

2.45 Political Interferences and the Role of the Public Performance Board in Sri Lanka.

(An Analysis Based on the Film "Purahanda Kaluwara "(Death on a Full Moon Day) by Prasanna Vithanage.)

S.H. Samanthika Priyadarshani
300/9A, Walisena watta, Meegoda.

ABSTRACT

As per the Public performance ordinance No 07 of 1912 authority of Public performance board should be obtained before a film, drama, or a Public performance is exhibited to the general Public.

Public performance board was initially setup to maintain a basic standard on exhibited films. But today it is challenged by individual preferences and short term political agendas.

The Board gave approval to Purahanda Kaluwara Directed & Produced by Prasanna Vithanage for Unlimited Public display on 06.03.2000 but the minister concerned stopped the release of the film, which was to be screened from 21.08.2000. The minister's argument was that some scenes of the film were detrimental to the national security and the motivation of the security forces fighting against the L.T.T.E.

Subsequently Mr. Prasanna Vithanage filed a fundamental rights petition in the Supreme Court challenging minister's action.

The bench of three judges of the Supreme Court ruled out minister's action stating that once the public performance board has given approval for a film the minister has no right to over rule it.

Object of this study is to analyze the socio economic and political scenario behind;

- Initial approval given to the film by the Public Performance Board
 - Subsequent suspension of its release by the minister
 - Supreme Court's overruling of the minister's decision.
- and it will be discussed along with following points
1. The director was nationally and internationally acclaimed for this film.
 2. Actions taken by the civil society in defense of the film.
 3. The competent authority for emergency regulations had not tried to show that the film comprises scenes detrimental to national security.
 4. Competent authority had allowed the publication of Major General Sarath Munasinghe's "Soldaduvekuge esin" Which includes stories similar to the film script.
 5. A parliamentary election was scheduled to be held on 11.10.2000 and there was an attempt to release another film, which was giving political advantage to the ruling party.
 6. The film was scheduled for public display on 21.08.2000 and all arrangements had been made by the producer to release the film on that day. It was a legally accepted fact.
 7. Court decided that the action of the minister, national Film Corporation and its chairman in suspending the public release of the film had violated the fundamental rights of the producer.

In addition as per this decision the legal authority of the public performance board was upheld.

Key Words: Political interferences, Public Performance Board, Unlimited Public display, national security, socio economic scenario