

Was L. H. Mettananda an Extremist?

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I refer to the article "There is only one way to national solidarity" of July 4 in The Island by Shanie.

According to this article opportunity for national solidarity was lost due to the extremists, who "strangled and silenced the moderates".

We would like to know who the moderates are and how they were strangled. Shanie has chosen L. H. Mettananda as the spokesperson for the extremists while not mentioning any Tamil leader symbolizing the extremist forces.

This letter is written to object to branding L. H. Mettananda as an extremist. He spoke for the Sinhalese and the Buddhists who lost their rights during the colonial administration.

Mettananda advocated national unity through languages. He stressed the importance of the Sinhalese learning the Tamil language and the Tamils learning the Sinhala language.

When L. H. Mettananda was acting principal at Ananda College (1932 - 1936) Sinhala and Tamil languages were given pride of place, in all the literary activities. When he improved the library at Ananda he added many Tamil books to the collection. Among the galaxy of distinguished pupils that Ananda College produced was Professor Arulpragasam.

In his prize day report on 8th March 1952 he quoted Professor Nesiah and agreed with the professor's view that English should be a compulsory second language as the medium of international relations. His premise on the medium of instruction in the primary classes was that it should be in the child's mother tongue.

Tamil language was taught in the primary classes at Ananda College. Mettananda's language policy was Sinhala only, in the country at large.

His stand was explained through various writings including letters to the newspapers. He was not driven by extremism to have taken this stand although this great nationalist is misunderstood and misrepresented by ill 'informed writers.

L. H. Mettananda was the principal of three outstanding schools in the country namely Ananda College, Darmaraja College - Kandy and Nalanda College of which he was the founder principal. As such he was a great

educationist.

I would invite the interested readers to be acquainted with the following books before branding this leading personality as an extremist. The books are Theory And Practice of Education by L. H. Mettananda; Light of Ananda, by Dr. K. D. G. Wimalaratna, and Mettananda Lipi (in Sinhala, running into 460 pages).

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(Old Nalandian)