

We publish the following article which indicates the dangers of proselytization as practiced by 'mushroom' evangelical groups. The news item is a classic example of how their activities are generally viewed by non Christians.

**DailyMirror**

Wednesday, November 04, 2009

## **Mystery surrounds deaths of two women**

*By Yohan Perera and*

*H. W Somaratne Yasa Mendis*

At least two people died mysteriously after attending a healing session which had been conducted by a religious prayer group during the weekend at the Vihara Mahadevi Park.

The two unfortunate victims were identified as Neminona from Ambalangoda and Damayanthi Samaratunge from Matale.

According to relatives, the victims had not been suffering from any major illness when they attended the healing session but a spokesman from the prayer group said the victims were brought from hospital and they were in a critical condition at the time.

Manju, the son of Neminona told the Daily Mirror that his mother decided to attend the prayer sessions after viewing a CD which had been sold by this group. He said this group had been selling CDs in the Ambalangoda area. He said his mother had gone into a trance and had started dancing. At that moment she had been taken onto the stage where the service was being conducted. Later they announced that a woman who had taken ill had to be taken to hospital.

"I approached the stage after hearing this announcement but was chased away by the organizers," Manju said. However Manju and his father had managed to take her to hospital but the doctors had pronounced that the patient was dead.

**Mystery surrounds...**

He said they lodged a complaint with the Cinnamon Gardens police and two people from the prayer group had also come to the police station at that time. "They asked me what they could do and I said they need not do anything as they had already done the worst," he said.

The two people had then threatened him.

Jayakody a relative of the second victim said Damayanthi too did not have any ailment but had gone there as the group claimed they will pray and resolve her family problems, "My cousin joined a group of people who were coming from Anuradhapura to attend the healing session. He

said the death certificate of his cousin had not been issued yet.

A spokesperson from the prayer group said they were not aware as to what happened and said both victims were in a critical stage when they were brought to the healing session. She said everything happened by divine power.

The relatives of the victims said the police had released the pastor who had conducted the session after having arrested him. They alleged this was done by the influence of high government officials.

The spokesperson said people from Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa attended the sessions and this pastor who led the group had assisted another popular preacher who held such sessions.

She said the majority of the people who attended the sessions were Sinhala Buddhists and the group was an independent one with no links to any main stream Christian churches.