

When the future historians write on the political, social, economic and strategic environment, which existed in the second half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, they will certainly highlight 2009 as a momentous year, perhaps they may term it as marking the 'unification of the country.' When one speaks of unification one wonders whether the terminology is appropriate in describing the culmination of the events, which unfolded during the last 30 years. Perhaps, during the past 30 years the political landscape of the country was gloomed and darkened by a spectre of the dastardliest of terrorism, which the land had never experienced before. A born murderer from Velvettiturai held the political and civil society to ransom, in the name of liberation to a segment of the population, who themselves did not comprehend, what kind of liberation, that this traitor of the people was trying to achieve. There was mortal fear breathed down their throats, into their very systems. Gradually this fear was spread among a whole nation, through murder, mayhem, looting, utilizing the brainwashed vulnerable sections of his group. Though the demands by these terror groups were unjust, undemocratic and nationally deplorable, some were granted, by successive governments in the name of peace; due to intransigent nature of the demands, especially, on 'separation' some of the Tamil groups gave up terror as they found these were non-achievable, and joined the main stream of politics and social life.

The successive governments used varied methods to bring this maniac too to his senses, but his psycho pathetic mind was made of extreme rigid-stuff that he did not waver. His demand for a part of this precious land, in the name of a peculiar state, was never realized except for the establishment of some illegal institutions. He could not realize his ultimate aim due to the united action against him, by the rest of the Nation, including his own people. Therefore, there was no separate state in northern Sri Lanka. As the term 'unification' connotes bringing together of disjointed parts, its use to describe the culmination of a defeat process, indirectly promotes a villain to a status of a 'hero'.

The Tamil-Sri Lankans were the worst affected, by his acts. Some three years ago there appeared an article written by me, under the heading "Tamil Independent Voices will drown..." (on Saturday 26th August 2006) in the "Daily News" and also in "The Island" on 30 August 2006, I underlined the destruction that this maniac brought about to the Tamil Civilization in Sri Lanka. He did not have the intellectual capacities to realize that with the 'mirage of that peculiar state' deep in his conscience he was sending youth to a killer machine, under the name suicide-bombers and martyrs. Those intellectuals who opposed or advised him to mend his ways were murdered by him, the list is long starting from Mayor Alfred Duraipappa in 1975, to Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, and further (all these names are well recorded): the 'child-proscription' to his army, erased from mother earth a generation of Tamil youth, thousands were deprived of higher education. The Tamil Sri Lankans whose pride was their intellectual propensities were flattened to dust. At least two generations of youth were annihilated. Economy was ruined in the north and the east; social structures of a mainly Hindu society was completely mowed-down by this 'Surya-Devan'.

Sacrifices

Ultimately, when he knew that he could not face the Sri Lankan forces any more, and imminent

death was at this bunker step, he used the unwilling civilians as a human-shield to protect him, and face an ignominious death. It is this utter cowardly act of his which resulted thousands of poor Tamil-Sri Lankans to languish in IDP camps. He was never a hero as some interested persons want him to be projected as, but a well and true coward and a megalomaniac. It is unfair, therefore, to attribute to him any so-called political achievements, which diminishes the sacrifices made by Ranavirus, for the last three and a half decades.

The historic achievement of the Commander-in-Chief, heroic heads of the Army, Navy, Air Force and the Police and the Ranavirus, in crushing the most deplored terror outfit of the world, should be kept on a higher pedestal, and revered as it is of supreme value to Sri Lanka, and the whole world, when certain regions of the globe are engulfed in a terrorist menace. Nationally, their supreme sacrifices reaffirmed that 'Sri Lanka is a free, sovereign, independent and democratic, socialist, republic' (Sri Lanka Constitution) under one flag and one National Anthem. Internationally they also taught the other nations, infested with terrorism the 'modus operandi' of destroying and crushing it in whatever form it raises its ugly head. Undoubtedly, a place will be carved, for Sri Lanka when future history will be written, both National and Global. President Mahinda Rajapaksa described this role of our beloved young Ranavirus in his moving address to the Nation from the precincts of Parliament on 19th May thus:-

"The world had not seen military sciences able to face a combination of land mines, claymore mines, small suicide vessels, light aircraft that can evade radar, and suicide killer jackets.

Through 30 years the security forces of Sri Lanka were compelled to find ways and means to face up to all this. By the end of its successful march the Security Forces of Sri Lanka had become the most disciplined and capable military in the world.

Our security forces were able to defeat the most ruthless terrorists in the world due to their strict discipline, commitment and creative use of military strategy." May I invite the Defence Secretary, and other Service Chiefs to write a thesis on the "modus operandi" of this meticulously planned strategies of warfare for posterity.

Buddhist principles

The 26-year delay in bringing this outfit to its knees have been analyzed in varied ways, focused from different angles, by experts of different fields. A historical and a philosophical explanation could be the fact, that Sri Lanka is a land whose most ancient ways of life was based on Buddhistic principles, mainly Metta, (Loving-Kindness) Muditha, (rejoicing in others' joy. Karuna (Compassion) and Upekkha (Equanimity) that they looked at the enemy with the large heartedness taught in Buddhism. Later other religions which taught similar values in our land made people further tolerant and accommodative, even if the opposing views were not quite acceptable. These value-systems first originated in Buddhism. There are many stories in Buddha's life; one popular episode is how he tamed people who could not be put into correct path, like Angulimala who later became an Arahant.

Final solution

The Buddhist Kings of yore gave sufficient time for wrong-doers to correct themselves, under Buddhist principles of "Dasa Raja Dhamma" which was done during history and even in the

present turn of events. President Rajapaksa stated in his address that he believes that Buddhist principles based on Metta could bring in solutions to our future problems.

Historically, what befell, on Sena and Guttika, in 237B.C. by getting killed, after 23 years of negotiation and their misrule, and the much-written rule of Chola King General Elara 145 B.C. are examples of tolerance by Sinhalas to foreign invaders for some time, which turned to their armed defeat at a later stage. The driving away the Cholas by Vijayabahu 1, in 1070 A.D. is another instance of capability shown of armed might. When 'patience was misunderstood to be weakness'. However, these were no parallels to the holding of people to ransom by terrorism. In the present period of history, which is purely domestic in nature and worse still when it is intra-country, a clear case of biting the hand that feeds'.

In any event, even in the present period, the manner in which the 'majority of the people' who love the country, (to borrow a phrase from President Mahinda Rajapaksa's address of 19 May), acted in the face of terror was magnanimous. President Mahinda Rajapaksa himself, declared this time that his patience should not be construed as weakness. When it was intolerable and when other equations became compatible of eliminating terror. the patriot forces led by President Mahinda Rajapaksa struck and struck hard, it should be the solution when everything failed to answer.

Our political leaderships, the Maha Sangha and other clergy too, tried to tame this megalomaniac with these Buddhist values, and of other faiths; and even when the armies were zeroing on him or his cohorts they were requested to hold on, and withdraw. One of the Presidents in fact, called him lovingly, the youth who is misled. All these overtures met with violent responses unprecedented in world history. That President of Sri Lanka who showed Metta, in fact, was assassinated; the Sangha who tried to take him to the correct path were butchered in Aranthalawa.

The members of Police in the front, who were requested by the leaders not to use force on the cohorts, were brutally massacred; and Muslims with clergy, who were praying in Mosques were butchered. Buddhist places of utmost reverence were attacked, little realizing that they were Blessed Sacred precincts tied up with the historicity of this land, which gave shelter to this murderer and fed him along with his followers. The Sacred Tooth Relic and the Sri Maha Bodhi were his targets; these sacrilegious acts are all well documented and perhaps, nothing but the Panchanatharya Kamma (Five Adverse Kammass which result in this birth itself) which the Buddhists believe in ultimately fell on him.

Spiritual protection

There were of course, geo-political reasons which prompted the basic thinking of Sri Lankan leaders in addition to their philosophical religious upbringing; it has been found that the basic thought process of Sri Lankans have been influenced by the Great Teachings of the Buddha. Only when such spirituality did not answer the worldly methods were applied to its very extreme.

This view could be substantiated by looking at our early history; when foreign invasions took place our Kings at first tried to talk peace and settle problems amicably, but when they did not work the answer was given which was bitter. The instances of our wars with the colonialists

bear ample testimony to this thesis, during the period since 15th century to the 20th century when we gained independence.

This land of Sri Lanka was Thrice-Blessed by that Great Savant the Buddha, with His visits. Sri Lanka had always been saved and protected in the face of greater upheavals and the land had been in tact; Buddhism has survived to direct the lives of inhabitants. The unworthy methods of the insane had never succeeded in the rule of this pure revered land even in history. It was in the month of Vesak, the period during which the Exalted One attain Enlightenment that Sri Lanka was liberated from this menace, which proves that there is an unseen hand protecting the land and its peoples. (I believe in this and had stated so in some pervious essays of mine). I prefer to refrain from mentioning even the name of the terror-satan who was killed by the Ranaviru children of Mother-Lanka, on 18 May, 2009. It was the sad end that he may not have wished for, but that is how history repeated itself, in Lanka. With his movement into the hell, if there is one, for his deeds, we should look ahead for reconciliation, reconstruction, remoulding the futures of youngsters, and remodelling of our political structures.

Born leaders

In Lanka in times of such deep cleavages in the political and social spectrum, there had emerged leaders, who could take-up challenges and steer clear the destinies of our nation. President Mahinda Rajapaksa in the 21st century could be called a leader who emerged from Ruhuna to shoulder this huge responsibility of crushing and defeating an inhuman terror outfit that had won global disrepute. Out destiny had it that, his own brother Gotabhaya (historic names all) had to shoulder the defence part of the operation. Air Chief Marshal Donald Perera, Chief of Defence Staff General; Sarath Fonseka, the Army Commander; Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda, the Navy Commander and Air Chief Marshal Roshan Gunatilaka, the Air Force Commander; Jayantha Wickremaratne, Inspector General of Police; Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekara, Director General, Civil Security Department and the front-line commanders on the ground were the Dasa Maha Yodayo (Ten Giants), or more, born to resurrect our land, from this curse. Although, I do not venture to draw direct parallels with ancient history for, valid, obvious reasons and also for, this terrorist in question does not match any of those worthy opponents, the present leaders of the Security Forces are comparable to those of our ancient warriors. (I do not wish to write names lest I miss any). They are indeed Giants in the true sense of the word.

The Ranaviru children hail from our warrior families who descended here, with Sri Maha Bodhi and even earlier when Vijaya settled in Sri Lanka; they carried the brunt of the operation. In fact their parents and spouses should feel happy that they will enter the annals of history for their sacrifices and bravery.

Thus starting from the Commander-in-Chief to the valiant soldier was born in our midst with a purpose to free the land from an unfathomable terrorist scourge, which they did with devotion, commitment and loyalty. We the common laymen owe a huge debt of gratitude to them and we, the Buddhists should invoke the Blessings of the Triple gem.

The followers of other faiths should invoke the merits according to their great religions. In our land now live brothers and sisters of other faiths, with differing ethnicities and we respectfully

recognise their contributions to the life of Sri Lanka. We all salute the brave 'Ranavirus' - starting from the Commander-in-Chief to the valiant soldier. We drop a tear to the departed, a word of solace to the injured and a bow to those fought till the last.

Way ahead

Now is the time for introspection. I stated 'Four 'R's at the beginning of this essay. They are not the same as R2Ps, promulgated by some thinkers, academics, NGO wallahs or foreign affairs experts, as I do not belong to any. They are simply as follows, reconciliation, reconstruction, rehabilitation, remodelling and restructuring of the political, social, economic and cultural fabric of our Motherland. Let me explain what I have in mind.

President Rajapaksa in fact, stated in his address to the Nation on 19th May that there will be a home-grown solution to the problems of our Motherland.

Apart from the devolution of responsibilities to meet the other urgent requirements there are plans under way. I am aware that already there are such rehabilitation and development plans for the Eastern Province, under the Senior Advisor and MP Basil Rajapaksa. Therefore, what is written here could be stating the obvious. Still let me briefly outline them.

Reconciliation

There are obviously deep scars created in the social fabric due to thirty-year conflict engineered by a lunatic. The Tamil community, especially, need some respite. They were the most affected among others. Their psychological conditions need deep understanding by other communities. They have lost their loved ones; possessions; lands and property; jobs; and they have nothing to go back in most cases. The rifts between communities are also wide. We should bring them together with varied initiatives. Already, these programmes are under way but at different levels of society there should be a dialogue. For example various strata of the society, farmers, craftsmen, professionals, academics, lawyers, journalists etc should commence a dialogue and form associations, meet at regular intervals, learn each others' language and discuss matters of mutual importance. It will build camaraderie. The leadership for these should compose of persons of the same profession from the South and the affected areas. These programmes could be from the Government, private and corporate sectors. The Chamber of Construction Industry, I am aware, has already initiated a programme to bring together construction industrialists from the South Sri Lanka with those of the North.

I believe there are other similar organisations getting together professionally, and helping the affected with whatever support they could give. Perhaps, the committees that has been formed will consult the varied sectors to form integrated units. All I have in mind cannot be written here lest I lengthen this essay.

A South African model of reconciliation programme may not suit our set-up, as communities never had animosities. Still there may be things we could learn from them. Learning of Tamil and Sinhala by both communities is a must in this exercise.

Reconstruction

The Ministry in-charge and the officers are already in this job and perhaps, the private sector

could be drawn in further to accelerate the process of development. (I do not propose to write further in this area as development is continuing.)

Rehabilitation

This is a stupendous task and the Government is on it with experienced hands. With lakhs of persons in refugee camps, the plans are under way according to reports to resettle them in their own lands.

It is the right thing to do as soon as possible. A word of caution here; it is this aspect which catches the eye of international groups who are all out to tarnish the image of a successful programme. I am personally aware of this segment having got exposed to working in the international orbit and also with grassroots people in the Wannu. We feel sufficiently, satisfied as ordinary laymen that our colleagues work assiduously with youngsters in this area.

Remodelling and restructuring of our systems

This relates to the devolution process of our administration. In fact the crux of the problem was in this segment. There are several ministries and organisations responsible both at a higher political level and at an administrative level, for making fresh initiatives for devolution of powers. It is once again an aspect prone to criticism, domestically, and internationally. Hence, the sooner we offer the maximum possible powers to the grassroots for their own administration in whatever name or form we could halt the rise of disaffection and disappointment from vulnerable groups.

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