

Desperate plea of a patriot

The Secretary General of Tamil United Liberation Front V. Anandasangaree has written again an open letter to the President of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapaksa. Mr Anandasangaree, points out that he is requesting the President in good faith and that no satisfactory permanent solution can ever be found under a unitary system of Government. He concludes his letter with the sentence "I plead with you to consider the Indian Model as an alternative to a Federal Solution, if you still won't support the Federal Model which was to your liking once. The SLFP convention also once approved it."

We publish the full text of letter by the Secretary General of Tamil United Liberation Front V. Anandasangaree addressed to Sri Lanka President Mahinda Rajapaksa:

His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa,
President of the Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka,
Temple Trees,
Colombo – 03

DESPERATE PLEA OF A PATRIOT FOR A PERMANENT SOLUTION

Your Excellency,

I am compelled to write this letter to you being very much worried and upset over the happenings in this Country, since the end of the war. My question is, when the bloodshed due to the war in the North has still not dried up and the wounds of the war not healed yet, why should the Government or any one representing the Government harass the people and wound their already wounded hearts, beyond their limits of toleration. They won't dare to defy a soldier with arms. At the same time the setup that was there earlier, is still there keeping the people under their control by indirect threats. This is the situation prevailing in the North – Vanni in particular. You are not unaware that the worst affected of all the four districts of Vanni are the districts of Killinochchi and Mullaitheevu. The people of these districts got displaced several times and when they were resettled, they went back to their houses to find nothing left. They found their houses either razed to the ground or found the roofs, windows, doors and all fittings removed. Their losses cannot be cited as parallel to any other loss due to any natural disaster, except perhaps the Tsunami which too cannot be compared to the

losses sustained by the IDPs. In short after several displacements, at the final destination, they had only the clothes they were wearing and carrying with them.

Added to this misery they lost many members of their families, some still missing, many seriously injured and without limbs, some both the limbs and their eye-sights. Many still carry within their bodies splinters of shells that cannot be removed. If the people in the South were permitted to help the refugees they would have looked after them well. Unfortunately even for many NGOs the IDP camps were out of bounds. But hundreds of hardcore LTTE Cadre managed to escape from the camps and fled to India, with the help of some outsiders. What I write here is just a fraction of the sufferings and losses sustained by the people. The resettled people undergo many hardships including starvation. If the resettlement and assistance to the refugees were left in the hands of the officials things would have been entirely different. The local politician's interference had done enough damage to you and to your Government.

The people did not get any compensation for their losses and are living in frustration. Frequent visits of ministers for ceremonial opening thamasas had not won their hearts. They are not interested in carpet roads. What they want is a house to live in, completely built or fully renovated at Government expense. Government has a moral duty to do so without giving loans for buildings or to renovate houses. This had been the practice in the past. They want their Gold back for which many people have receipts. They want back their lands and houses illegally retained by the Army. The lands and houses kept by the army were compulsorily taken away from the people or for, highly undervalued price, by the LTTE. Their problems are many and should be solved with the sympathy, they deserve. They have suffered enough and subjecting them for any more sufferings, physically or mentally, will end up in great tragedy, bringing disrepute to the Government. The curse of the people will follow those who harass the people, for several generations to come.

ANCESTRAL RELATIONSHIP OF SINHALESE AND TAMILS

Your Excellency, we can't go on like this for ever. A solution to the ethnic problem should be found without any more delay. The various communities in Sri Lanka should shed all their suspicions against one another and get together to find a solution for our problem, once and for all. I am of the opinion that lack of knowledge of certain events in the history of our country, is the main reason for the distrust that had developed between the two major communities in Sri Lanka, over a period of time. It had resulted in one group looking upon the other with suspicion. What percentage of the country's population know of the ancestral relationship the Sinhalese and the Tamils have.

The history of our country, as known to most of us is that Prince Vijaya took the Pandiyan Princess, from Madurai in Tamil Naad, as his wife. So were the 700 followers of Vijaya for whom King Pandiyan sent suitable maids. I quote below the following paragraph from the Mahawamsa

"When he had thus obtained many maidens and had given compensation to their families, he sent his daughter, bedecked with all her ornaments, and all that was needful for the journey, and all the maidens whom he had fitted out, according to their rank, elephants withal and horses and wagons, worthy of a King, and craftsmen and a thousand families of the eighteen guilds, entrusted with a letter to the conqueror Vijaya (Chapter 7 -55 to 58)."

Like the Tamils in Sri Lanka who boast of Umbilical relationship with Tamil Naad, the Sinhalese too have similar Umbilical relationship with the Tamils of Madurai which is still a part of Tamil Naad. In short whether one is a Tamil or a Sinhalese, it is very clear that we all had Tamil mothers. No one can deny this if we have faith in Mahawamsa. If this position is accepted, not because I am saying so but because it is a part of the recorded history of Sri Lanka, why should we fight among over selves?, should be the question that we should ask ourselves and every other person in Sri Lanka, over and over again.

To strengthen my claim I wish to quote from an article published in "The Island" of February 1st 2009 captioned "A draft manifesto for a Sri Lankan Obama" authored by a much reputed retired public servant

who once served in Jaffna as a righteous Government Agent Mr. Neville Jeyaweera. This is what he says

“However, when we talk of the Sinhala-Buddhist tradition as constituting the central zone of the Sri Lankan identity, we must also not forget that genetically, the Sinhala are as much Dhamila as they are Sinhala. If we are to believe our great chronicle the Mahavamsa, which many Sinhala do, our archetypal ancestors, Prince Vjaya and his seven hundred comrades, from whom the Sinhala claim descent, took Pandyan wives, which means that through our maternal line, 50% of the Sinhala DNA is Dhamila and our genetic pool is therefore equally Dhamila as Sinhala. The point I am trying to make is that genetically, the Dhamilas are not an alien people but are of the same flesh and blood as the Sinhala. Therefore, integrating them into our nation as equal partners is at least expedient, if not mandatory, and it is our failure to do so that caused them to want to set up on their own and go their own way, setting off a bloody civil war as a consequence. Recognition of that fundamental truth, and raising a national consciousness and an environment appropriate to it, will be the first task that awaits a Sri Lankan Obama.”

ETHNIC ISSUE IS A NATIONAL PROBLEM

I had been right throughout viewing the country’s problems as those common to all and not to one particular community or race or to a particular group of persons. I always felt that the genuine participation of everyone in this country is indispensable, to solve the country’s problems and that it will not be difficult, if only we will concede, as you had been often saying, that everyone in this country has a right to live here and to enjoy equal rights and privileges like the others. First of all we should learn to live with the others with a common identity as Sri Lankans, in addition to being Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims or one belonging to any other group. A true patriot should, love not only his or her country but should also love all those who live in it, treating all of them as equals. I have lived up to these ideals and will continue to do so until I breath my last. I will without any hesitation, lay down my life too for the sake of my country. That is what our country expects from every one of us. My concerns for my country had always been my first priority, throughout my life. I hope that you are also aware of that.

I am not unaware of the love and respect you have for our country and of your efforts to develop the same. But I will not applaud you like several others merely to please you for all your decisions and actions. I defer with you in many matters, most of which are related to the North and the East and of the people of the North and the East. I have even said that “Chinthanaya” of some others is now smuggled into those of yours and passed on as a part of the “Mahinda Chinthanaya”. A lot of changes had taken place in the “Mahinda Chinthanaya” and at this rate very soon it will lose its originality and identity. This is where you have erred. I had been writing to you off and on and my letters carried a lot of valuable suggestions and advice many of which, if taken seriously, would have saved you from a lot of embarrassments, you are facing today. Although both of us entered Parliament together in 1970, I am more senior to you in age and in politics. Hence I have a moral duty to tell you frankly what I feel about every one of your actions and decision.

Your Excellency, I am one who is not communal and had been always saying that I wish to have a Sinhalese family as my neighbor on one side and a Muslim family on the other. I have still not changed my views in this matter. I want anyone to read and respond to this appeal whether positively or adversely but guided by their own conscience and not by sentiments. As for me, like many others, finding a permanent solution should be the Government’s top priority which is not at all difficult. I am yearning to see the dawn of peace in its true form in this beautiful Island of ours, in which from time immemorial the Tamils and the Sinhalese had lived in peace and harmony along with Muslims and many other ethnic groups, before the country gained its independence. What was going on in this country since independence in 1948 is not fully known to the present generation. They hardly know what a peaceful country Ceylon was in the good old days. I am one who had lived throughout this period and had witnessed and experienced all good events and bad events that took place in our country. The turning point was the passage of the Citizenship Acts and the situation got aggravated with the passage of the Act making Sinhala as the only official language of the state in 1956. Since then for more than half a century no one could live peacefully in any part of the Country whether one is the Head of the state like you or an ordinary citizen of Sri Lanka like me.

BUILDING A NEW SRI LANAKA

Peace knocked at our door a number of times. It is we who shut it out. If your Excellency continue to maintain that a solution to the ethnic problem can be found only on the basis of consensus reached among all sections of the people, I bet you will never solve it. You are aware what problems the Tamils and other minorities face. You are also not unaware as to what solution that will be acceptable to the minorities, for which you do not need any select committee of Parliament, or so many meetings with others or any more All Party meetings. If you persist in finding a solution under a Unitary System, you will never solve the ethnic problem even if your party wins all Tamil majority seats in the North and the East. A unitary system will not be acceptable to the minorities, the Tamils in particular. It will never serve as a permanent solution, since it can be meddled with, by some others when you and I are no more. I had been repeatedly saying that only the Indian Model will be acceptable to the minorities as the only alternative to a "Federal Model"; if the term "Federal" is allergic to some. Otherwise it would be the best and the most acceptable one. The term "Unitary" is equally allergic to some others. You can rest assured that if certain doubts are cleared in the minds of the section of the people who think that the country may get divided someday, they are bound to accept a Federal Solution. For your part make ample provisions in the constitution deterring everyone from making any attempt to divide the country and also make everyone to feel that we are all equals and will be treated as such and will never be allowed to be subjected to any form of discrimination, imposing severe penalties for violations by any official. I am sure that finding a solution on this basis is achievable, if you are determined to do so. The proposal could be prepared by you in consultation with leaders of all parties and other dignitaries in whom you have confidence and placed before the country for anyone to suggest any amendments that should appear to be reasonable and acceptable.

At this juncture I wish to refer to my common letter dated 02-10-2005 sent to you and to Hon. Ranil Wickramasinghe during the Presidential Election of Nov 2005 at which both of you were candidates.

In this letter (copy attached) apart from many others, I have pointed out the need for an early settlement of the Ethnic Problem, -- The need to keep it out of the presidential campaign -- Failure of politicians to keep up promises made during election campaigns, -- Allaying the fears of the people with regard to - Federal form of government. -- The demerits of the unitary system in relation to Sri Lankan ethnic problem -- The merits of the Indian Model of devolution and wound up by saying:-

"Thousands of Sri Lankan Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims and other ethnic groups visit India every day. They are full of admiration for its liberal democratic ideals. A majority Hindu country has a great Muslim Scientist as Head of the State and treat him with due honour. Another highly respected leader is the Prime Minister of India from an ethnic group that forms only 2% of its population and the leader of the ruling Party who is a very highly respected lady is one, not born in India. This great neighbor of ours has found unity in diversity; why can't we have powers devolved to our regions on the Indian pattern?"

"I strongly urge that both the candidates should declare that a solution to the ethnic problem will be found jointly, by both agreeing to take it up soon after the election, irrespective of who wins. I am positively sure that this is the only way to bring back peace to our suffering masses. With the attention of the entire international community focused on Sri Lanka, I believe this is the best time too."

After the Presidential Election at which you won, you made your policy statement in Parliament on 25-11-2005. I wrote to you another letter on 28-11-2005 captioned "Policy Statement and the Peace Process"; (Copy attached) of which a selected paragraph is quoted here: -

"As usual like your predecessors, you too have sought the co-operation of everyone to help you to build a New Sri Lanka. Without a contented minority support, it is difficult to achieve it. Even the full co-operation of the majority Sinhalese may be available to you because the main concern of the people of Sri Lanka today is achieving Peace and to achieve it, an acceptable solution is a pre-requisite. Peace is knocking at our door. Whether we are going to let it in or shut our doors, is in your hands. Having found a reasonable solution, within the frame-work of a United Sri Lanka, acceptable to the International Community, which will never support separation, you can then proceed to muster support

for the creation of a New Sri Lanka. Until then the minorities are not at all interested in anything, even if you give them everything free. To put it better the LTTE won't allow them to do anything. With no satisfactory response from your side, they have no alternative other than submitting themselves to the LTTE's pressure for everything.

WHAT IS REASONABLE AND HONEST

I now come to your 2nd Independence Day message to the Nation, after you got elected as the President of the Democratic Social Republic of Sri Lanka, delivered at the 59th Independence Day Ceremony held at the Galle Face Green on the 4th of Feb 2007. I was moved to tears for not participating in that ceremony not because anyone prevented me from doing so, but because I felt that the Tamils have lost their right to rejoice at the Independence Day ceremony as one belonging to a subservient community or race. It was too much for me to bear, being one who is very patriotic and had actively taken part in the Independence Day ceremony on the 4th February 1948. I had lived in this country for 78 years and I hardly remember when I last celebrated the Independence Day Ceremony.

Permit me to quote an extract of your speech at that ceremony:-

"It is this massive commitment to peace that led our Security Forces to liberate the innocent Tamil people who were taken hostage and used as a human shield by the terrorists, to win their savage demands. For this valiant effort our heroic security forces deserve the salute of the Sri Lankan people on this honoured day.

Similarly, we should now take speedy action to establish democratic governance in areas liberated from the clutches of the terrorists in the East and the North. It is our duty to protect the lives and property of the Tamil and Muslim people, and bring sanctity to the future world of their children. As I stated at the inauguration of the Moragahakanda Maha Samudra, I wish to re-emphasize that the most reliable weapon against terrorism is to do justice by the innocent Tamil people. I know that the Sinhala people in the South are ready for this. We are not ready to give into the blood-thirsty demands of the LTTE. However, at the minimum we should be reasonable and honest enough to agree with Mr. Anadasangaree or the Hon. Douglas Devananda."

INDIAN MODEL ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION

Your Excellency, this was a part of your message to the Nation at a time when the country did not have much hopes of defeating the LTTE. Yet since you had said so, it came as a guarantee that you were giving to the Nation. You said, "However at the minimum we should be reasonable and honest enough to agree with Mr. Anadasangaree or Hon Douglas Devananda", Even at that time he was a minister of your cabinet. But I was not even a Member of Parliament or a member of any local body. Long before you contested the Presidential election in Nov 2005 for the 1st time, I had started my campaign for an Indian Model of devolution and even suggested during the Presidential Election campaign of 2005 to leave the ethnic issue out of the campaign and to take it up with the defeated candidate to agree on a consensus. Hence mentioning my name, at the 59th Independence Day speech, and saying that at the minimum you should be reasonable and honest enough to agree with me or with Douglas Devananda, gave me hopes that you were considering the Indian Model as a solution to our problem. My hopes got strengthened when one day you asked me not to use the term "Federal" in any of my articles and statements but to use the term "Indian Model" liberally, in all my writings. I also remember your asking me to discuss this matter with the J.V.P too.

Your Excellency, in conclusion I plead with you to consider the Indian Model as an alternative to a Federal Solution, if you still won't support the Federal Model which was to your liking once. The SLFP convention also once approved it. Our people should be told that "Democracy" is not merely the rule of the majority. But Democracy is rule of the majority with the consent of the minority. At the 2005 Presidential Election the UNP offered a Federal Solution and obtained 49% of the votes. Out of the votes you obtained, the leftist votes you got could be taken as votes cast for a Federal Solution. Although my suggestion looks ridiculous it has some moral values since one percent of the votes cast at an election should not obstruct the finding of a reasonable solution for a 55 year old problem that had brought

destruction to the country, which would have been otherwise peaceful and prosperous. If a solution based on the Federal or Indian model is found several thousand souls from all ethnic groups in Sri Lanka will rest in peace. To achieve it, assurance from several countries can be obtained, to get their full co-operation in curtailing the activities of all, who are opposed to peace in Our Country. As for you, you will go down in history as the single person who brought peace and prosperity to an ailing nation. I am advising you in good faith that no satisfactory permanent solution can ever be found under a unitary system of Government.

Thanking You

Yours Sincerely,

V. Anadasangaree,

Secretary General

Tamil United Liberation front