. In such a context, we [females] carrying guns and active in politics in villages, made this a women's revolt." If these women lived an ordinary life, they would be cooking food, washing cloths and looking after their family. Instead, they were involved in politics, something men should do, not them.

Chandra participated in education camps on the outskirts of Colombo such as Moragahena and Ederamulla organised by the JVP. There she learned karate and basic weapon training. She attended with other fellow comrades Wijeweera's court case in Nuwara Eliya.

> The first one (education camp) was in Moragahena. There was a group of [university] students. I participated as a [university] student and stayed back in the camps, lying to my parents, yet later on, I got caught by my mother. But when [they] knew, they could not do anything about it. I used to commute in the morning and return by night for Wijeweera's court case.

She further introduced new young people to the movement (*koku gahanawa*); did not opt for a job being graduated in 1969 and becoming a full-timer for the JVP. In this different space and time, Chandra was impelled to stay at home or work and live a life under her parents' supervision. Doing neither, she decided on the spaces she would be in. As a young girl, the social order expected her to invest her time (among other things) on building a family of her own. Our female rebel dedicated her time to do things that were not supposed to be done or even thought of. None of her activities were known to her parents, the protectors of the existing social order. She lied. In this juncture, lying was an emancipatory act to escape from the reality.

On Chandra's account, can we characterise the JVP as a political movement which was conscious about the sexual division of labour? Considering the historical trajectory of the JVP, it is naïve to come to such a conclusion. Yet understanding the hierarchy and patriarchal norms played within the movement is required to understand the above question.

Order within the JVP

The JVP from its outset to 1971 had one of the most complex and rigid hierarchical structures in the Sri Lankan post-colonial setting. Chart 1 which was compiled through interviews from Chandra and two former rebels, Nimal Maharage[7], a CC member and the District Secretary of Kotte District[8] and Sunil Rathnasiri, a leader of the students' section, illustrates the hierarchical formation of the JVP during 1971 and it can be argued that the whole membership, from top to bottom, was well organised.

To give a brief summary of Chart 1, Wijeweera stayed on top of this hierarchy as the leader or the general secretary. After him, there was the Politburo (PB) which consisted of 5-6 members which Wijeweera too was a part of. Under PB, there were two subsections. One was the general hierarchy and the other was the student wing. In the general hierarchy, Central Committee (CC) which had approximately 15 members including the PB members was next to the PB. All the CC members were District Secretaries

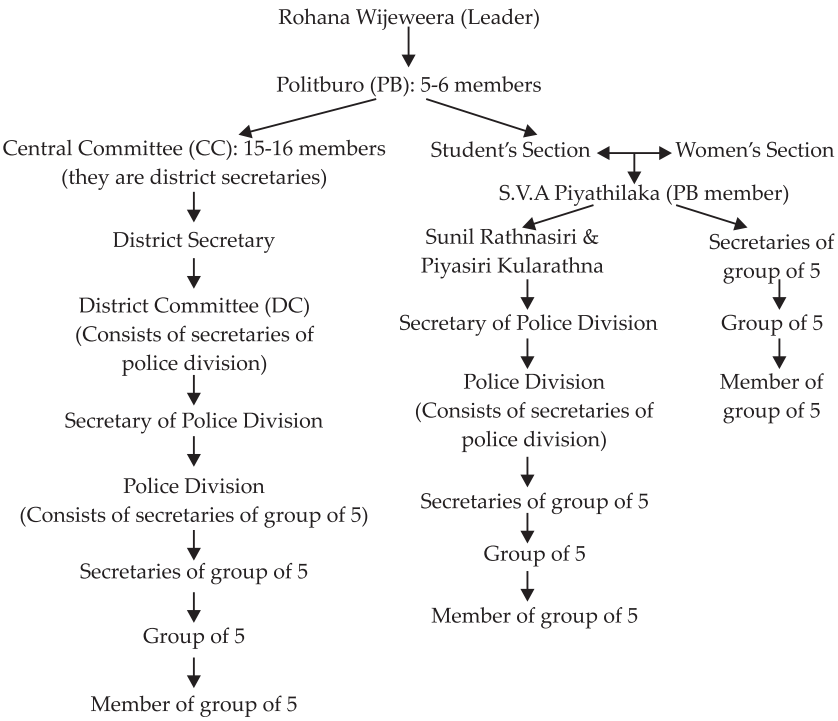

Chart 1

who were selected to represent District Committees. These districts are not the present districts and they had their own boundaries. The district committee consisted of secretaries of police divisions of the country. Every police division comprised a secretary and a group of 5 members. The secretary of the group of 5 members was the contact point of that group. In this hierarchy, every rebel was a member of the group of 5. This same structure was visible in the students' section. In the students' section hierarchy, there were no district committees. All the secretaries of police divisions were handled by two leaders and they were instructed by S.V.A Piyathilaka who was a PB member. Finally, the women's section was created lately under Piyathilaka and was in a developing stage. The women's section originated from the students' section and they both work closely.

The whole system had been structured as a pyramid. The most important feature of this hierarchical structure was the

application of isolation. Every element of this hierarchical structure functioned in its own isolation. No member of group 5 knew other members of the 'other' group of 5. No secretary of the police division knew the other secretaries of the 'other' police divisions. Likewise, no one knew anyone outside its hierarchical structure. The whole structure was controlled by the PB and the CC. This rigid isolation of members was extremely important in keeping secrets and executing relevant activities. In a Rancierean perspective, every member in this order had a particular place and a role distributed among the membership by the leadership strata and secrecy made it difficult for members to move from its assigned place and role to a different one. Can an emancipatory political party have a rigid structure as such?

The JVP can be criticised due to this rigid structure which goes against the emancipatory spirit of the movement. Looking closely at this contradiction, hierarchy vs emancipation, it can be argued that the leadership of the JVP had logic to implement such a structure. The rigidity and secrecy were vital to the JVP politics because, from its outset, it had the objective of capturing the state power through a militant campaign and the entire membership was organised to serve that purpose. This period had three types of popular revolutionary models. One was the Russian model as used in 1917 where the urban working class overthrew the government. Another was the Chinese model of 1949 in which the communists had a prolonged militant struggle organising the peasantry in rural areas. The final and the most appealing revolutionary model during this period was the Cuban revolution. From a tactical point of view, it had a strong military front in the outskirts and political front in the capital where the military campaign was much more prominent in capturing the state power. On account of the temporal proximity and the charismatic revolutionary figures such as Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, the youth during this period were more attracted to this than the Russian or Chinese models. Wijeweera understood that the JVP could not acquire power by organising the party in these models due to the Sri Lankan context. The JVP could not organise the 'working class' because it was already well organised by the two

main leftist parties, Lanka Sama Samaja Party and the Communist Party of Ceylon. As discussed above, the working class was elevated in its social hierarchy due to rights achieved through struggles led by the traditional left and as a result, it cannot be considered as the 'proletariat class' from young Marx's perspective. While, the Sri Lankan conditions did not suit a long-term military campaign in rural as in Chinese and Cuban revolutions. Wijeweera has famously believed the jack tree[9] as a main obstacle for organising the peasantry. By this, what he believed was that peasantry has its own way of surviving the harsh reality rather than challenging the existing conditions of oppression.

This understanding of the inability to apply Russian, Chinese or Cuban revolution models due to the limitations of the Sri Lankan context forced Wijeweera to consider different revolutionary models. In this juncture, he was influenced by Abeid Karume, a fellow student of Wijeweera at Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow (Keerawella 1982: 67). Wijeweera learned about the idea of a 'one day revolution' from Karume who successfully applied this idea in 1964 and became the president of Zanzibar. Inspired by Karume, Wijeweera organised the JVP in order to acquire the state power from a one-day military campaign. The rigid hierarchy of the JVP, as mentioned earlier, was created to serve this revolutionary model.

Adopting a complex structure like this had its own limitations. Most importantly, this hierarchical structure restricted democracy within the JVP's decision-making process significantly. Especially, two sections of the JVP have been excluded from the decision-making. The JVP membership outside PB and CC had a slim-to-none access to influence the JVP decision-making body. In general, the membership was expected to follow orders from the leadership without questioning. According to Chandra, "we [both males and females] obeyed the decisions that came from above. But we did not understand it those days. We thought those decisions were right." Questioning the decisions would have given a negative identity about the individual. Yet, the end goal, capturing the state power in one day through organised attacks on the state justifies this rigid centrality. Differently expressed, this end goal cannot

be achieved in a democratic space. It required a strong central authority to take strong decisions quickly and have a strong grip on the whole membership because one single misstep would have had a massive disadvantage to the end goal.[10]

The other group which had been excluded, consciously or unconsciously, from the decision-making process were women. There was no female in PB or CC except men. Though there was a recently created women's section, it was regulated by a male. Nimal Maharage explains this lack of women in leadership roles as due to women's delayed reaction towards JVP politics. "It [having no females in PB and CC] never occurred to us […] There was no such decision to exclude women. The main reason was women started to join the JVP from 1969. During this course of time, from 1965 to 1969, these structures already existed." Chandra had a similar view point of women's exclusion from the leadership strata. "Now we [females] have changed and we believed that other females should change as well. But what I am saying is it did not happen as rapidly as we expected. Perhaps if we worked like this for another five years we would have attracted many more females."

The exclusion of women was not only inherent to JVP politics. This was the fate of women in politics of the country in general. It is difficult to precisely state if this has changed in the present after having a female prime minister and a president. It is mainly due to "the traditional apolitical role of women has been seen as originating in patterns of childhood socialisation that define women's roles and concerns as limited to the private sphere of home and family, and that assigns the public sphere, within which politics is located, to men" (Kearney 1981: 729).

Throughout post-colonial Sri Lanka, women, in general, have been sidelined in politics. This does not indicate that women were passive in politics. Swarna Jayaweera has pointed out, "women have been estimated to constitute between one-quarter and one-third of the membership of major parties, but a much smaller fraction of party officers" (in Kearney 1981: 732). Major political parties, such as the United National Party (UNP), in 1969, had one woman among the party's 13 officers and two women in the 51-

member working committee. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) selected two women, one of whom was the party's president, out of the sixteen officers in 1970 and LSSP had only one woman in the 55-member central committee and no women among the 10-member politburo in 1972 (Kearney 1981: 732). Nevertheless, there have been a few instances where several women who succeeded in politics including Sirima Bandaranaike, the world's first female prime minister and the prime minister during the 1971 revolt. The 1970 parliamentary general election held, 14 women out of 441 candidates contested and 6 of them elected among 151 seats (Kearney 1981: 734). Elitism and patriarchal norms have dictated the political careers of most of these women. To state "of the seventeen women who have been elected to parliament since 1947, more than half were elected (or first elected) to parliament as the replacement for a husband or a father who had died or who was barred from contesting for legal infractions" (Kearney 1981: 737). In Sirima Bandaranaike's case, she did not contest a seat in parliament until 1965. She came to politics after the assassination of her husband, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, the prime minister between 1956 and 1959, by the appointment to the Senate which enabled her to serve in the prime minister's post.

Women and Equality

"We always did what others [male leaders] told us to do. We didn't take many decisions", stated Chandra. It is observable that mainstream politics was gender blind. Perhaps, we can ignore other political parties for their gender blindness because they, implicitly or explicitly, have been integrated into the capitalist mode of politics. Nevertheless, the JVP was constituted for a different purpose, a purpose their Marxist predecessors failed to achieve. That was to create a society of equals. With this goal, how did the JVP treat women as secondary to men?

This has been a key issue not only in the JVP politics but also in revolutionary militant politics in general. Differently said, revolutionary militant movements, though their goal is a society

of equals, are subjected to the existing gender norms which were discussed earlier. Even one of the greatest revolutionaries in the 20th century and an emblem in the 1971 revolt, Che Guevara was no exception. In the description of women's role in guerilla movements in his *Guerilla Warfare*, Che echoes the traditional patriarchal norms of society. He states,

> In this phase [the guerilla struggle], women can also perform their traditional role in peacetime: a soldier living in the extremely harsh conditions of guerrilla warfare is happy to be able to look forward to a seasoned meal which actually tastes like something … A female cook can greatly improve the diet and, moreover, is easier to assign to these domestic tasks… A woman plays an important part in medical matters as nurse, and even as doctor, with an infinitely superior gentleness to that of her rough compañero-in-arms, a gentleness that is so much appreciated at times when a man is helpless, without comfort, perhaps suffering severe pain and exposed to the many kinds of risks that are part of a war of this nature (Guevara 2006:107-108).

Though Che did not discriminate women from military movements, as visible in this section, along with the traditional patriarchal norms, he too believed that women were more useful in a militant movement in performing tasks which were similar to their domestic roles. Linda L. Reif gives a lucid description on gradual development on women's status in Latin American militant movements by examining five cases: Cuba, Colombia, Uruguay, Nicaragua and El Salvador (1986). In some consequences, this subordinate role of women can be used as sexual exploitation of women by their male counterparts. In the Naxal movement, "The extension of sexual favours to male combatants [from female combatants] on many occasions is ordered by the Naxal leaders as *duty*" (Shekhawat and Saxena 2015: 125). Since there was a real danger of being raped if they rejected this duty, most of the female rebels had agreed to fulfil the sexual desire of male combatants (Shekhawat and Saxena 2015: 125). The following statement of a Naxal male combatant summarises the patriarchal thinking behind

the women's subordination: "Women fight with us . . . we share all responsibilities . . . but there are certain cultural norms and if women, including female combatants, adhere to them it is good for them as well as society as a whole. Women should fight with men for a just cause but this does not give them liberty to cross the boundaries set for them" (Shekhawat and Saxena 2015: 126).

A burning question in this context is how a militant movement which promises an egalitarian society was unable to treat their female rebels equally. With hindsight, a middle class, upper caste female like Chandra being attracted to the JVP and becoming a full-timer confirms that she had figured the paradox out. Therefore, in what ways does Chandra's experience in the 1971 revolt shed light on the paradox of the promise of an egalitarian society and gender inequality? Her answer to the question, "there is a massive inequality, in terms of gender, class and caste in the main society. Did you experience any type of inequality that existed in the society within the JVP?" offers a path to understand this paradox. Her reply was "no it [inequality] wasn't that strict. By 'that strict' what I meant [inequality] was in the decision-making process *but not in our existence within the movement* [emphasis added]." It has already discussed the rationality behind the exclusion of certain groups from the decision-making. Then how does the existence overrule the inequality in the decision-making process?

What she meant by *but not in our existence within the movement* is that she was interacting with others as an equal regardless of her gender, class or caste identities. She practised equality with her fellow comrades. As a female leader, she belonged to the second layer of the JVP leadership where the first layer being PB and CC. Since her interaction with the first layer of the hierarchy had been minimal, the rest of the membership she worked with constituted her existence. Let's see her experience in the Ederamulla education camp.

> [There] we had continuous discussions about revolutionary struggles… Then we did a lot of weapon training. After that we sleep. Like this we lived there for a week… In Ederamulla, we [males and females] cooked. Since there were more females, they cooked most of the time. But males helped as well. There were some males who were not

> involved in this. There were no distinctions between works among males and females. Everything was done in groups. In that, there was no male female difference. Mostly, there was gender equality
>
> When we were taking classes, everyone sat on the floor. The person who was lecturing sometimes was on a chair. It is really difficult to lecture for 10 or 12 hours. That's why. Sometimes everyone was on the floor. You know why? It is because we had less facilities those days… Also, males and females sat together. Hanging out together was there always. When we slept in the hall, we slept on the floor; males on one side and females on the other.

According to Ranciere, equality consists of "a set of practices guided by the supposition that everyone is equal and by the attempt to verify this supposition" (Ranciere 1992: 58). Ranciere does not consider equality as something that has to be achieved in future or as a goal. Instead, it is about how you act with others in this present moment. Practising equality is what equality actually means. As elabourated by Chandra, she was among equals. No one was given privileges or mistreatments due to their gender, caste, class or any other entitlement. This group in Ederamulla practised equality by trying to verify the supposition of everyone is equal in their daily activities inside the camp.

Recollecting their experiences on the 1971 revolt, Sunil Rathnasiri, a leader of the student section, and Nayanananda[11], Kalutara District Secretary, verified Chandra's experience. They all denied that as young men, they felt any kind of gender discrimination towards women. "When we were assigning duties to the membership, we did not consider the gender of that person… Activities like collecting weapons, conveying messages and introducing new people to the JVP were carried out by both men and women", stated Rathnasiri. Talking about education camp life, Nayanananda too confirmed this. "Things like cooking were not considered as female jobs. Everyone did everything." These testimonies showcase a different world, a world where there was no particular place and role for men and women.

Nevertheless, it will be misleading to label the JVP as a gender neutral political party. Though Nayanananda and Rathnasiri were positive about the gender neutrality in the movement, it appeared

that they were less concerned about the role of women when asked about it in the interviews. Nayanananda's testimony on heterosexual relationships provides the general attitude towards women in the movement.

> If we have girlfriends, it is compulsory to introduce them to the movement. Otherwise, we have to stop the affair[12][…]. The general opinion about women [in the movement] during that period was that no one can have a love affair. If a male rebel has a love affair, it is compulsory to make them part of the movement. One of the main criticisms levelled against Sarath [Boraluketiya][13] was is being married.

Having an intimate relationship or 'love affair' was considered as a distraction to the revolutionaries to achieve their revolutionary goals. Girlfriends or wives who were not part of the movement, in this context, were rejected by the JVP. However, this did not strictly apply to female rebels who were having 'boyfriends'. In other words, less attempts were made on controlling the relationships of female rebels.[14] Differently put, an apolitical woman is a larger barrier to revolutionary poiltics than an apolitical man. This indicates that the prevailing gender norms of the society had an impact on the role of women in the movement.

Nimal Maharage, in his interview, describes two incidents where women were mistreated by their male counterparts. In one incident, a particular Police Committee member had ignored the information provided by a female member about two guns. She had stolen these two guns from the house where she lived, packed them and asked this particular member to come and collect them but he suspected that woman's courage and reliability. Collecting weapons was one of the main tasks of members and ignoring such information was a serious problem. In another case, a map of the army camp in Panagoda, Colombo drawn by a female was rejected by the police committee of Panagoda. This was mainly due to jealousy of her ability to draw. When checked the map drawn by this female with the one provided by the police committee of Panagoda, the one drawn by the female was much more accurate. As a result, Maharage used her map for the preparation

of attacking the Panagoda army camp.[15] His experience notes the existence of patriarchal norms in the movement. Yet in both cases, he has taken the necessary action to appreciate the labour of these women. These deliberate attempts to eradicate aforementioned mistreatments point out his commitment to practise equality with others regardless of their gender.

Though these limitations prevailed, female rebels have not been exploited sexually or in other ways as pointed out by Shekhawat and Saxena (2015) in their analysis of the Naxalite movement. Chandra becomes passionate when talking about how her fellow rebels treated her. She stayed at night among male rebels in educational camps but no such sexual harassment was experienced. She points out that these rebels were 'well disciplined'. For her, it was *sahodarathwaya*. The word *sahodarthwaya* is basically derived from the Marxist term of camaraderie but in its Sinhala use, it is more akin to brotherhood. Considering the responsibility assigned through patriarchy, brothers are responsible of the well-being of their sisters in the Sri Lankan context (and South Asian context in general).

As a female, Chandra never considered her womanhood as a barrier to her activism. She showed similar courage and determination as her fellow male rebels. This was evident when she was summoned to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) a few days after the failure of the 1971 revolt. Those were the dark days especially for young females. The winner of a beauty pageant in Katartagama, Hambanthota District, Premawathi Manamperi was arrested for her involvements with the JVP, tortured the whole night and shot dead in public by the military. Padmalatha still gets goosebumps when thinking about her journey to Kandy with her father and younger sister on April 4, 1971.

> It was an extremely difficult journey. There were no regular buses those days. Everything [the revolt] happened once we left home. [people were] killed by the police. The bus we were in stopped in the middle and [the driver and conductor] told the passengers to leave the bus since it was going back to the bus depot. We were extremely scared but managed to reach Kandy due to the help of ordinary people. We stayed in a few [unknown] houses and reached

> the house in Kandy which belonged to Lechchami Nanda, one of my mother's friends. She was very caring.
>
> Few hours later, Lechchami Nanda came rushing and told my sister and I to hide because the police were coming to question us. We immediately went to one of our cousin's places in Hasalaka through the jungle. When we were there, the police came at night and took us to the Hasalaka Police Station. I still get goosebumps when thinking about it.
>
> I wanted to protect my sister. She was clinging to me. She was 15 years old and I was 20. She was frightened. In that situation, I acted like a man. If they [the police] want to do something, they have to do it to me, not to my sister. At that moment, the police were on a killing spree. I was determined that if they were going to kill us, I would be the first to get killed. I got unbelievable strength at that moment […]
>
> Luckily, the Inspector of Police was from our area. Because of that, he released us.

Padmalatha displayed immense courage and determination regardless of her small stature and soft spoken nature. Likewise, Chandra was not fazed when she was summoned to the CID for questioning. She did not cry, fear or hesitate like most people think what a woman should do when they are in a hostile situtation. Instead, she stood her ground firmly where most of her fellow male rebels stumbled.

> One day Piyathilaka robbed Rs. 50,000 from the York Street Bank, put it into a bag and gave it to me saying 'there are bombs in this bag and keep them safe'. So I hid it and never opened it… I never knew that the bag had money not bombs until the CID informed me that the bag had money. That's how we kept secrets.
>
> 'What is this bag', CID officers asked
>
> 'I don't know'.
>
> 'Who gave it to you?'
>
> 'Piyathilaka'.
>
> Now these men [CID officers] were fools. They only questioned how I knew him. I told them that I had only met him thrice. Now

> I had to prove those three times right! So I told them I once met him in the university with my friends. So when they asked why I met him the second time, I had to fabricate a compatible story. Since my home was near the university, I told them that I met him accidentally near my home. So he came there and had a cup of tea. Remember I said three times. The third time, I told them that he came, gave this bag and told me to keep it safe. Then I kept it with me and some time later he took it back. Now these men could not prove that I was telling lies. I had to tell lies in a truthful way right. They [CID] were more foolish than us. [They] believed all those lies I told. Just think for a second. Why couldn't they ask 'why did you accept a thing like that?'
>
> I knew everyone who was in custody on that day. I didn't speak to anyone and vice versa. Once they [CID] got the statement from me, they foolishly sent me home.

Perhaps the CID officers were overconfident about themselves that they could easily break the will of a young girl like Chandra. As we have witnessed, confidently she did not reveal anyone from the movement, neither confessed to the officials. Unfortunately, this cannot be said about some. A male comrade who had worked closely with her had disclosed all the information about her and others and she too was arrested. In the custody, her bravery in escaping from the CID in the first occurrence was commended by its officials. An instance, one officer had stated in a somewhat friendly manner, "you devil crept under our nose saying you know nothing" (*tho nam yako ape kanen ringuwane mokakwth danne ne kiyala*). Further in the CID custody, she looked after the well-being of her fellow comrades. "Actually the CID summoned a few rebels because I managed to convince the CID to neglect most of the rebels whose names were in the list provided by a male rebel. I explained that most of these people just attended the JVP political classes and had no part in the revolt. They accepted it and stopped arresting others."

Her courage and love for fellow comrades was visible in its truest form in the darkest hour of the revolt. She never betrayed the movement and the trust reposed in her, which resulted in her imprisonment in Welikada Prison for six years along with

criminals where all the other female rebels were moved to a political prisoner's camp in Mirigama, Gampaha. The prison life allowed her to reflect on the JVP. There she realised that the JVP never had a proper plan to capture the state power. When she was released in 1977, she was no longer with the JVP.

Conclusion

Analysing Chandrakka's story is essential for any youth regardless of their gender for a number of reasons. The courage and commitment she portrayed within the movement and its aftermath are qualities that are lacking in the present generation Sri Lankan youth. Chandrakka overcame the barriers imposed on her by her upper caste, middle class social status and gender identity. Rather than living the life of an ordinary youth who was bound by these constraints, Chandra had an alternative life which disturbed space and time of the existing social order. Though she had an adventurous life, it had never been explored thoroughly. The literature on the 1971 revolt so far has been dominated by structural and masculine analyses. Chandra's story provides us a different aspect of the movement. She illustrates how important her role was within the JVP. She exemplifies that a woman has courage the same as a man when handling oppressive situations.

At the same time, Chandra's story assists us to evaluate the gender equality within the JVP and locate it in the continuum of revolutionary military movements. We see a paradox in revolutionary militant movements. That is how to uphold the promise of a society of equals while treating women as equal to men. Latin American and Indian examples prove the difficulty to maintain both these aspects at the same time. What happened in this regard is that while struggling for a society of equals, women within those movements were given a secondary status by its patriarchal leadership. For an outsider, it is easy to question the patriarchal nature of the JVP by pointing out to the JVP its hierarchy and exclusion of women from the decision-making process. Yet Chandra shed light on a different aspect in this regard. That is the equality she experienced in her existence within the movement. The centrality of decision-making which was vital

for an underground revolutionary militant movement did not prevent men and women from acting with each other as equals. Considering its present patriarchal nature (Weerawardhana 2017), it is difficult to say that the JVP was unable to preserve this type of gender equality in their post-1971 politics.

This paper, including the story(ies) of women brings a different light to the 1971 revolt. It has been the lost dimension of the history of the JVP. Most of the vital female rebels left the JVP soon after the defeat of revolt and this led to a massive vacuum in gender equality which is still visible in the present JVP. It is important for researchers to contribute more to the gender discourse of the JVP, to assist not only the JVP but also the radical political movements, both global and local, to overcome this inadequacy. That is the lesson of Chandra's story.

Notes

1. Chandrakka was the way she was addressed by her fellow comrades. Chandrakka means elder sister Chandra.
2. He is Nimal Maharage and he will be introduced in the latter part of the paper.
3. Chandra Perera was interviewed on April 21, 2019 at her residence in Nugegoda, Colombo.
4. Padmalatha was interviewed on June 18, 2019 at her residence in Ambalangoda, Galle.
5. Nayanananda was a second tier leader of the movement and was the District Secretary of Kaluthara. His experience is discussed below.
6. Wasantha Dissanayake was interviewed on March 6, 2019 at the University of the Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo.
7. Nimal Maharage was interviewed on May 20, 2019 at his residence in Nugegoda, Colombo.
8. The Kotte District, consisted of areas from Rajagiriya, Kesbewa to Avissawella which were within the boundaries of Colombo District.
9. Since jack trees were common in rural areas people consumed jack fruit as an alternative for rice. Wijeweera believed that jack fruit helps people to survive in the harshest conditions and as a result discourages people to become revolutionary collective subjects.
10. Even though the JVP maintained a strong centrality, they could not eradicate some crucial errors. For example, the decision of the time to attack was misunderstood by the group who was assigned to attack the Wallawaya police station. PB took the decision on April 3, 1971 to attack at 5 am on 5th April and

the Wallawaya group misunderstood the time and launched their attack at 5 pm on 4th April. This alarmed the state of a possible attack in the near future and ordered all the police stations to be prepared. Therefore, when the rebels launched their coordinated attacks at 5 am on the following day, they had already lost the surprise element of the attack which was essential for their success.

11. Nayanananda was interviewed on June 18, 2019 at his residencies in Ambalangoda, Galle.
12. The word 'affair' is commonly used in Sri Lanka to describe any type of heterosexual relationships.
13. He was a politburo member.
14. Nayanananda stated that the restriction of having an intimate relationship had to be changed when Wijeweera could not restrain himself from falling in love with the sister of a fellow comrade.
15. Though they made preparations to attack the army camp, they could not execute them.

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