

**Master enseignement, M1/SM2  
Institut du Monde Anglophone, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle  
Culture anglophone**

Christine Lorre-Johnston, « Le Commonwealth »  
vendredi 13 avril 2012, 10h-12h & 14h-16h

*Analyze the bonds that exist between Canada and Sri Lanka, as represented in the following documents:*

- A : “Ottawa presses Sri Lanka to reconcile with Tamil minority,” Campbell Clark, Ottawa, *The Globe and Mail*, March 19, 2012
- B : Excerpt from *Anil’s Ghost*, by Michael Ondaatje, London: Bloomsbury, 2000
- C : “Rathika Sitsabaiesan MP - First Tamil elected to Canadian Parliament”  
Video (2’40’’) available at:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGAabvG3UEs&feature=related>

Document A :

“Ottawa presses Sri Lanka to reconcile with Tamil minority,” Campbell Clark, Ottawa, *The Globe and Mail*, March 19, 2012

The Harper government is dispatching a delegation to Sri Lanka as it presses the country to launch a post-war reconciliation with its Tamil minority.

Sending the delegation to Sri Lanka, which has sometimes restricted access for foreign officials, is intended to underline Ottawa’s keen interest, which includes lobbying other nations to back a United Nations resolution calling on the country to act on human rights.

It is the latest measure in the Conservatives’ turnaround from reluctance to criticize the Sri Lankan government during its civil war with the Tamil Tigers, which the Tories banned as a terrorist group, to one of Colombo’s most vocal critics.

Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird is sending three representatives, MPs Rick Dykstra and Chris Alexander – a former ambassador to Afghanistan – and new senator Vern White. They will conduct a kind of fact-finding mission intended to shape the government’s next steps in dealing with Colombo, a government source said.

The three are scheduled to meet government officials in Colombo and other parts of the country. The government source would not confirm the locations, but another individual familiar with the plans said the tour is expected to include Jaffna, the major city in the Tamil-dominated north, and other areas hit hard in the civil war.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s government alienated many in the 300,000-strong Tamil-Canadian community by being slow to demand restraint from Colombo during the civil war that ended with the Tigers’ defeat in May, 2009.

But Colombo’s failure to acknowledge rights abuses in the civil war and reconcile with its Tamil minority has prompted the Conservatives to criticize Sri Lanka. Last fall, Mr. Harper threatened to boycott next year’s Commonwealth summit there if the country’s record does not improve.

A UN report last year concluded there is evidence that both the Tigers and the Sri Lankan government committed human rights abuses in the civil war – including the shelling by government forces of tens of thousands of civilians in no-fire zones.

Mr. Baird has met several times with Tamil-Canadians, some of whom asked him to send a delegation to signal to Sri Lanka’s government that Ottawa takes the issue seriously, according to one community leader. But Sri Lanka doesn’t always welcome foreigners snooping around: in 2009, after the war ended, it refused visas to Tory MPs Paul Calandra and Patrick Brown, and deported Liberal Bob Rae.

The delegation will arrive in Sri Lanka on Wednesday, just as an international diplomatic battle over Sri Lanka’s human rights record heats up in Geneva.

That issue is a U.S.-drafted resolution at the UN Human Rights Council that criticizes the Sri Lankan government over human rights, calls on it to implement the recommendations from its own post-war “lessons learned” report, and mandates the UN’s High Commissioner for Human Rights to report on progress in the fall.

Canada is a co-sponsor of the resolution and is lobbying other nations to back it, a government source said.

But the Sri Lankan government is fighting hard, portraying the resolution as Western interference in the country’s internal affairs.

Colombo has in recent years turned increasingly to China as an ally, so Western nations are hoping the vote in Geneva, expected on Thursday or Friday, does not turn

on an East-West divide. They are seeking to persuade Sri Lanka's major neighbour, India, and African nations on the council, to vote for the resolution. India's Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, said on Monday his country is "inclined" to back the resolution – although that less-than-definitive phrase led to speculation he is seeking to water down the wording.

Document B:

Excerpt from *Anil's Ghost*, by Michael Ondaatje, London: Bloomsbury, 2000, p. 10-11.

*[Anil Tissera, born in Sri Lanka, educated in America as a forensic anthropologist, is sent to Colombo by an international human rights group to work with local officials to discover the source of the organised campaigns of murder engulfing the island.]*

Anil was glad to be alone. There was a scattering of relatives in Colombo, but she had not contacted them to let them know she was returning. She unearthed a sleeping pill from her purse, turned on the fan, chose a sarong and climbed into bed. The thing she had missed most of all were the fans. After she had left Sri Lanka at eighteen, her only real connection was the new sarong her parents sent her every Christmas (which she dutifully wore), and news clippings of swim meets. Anil had been an exceptional swimmer as a teenager, and the family never got over it; the talent was locked to her for life. As far as Sri Lankan families were concerned, if you were a well-known cricketer you could breeze into a career in business on the strength of your spin bowling or one famous inning at the Royal-Thomian match. Anil at sixteen had won the two-mile swim race that was held by the Mount Lavinia Hotel.

Each year a hundred people ran into the sea, swam out to a buoy a mile away and swam back to the same beach, the fastest male and the fastest female fêted in the sports pages for a day or so. There was a photograph of her walking out of the surf that January morning—which *The Observer* had used with the headline 'Anil Wins It!' and which her father kept in his office. It had been studied by every distant member of the family (those in Australia, Malaysia and England, as well as those on the island), not so much because of her success but for her possible good looks now and in the future. Did she look too large in the hips?

She pushed the sheet down to the foot of the bed and lay there in the darkened room, facing the waves of air. The island no longer held her by the past. She'd spent the fifteen years since ignoring that early celebrity. Anil had read documents and news reports, full of tragedy, and she had now lived abroad long enough to interpret Sri Lanka with a long-distance gaze. But here it was a more complicated world morally. The streets were still streets, the citizens remained citizens. They shopped, changed jobs, laughed. Yet the darkest Greek tragedies were innocent compared with what was happening here. Head on stakes. Skeletons dug out of cocoa pit in Matale. At university Anil had translated lines from Archilochus—*In the hospitality of war we left them their dead to remember us by*. But here there was no such gesture to the families of the dead, not even the information of who the enemy was.