



THE QUEEN OF
DECEIT

VICTOR IVAN

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The Queen of Deceit

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INTRODUCTION (To the Sinhala Version)

I have never considered Sri Lanka to be a particularly civilised country. It has instead appeared to me to be a particularly immoral country, whose leaders embodied iniquity and baseness.

I first began to see Chandrika Kumaratunga in this light while she was President of this country. It was after the quite brazenly rigged Wayamba Provincial Council poll that I first began to refer to her as the 'queen of thieves.'

Let me begin the introduction to this book with the analysis I made at that time

"From now on, the People's Alliance can no longer speak of democracy. It cannot speak of the United National Party's reign of corruption and terror. It cannot speak of transparency, or claim to be a regime as pure as a white

lotus. It has lost the right to speak of creating a society governed by benevolence and humanity.

A public that looks at the People's Alliance today, with eyes untainted by party loyalties, will see before them a government that has made fools of us all; a government led by a crooked mistress, disregarding completely the principles on which the Alliance was formed.

It is the Leader of the People's Alliance who must bear responsibility for reducing her government to this state. There was a reason why the people voted her into office. It was not because she was of noble birth, nor because she was the daughter of two prime ministers of this country. She was not elected to office because she was the wife of a popular film star, nor indeed for her own film star good looks.

The people voted Chandrika Kumaratunga into office, because she was the one person on the political stage that the people felt they could depend on to defeat the government of the time and bring about a new and better political culture.

It was not the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, that has been turned into the personal property of the Bandaranaike family, that propelled her to power, but rather, a non-partisan electorate; a people who dreamed of a more civilised political system and wanted a positive political culture for the land of their birth. It was not the SLFP that was solely responsible for her success; assistance came her way from the non – partisan groups of people who joined to bring her to power.

Above all, blood and tears brought her to power; the blood shed in this island, the tears shed for lost husbands and sons; these provided the fuel for her political journey.

Chandrika Kumaratunga's public speeches were not about the era of queues, or about rice, coconuts and potatoes. The theme of her rhetoric was democracy. Her speeches consistently highlighted the need to win democratic freedom and establish democratic norms.

Her election manifestos were drafted on the same premise. Standing before the memorial to her father, she swore that she would establish a truly democratic political culture and restore democracy in the country.

Chandrika Kumaratunga rose to power, and then swiftly forgot the desires of the people. She forgot her obligations, and she forgot her promises. Forgetting the blood and the tears of those who were truly responsible for her rise, she chose to consider only the demands of the coterie of powerful and rich allies who began to gather round her shortly before the government was formed.

And so she forgot the urgent need to find solutions to the social problems that had made widows of countless women in this country; social problems which were not restricted to the Sinhalese or to the Tamils; social problems which had reached deep into her own life, to bring her widowhood. She forgot her eloquent public promises to establish democracy, and her pre election pledges to institute democratic freedom.

Far from fulfilling her promise to abolishing the executive presidency, she proceeded, until her last day in office, to use all the powers the system had given her; and she made no attempt to change the preferential voting system which had turned elections into killing sprees.

Her favourite sub-theme in political speeches had been the devolution of power. Here too she failed to deliver.

Not only was she unable to deliver new proposals for the decentralisation of power, she was unable even to strengthen the existing power sharing mechanisms. While Chief Minister of the Western Province, she had ceaselessly demanded that police powers be devolved to the provinces. Yet during her 11 year reign, she did nothing towards meeting her own demands. While Chief Minister she had railed against the government's take over of the best schools in the provinces. Yet during her stint in office as President she took some of the finest provincial schools under the control of the centre.

She claimed that she meant to devolve power more extensively than had been done under the provincial councils; but she betrayed her true intentions when she engaged in a sustained effort to dissolve the councils held by the opposition.

Although one of the most important first steps towards re-establishing democratic norms was to ensure that the people had the right to free and fair elections, Chandrika Kumaratunga did nothing to boost the powers of the elections commissioner in order to enable him to discharge his duties more efficiently.

She looked away when there was mass scale misconduct at the 1997 provincial council poll. Reports by observers named certain powerful government politicians as being involved in the malpractice, but instead of holding them accountable for their transgression, she adopted a policy of granting them promotions.

A government minister was heard to publicly declare that the system created by J.R. Jayewardene had ensured that the People's Alliance would never to be defeated in any future poll; and the President lacked the grace to admonish the minister against making undemocratic speeches in public. All this led to the notorious Wayamba election. Leaders should know better than to encourage unruly monkeys.

The essence of democracy is the people's choice. Attempting to thwart or suppress the people's choice poses the greatest threat there is to a democratic system of governance. Political leaders should respect democratic values and train their supporters and followers to do the same. A politician, having violated these norms, cannot absolve him or herself of blame or right this grievous wrong by saying, "I am sorry, forgive me."

-Ravaya, February 7, 1999

I was a participant in the programme that was orchestrated to bring Chandrika Kumaratunga to power. I joined that process with the intention of ushering in a positive change in this country, not with the intention of achieving personal gain. I was in charge of managing her publicity, for both the parliamentary election of 1994 and the subsequent presidential poll, also in the same year. In helping to pave the way for her success, I felt compelled to attack her brother Anura Bandaranaike, and her mother Sirimavo Bandaranaike, in the course of the campaign.

Once having attained power, however, Chandrika Kumaratunga forgot the needs of the people and went on to savour the powers of the executive presidency, all the while permitting the cartel around her to join in fleecing the country.

Although she came from a feudal family which held a great deal of wealth and property, at the time she came to power she was hemmed in on all sides by financial problems. Old photographs show us her difficulties; her dress and her accessories give it all away.

The money to publish her first advertisement for the Western Provincial Council election campaign came from Hemasiri Fernando. Photographer Prasanna Hennayake, when called in to photograph Chandrika for the poster campaign, found her dressed in a saree that was inappropriate for the purpose and it was discovered that Chandrika did not possess anything appropriate to wear. Prasanna Hennayake had to pay for a new saree before he could commence the photo-shoot.

Lacking a suitable necklace for her swearing in as Prime Minister, she borrowed one from Padma Maharaja. She has stated publicly that after Vijaya's death, she was in debt to others. She has stated publicly that at that time her children had to wear hand-me-downs. What is truly astonishing is the way things changed overnight once she achieved political power.

Before long, she was wearing a *Patek Phillipe* wrist watch worth Rs. 2 million, and pearls that were also worth millions. While in power, she had accumulated money which was stored in a safety deposit box at the Hatton National Bank, for use when she was in Sri Lanka. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, during his 2001-2004 tenure, had the opportunity to have that safe raided, along with the one belonging to Chandrika's uncle, Anuruddha Ratwatte, who later had to face charges as a result of the contents of his safe being made public.

But, despite a tip-off, the UNP Leader was loath to make the move in the case of his President. Had his policy been different, she would have had to flee the country leaving her title behind.

Chandrika was finally, and to her mind, unexpectedly compelled to give up the reins of power. She had expected her guardian angel in the judiciary to grant her a favourable verdict in the controversy over the year in which she was due to give up the presidency. When he deserted her unexpectedly, she had no choice but to surrender to the inevitable and watch as elections were called in 2005.

She did not expect Mahinda Rajapaksa to become President. Her intention was to let Ranil Wickremesinghe win the election, enter parliament as the Leader of the SLFP and continue to wield political power in the country. She had even drawn up a list of SLFP MPs for the cabinet of ministers in a national government formed under a Ranil Wickremesinghe presidency.

In the eleventh hour of her presidency, she managed to have a cabinet paper passed and ratified by her ministers, gifting her a 1 ½ acre plot of land in Madiwela. The land was a portion of the site allocated for the construction of a presidential palace and it had already cost the UDA approximately Rs. 800 million to develop. The plot that was 'gifted' to her was valued at Rs. 350 million.

I felt compelled to file charges against her for that last deal. As a result, she had to return that "gift" of land to the government. It is probably the best action I have performed in my life.

This book, 'THE QUEEN OF DECEIT' attempts to highlight her actions during her tenure as President. Chandrika

Kumaratunga actions betrayed all the qualities of an unjust leader; perhaps she even had a degree of sadism in her make up.

Chandrika Kumaratunga should bear responsibility for the murders of both Rohana Kumara and Kumar Ponnambalam. She should be held accountable for the harassment of the singers Rukantha and Chandralekha and for burning down Actress Anoja Weerasinghe's house.

I even feel that the Town Hall bomb was orchestrated by her mafia, with her knowledge, aimed at winning sympathy for her on the eve of a presidential election that could give her another six years in office. Although the explosion was not meant to have caused her harm, a miscalculation resulted in her losing an eye. In exchange for that loss, she received a second term as President of Sri Lanka.

The people of this country, even the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress and the Muslim people have forgotten the death of SLMC Leader A.H.M. Ashraff. His death was deemed to have occurred in an air crash. In fact, it was one of the mysteries of the Chandrika Kumaratunga regime.

I had known Ashraff from as far back as 1987, and I consider him to be one of the greatest Muslim leaders of our times, within the limits in which he had to move.

Waruna Karunathilake and I had a lengthy conversation with Ashraff 48 hours before his death. The discussion took place at his office at the Ports Ministry.

It began at midnight and ended in the wee hours of the morning. He told us then how many seats he hoped to win under the

separate banners of the SLMC and the National Unity Alliance. He did not live to see the election results, but the number of seats he predicted each party would win turned out to be accurate. He also told us in no uncertain terms of his post-election plans.

Ashraff claimed that he was putting up with Chandrika Kumaratunga only until the election results were released. "After that I will teach that bitch a good lesson," he vowed angrily. He claimed he had already submitted a confidential letter to his party's high command, outlining post election plans and his opinion of Chandrika. When the Muslim Congress Chief made this statement, he had less than two days to live. He died mysteriously before his plans for political change could be realized. After his death, his widow was presented with a cabinet portfolio and a large sum of money as compensation for her loss.

What happened to the founder of the SLMC? Only Allah knows.

Perhaps I should explain why it was important to me to write a book about Chandrika Kumaratunga, a woman no longer in power.

During the period when an executive president wields power in this country, he or she is a democratically elected dictator. What ever wrongs the executive president may commit, however grievous his or her actions, he or she is literally above the law. But that immunity expires when the president's tenure ends.

Since the president cannot be questioned while he or she is in power, it is my hope to begin the practice of questioning the executive head of Sri Lanka, *after* that position has been vacated. This is why I filed legal charges against Chandrika Kumaratunga's Madiwela land deal; it is also the reason I write this book,

highlighting the waywardness of her eleven year presidency. I believe that political leaders must know that while they may enjoy immunity when in office, they will have to answer for their transgression once they are out of it. That knowledge may curb their misdeeds. I believe that it is the responsibility of the citizens of this country to ensure that our elected leaders are not permitted to turn into dictators.

Victor Ivan

September 8, 2006

INTRODUCTION (To the Sinhala Version)

This book was first published in Sinhala on September 16, 2006. Within about 05 months from that date, and by the time its English edition was published, nearly 30,000 copies had been sold. Those who made a survey of the readers told me that the number of those who read each copy could be somewhere between 20 and 30.

When I wrote the book I did not expect a large readership for it. My intention was merely to expose corruption and crime that prevailed in the time of Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunge's administration with her connivance. The book had large sales perhaps due to the fact that such a book was a novel experience for the people of Sri Lanka.

Before the publication of this book I had to sue her in regard to a land transaction of hers. According to the prevailing law of

the land, a retiring President can obtain an official residence from the government if he or she has no suitable house of his or her own to live in. However a retiring President is not entitled to outright ownership of that house. Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunge had not one house but several houses for her residence and, instead of obtaining an official residence, she obtained with the approval of the cabinet under her and on a transfer deed a land of one and a half acres developed at government expense. The commercial value of that land had been reckoned at about Rs. 350 million. Due to a court case instituted by me against this ugly transaction, she had to transfer that land back to the government.

In addition, I had made a complaint to the Bribery or Corruption Inquiry Commission requesting an inquiry into her assets and liabilities. I had with me an excellent file of letters exchanged between her secretary and me in relation to her declarations of assets and liabilities. Under the law prevailing in the country on assets and liabilities, any citizen can obtain photo copies of the statements of assets and liabilities of any persons obliged under the law to make declarations of assets and liabilities. Refusal of such a request made by a citizen to a person in authority is a punishable criminal offence. Before she came to power Ms Chandrika Kumaratunga spoke much about the law of assets and liabilities. In order to test her honesty on this issue, I requested from her photo copies of the statements of assets and liabilities of hers and her cabinet members. There was no response at all from her to my request. Thereafter I made that request to her, at least once a year. All my letters, which included that request of mine, were sent to her under registered cover. I knew that it was not possible for her to make a declaration of her assets. As a candidate at the Presidential election, as a cabinet minister and as an official in a political party she had an obligation to make an annual declaration of her assets. However in a period of

nearly twelve years she had declared her assets twice only, namely, in 1994 when she became the chief minister of the western province and in 1999, the year of the Presidential election in which she contested for her second term office. At the Presidential election of 1999 she had to declare her assets and liabilities, only as a result of a notice conveyed by me to the Commissioner of Elections in regard to declarations of assets and liabilities by presidential candidates. I made a request to the commissioner of Elections to reject the nominations of any candidates at the Presidential election who had contested at a previous Presidential election but had not declared their assets and liabilities. This request was given much publicity by the media. Due to the uncertainty created by it, both the presidential candidates of the two parties submitted their declarations of assets along with their nomination papers. I had with me a copy of Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga's declaration of assets for '94 and I obtained a copy of her declaration for '99 from the Commissioner of Elections. It was clear that the information given in the two statements did not tally with each other and that there were matters that were deliberately withheld. A declaration of assets must include also all information regarding the assets and liabilities of one's children whose age is less than 18 years. Particulars of bank accounts must also be included. Although particulars of several local accounts were included, those of foreign accounts were not included. Her children were being educated in England. However, particulars of accounts that should have been in their names were also not included. The statement should have included particulars of gems, gold and jewellery in her possession, along with their value, but only some vague and rough notes, and not clear details were included.

The complaint made to the Bribery or Corruption Inquiry Commission by me against her included all those fundamental

facts. However, for whatever reason, the Commission did not initiate an inquiry into her assets on the basis of my complaint. It was the second occasion on which I subjected the honesty of the Commission to a test.

It was thereafter that the book 'The Queen of Deceit' (Chaura Rejina) was published. At the time the book was being printed

Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga was in London. However her sister (Ms. Sunethra) had come to know that a book written by me about Chandrika was being printed. It had been planned to release the book on September 16 at the International Book Fair. Chandrika's sister asked for a copy of the book through an intermediary known to me. She was getting ready to leave for London on September 13 or 14 and she wanted the book because she wanted to give it to her sister who was in London. I had to tell that I had written the book to be read by the people of the country and not to be read by the members of the Bandaranaike family alone, and that the book had to be purchased at the exhibition stall on the day of its release and that it was not possible to give a copy before that. On the 16th, the date of the release, Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga's secretary sent a member of her staff after prior notice, and purchased 05 copies of the book from the exhibition stall.

Book stirred public interest from the very first day and had very brisk sales. On the 07 days of the exhibition, the book was sold at the rate of 02 copies per minute. A close friend of the Bandaranaike family said that the great acceptance the book was receiving had dismayed the members of the Bandaranaike family. Ms Sunethra Bandaranaike had spoken about it in an accusatory tone against me and had also spoken in an accusatory tone against her sister too for giving me the occasion for writing such a book. Mr. Anura Bandaranaike had spoken in anger about

the fact that a book written against his sister was being sold at his mother's memorial hall.

After the former President Chandrika Bandaranaike returned to Lanka she requested President Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse in writing to ban the book, but did not challenge the contents of the book. At the end she also lost, because of the book, the post of UNESCO advisor she had received.

Although the heat created by the book has not ceased entirely so far, there is no sigh that the veracity of the serious accusations made by the book is going to be inquired into. The warm responses received from those who read the book cannot be ignored. I have with me a file filled with letters received from some of the persons who had read the book. Although the book is about former President Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, many of the readers appear to have understood the facts that run below the story. The view of many who have written down their ideas after reading the book is that the political system of Sri Lanka is utterly corrupt. That, indeed, was the message I wanted to convey while writing about Chandrika.

My thanks are due to all those who contributed to the English edition.

Victor Ivan