

No solution ignoring pre fifty six

by Nalin de Silva

Mr. K. S. Sivakumaran appears to believe that I have turned a new leaf. He has apparently come to this conclusion based on my article on June 24, 2009, where I said among others, "I have more than a 'soft corner' for the Tamils as well as other communities in Sri Lanka, and I respect them as citizens of the country Of course, I have no hesitation in stating that the Sinhala Buddhist culture is the significant culture of the country, not the dominant culture." Mr. Sivakumaran is mistaken if he believes that I have turned a new leaf by stating the above. I have always held these views and if Mr. Sivakumaran or anybody else thought otherwise, I am not to be blamed. I challenge anybody to come out with anything that I have written that would prove otherwise. I have stated these in Sinhala as well and I need no advice from Mr. Sivakumaran or anybody else on what I should write in Sinhala. In fact, the word I have used for significant culture is *visheshitha sanskrithiya* and not *adhipathi sanskrithiya*. If Mr. Sivakumaran or anybody else thinks that I write different things in English and Sinhala then he or she does not know me.

I hope that I am not mistaken if I assume that Mr. Sivakumaran is also of the opinion that the Sinhala Buddhist culture is the significant culture of the country. If he and the majority of the Tamils are prepared to agree with it then half the problem is solved. I have to emphasise that Sinhala Buddhist culture is the significant culture for the simple reason that there were, and probably are, people who thought that all cultures are equal in the name of multiculturalism that is not practised anywhere in the world. There have been people who thought that the Lion flag should not be the national flag and that there were racist leaders who wanted three national flags one each for the Sinhalas, Tamils and the Muslims.

Then, there were others who wanted the national anthem to be sung in both Sinhala and Tamil ignoring the very meaning of the word 'national'. It is an irony that those who do not want to accept that the Sinhala Buddhist culture is the significant culture of the country, are more than willing to accept that the western Judaic Christian culture is not just the significant but the dominant culture of not only the western countries they love to migrate to, but also of the entire world. Most of us may not feel so but our educational system, judicial system, health, political structures are also the products of the western Judaic Christian culture and our lives are governed very often by the theories created in the western Judaic Christian culture.

As a person who has been teaching western Mathematics and Physics, I know the dominance that we come under and when I did not want to bow down to this western dominance some 'academics' in the University of Colombo took exception to that, and in particular Dr. G. L. Peiris wanted to find out why I taught *Jathika Chinthanaya* to a 'captive audi-



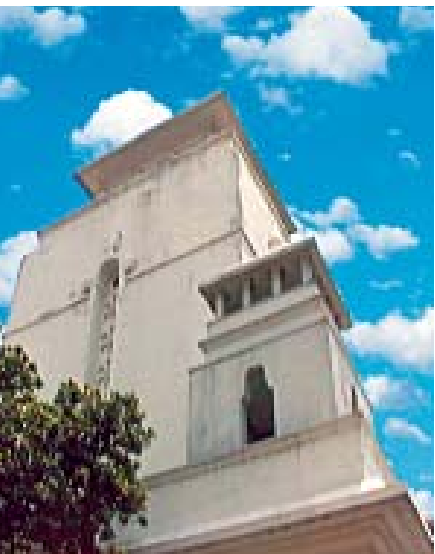
N.Q. Dias

ence'. The UTHR (J) that pretends to be a moderate outfit came out with a verbal barrage against the *Jathika Chinthanaya* and a person called Anuruddha Thilakasiri, who did neither understand *Chinthanaya* nor was rooted in the country, could not hide his contempt for anything national, and started a series of articles in *The Observer* and *The Silumina* during the regime of President Ranasinghe Premadasa, of course under state patronage.

If by accepting that the Sinhala Buddhist culture is the significant culture of the country half the problem is solved then the other half is solved by accepting that the problem has a history going back to the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and that the Sinhalas have already built a nation that could be expanded to include the Tamils and the other ethnic communities. Those like Shanie not prepared to listen to others but continue with their pet post fifty six theories on Sinhala Chauvinism, are not helpful at all in solving the problem. If they want to believe that everything commenced with the official language act let them continue to believe so without wasting the pages of national newspapers. They never answer the questions raised by others but go on preaching on so-called extremists from their pulpits.

I can understand their aversion to Mr. L. H. Mettananda, as he among the Principals of the elite schools, stood for the rights of the Sinhala people. He could not be silenced by the stooges of the British colonialists or by the cartoons of Colette, who depicted Mr. Mettananda as a monkey. If not for Mr. Mettananda and Mr. N. Q. Dias, there would not have been General Sarath Fonseka and Gotabhaya Rajapaksa (his experience as an officer in the army would have helped him immensely to fulfil his duties as the Defence Secretary) in the army and most probably we would not have defeated the LTTE. If not for them the higher ranks of the armed forces probably would have staged a coup similar to that in 1962 instead of engaging in the Killinochchi battle.

In fact, they could have gone to Medavachchi with the grandnephew of



Ananda College

one of the coup masters of 1962! I would have been happier if Mr. Mettananda had been remembered at the function held recently at Ananda College to honour the war heroes produced by that school. Shanie has said that Chelvanayakam was a moderate. If the latter was a moderate then Prabhakaran was also a moderate. It was under the leadership of Chelvanayakam that infamous resolution called 'the Vadukkodai Resolution' calling for the establishment

and the call for Eelam by Prabhakaran on the pretext that the "Sinhala government" did not listen to the "reasonable" demands of the Tamils forcing him to take up arms be identified as moderates while those who defended the right of the Sinhalas to recognise that the Sinhala Buddhist culture as the significant culture of the country are branded extremists? Tamil racists identify even those who called Prabhakaran *Thambi* and the LTTE terrorists 'boys' as moderates. According to Tamil racists those who think that Tamils in Sri Lanka constitute a nation without an iota of evidence, a claim that cannot be justified even with the pet theories of the western political scientists and social scientists in general, are moderates. It is a notion cultivated by the British who called Tamils and Sinhalas the majority nations first and then the Tamils a minority nation that was later adopted by the Tamil racists. Do (or did) the



L. H. Mettananda

Tamils in India constitute a nation? If somebody says that the question does not arise as the so-called national question has been solved there then one would ask whether the Tamils in India constituted a nation before the 'national question' was solved. It could be said that it is only a theoretical question but the theoretical question becomes very much practical in Sri Lanka, where there are people who still identify Tamils as a nation. It is this notion of two nations

“ Then there were others who wanted the national anthem to be sung in both Sinhala and Tamil ignoring the very meaning of the word national. It is an irony that those who do not want to accept that the Sinhala Buddhist culture is the significant culture of the country, are more than willing to accept that the western Judaic Christian culture is not just the significant but the dominant culture of not only the western countries they love to migrate to, but also of the entire world. ”

of a separate state was adopted. Prabhakaran took up arms given to him by India at the beginning and the west to continue the "struggle" of Chelvanayakam, the extremist who sowed the seeds of separation. Chelvanayakam's so-called non violent methods only incited people to violent activities. Shanie and others should answer the question why Chelvanayakam established the party by the name of *Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchchi* (Lanka Tamil State Party) in 1949 before Sinhala was made the official language. Chelvanayakam had asked for a separate state at least seven years before the introduction of the official language act! Incidentally, very often it is the Tamil racists who decide whether a person is an extremist or a moderate. How can all those who justified the use of violence

that was used as the basis for the demand for a separate state and at Thimpu the LTTE insisted that government accept this so-called fact. How come those who think that Tamils in Sri Lanka constitute a nation are moderates while others who think that there is only one nation in Sri Lanka with a number of ethnic groups are called extremists.

If after 1931, the English speaking Tamils began to feel that they were being alienated it was not because they could not become ministers in the government but since they thought that they could not become the chairman of the board of ministers. Arunachalams and Ramanathans had been the top most leaders of the country with the help of the British and some English speaking Sinhalas, and G.G. Ponnambalam was not satisfied being a minister. His infa-

mous fifty-fifty demand was nothing but an extension of the racist demands of the Ponnambalams, and if they had succeeded G. G. Ponnambalam and not D. S. Senanayake would have been the chairman of the board of ministers. It is this "alienation" that led Chelvanayakam to demand a separate state in 1949 so that he could become the leader of the northern and the eastern provinces at the expense of the Sinhala people.

If the Tamils and the other ethnic communities are prepared to believe that the Sinhala Buddhist culture is the significant culture, of course without losing their identity; that the problem goes back to the pre fifty six era; that from the first quarter of the nineteenth century to 1931 the British connived with the Tamil leaders to make the latter the leaders of the country ignoring the Sinhalas, especially the Sinhala Buddhists and thirdly that the Sinhala nation that was built during the time of the king Pandukabhaya could be expanded to include the ethnic communities, then the problem could be solved. I am afraid that the majority of Sinhalas would not agree to so-called devolution of power as a solution to the "ethnic problem". The "ethnic problem" according to the Tamil racists commenced only after 1956. The devolution is proposed as a solution to this "problem". However, the problem is something else that has existed since the nineteenth century. The so-called solution is nothing but an intermediate of a separate state. If a separate state was demanded in 1949 and if devolution is proposed in lieu of a separate state then surely it cannot be a solution to the so-called discriminations against the Tamils that are supposed to have taken place after 1956. In fact, what is proposed as a solution is the problem itself!

As I have said both in English and in Sinhala if the Tamils agree to the above three conditions, then the Sinhala people would have no inhibition of electing a Tamil as the President of the country in the future. However, they are not prepared to elect a Tamil who thinks that there are two nations in the country and who in the name of a multiculturalism that is not practised anywhere else in the world thinks that the Sinhala Buddhist culture is just another culture of the country. Contrary to what the western Pundits and their local *abiththayas* say the Sinhala nationalism is not an exclusive nationalism like German or Judaic nationalisms, and the Sinhalas are prepared to include the ethnic groups in the nation they had built more than two thousand years ago provided of course that the ethnic groups recognise that at present only the Sinhalas constitute a nation and that the Sinhala Buddhist culture is the significant culture of the country. I know that there are people who can grasp the world only through the theories that were created in the Greek Judaic Christian Chinthanaya during the last five hundred years or so and who would argue that the nations came into existence only after the advent of capitalism and hence there could not have been a Sinhala nation two thousand years ago. This is nothing but meek surrender to the cultural imperialism and knowledge hegemony of the west and we would argue that the westerners know only of nation states and that they identify nations through nation states while we are not bound to do so. In any event, the Sinhalas at the time of Pandukabhaya had a state and were conscious (*jathi vinnanaya*) of them being constituted into a nation. It has to be emphasised that whether in India (Bharat) or Sri Lanka the Tamils never had a state for themselves nor they thought of even as an ethnic group before the westerners came to this part of the world. The kingdoms in Bharat were identified by the *Vansa* of the kings and not even by the languages spoken by the people, not to speak of non existing ethnic communities.

There are few points on which Mr. Sivakumaran apparently does not agree with me. I will respond to them next week.

Book on the plight of Sri Lankan Muslims

***Nobody's People – The Forgotten Plight of Sri Lanka's Muslims*, A South Asia News Agency publication, 505 PP, Available in most bookshops**

The defeat of the Tamil Tigers has finally provided a rare historic opportunity to set our conflict-battered country on the path to progress. The bitterness and suspicions between the communities remain deep. However, the need to correct past wrongs backed by remedial and reconciliation measures are indispensable to bring communal harmony on the principles of pluralism, equality, mutual understanding and accommodation if we are to move ahead and ensure a better future for all.

Almost three decades of bloodshed and destruction have brought us full circle to the gross realization that the destinies of all communities share common goals and are inextricably interwoven. The earnest desire of every community, Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim and others, is to live together in harmony. Thus a permanent peace, though still a distant dream, remains the cherished goal of all.

In this context, the book *"Nobody's People – The Forgotten Plight of Sri Lanka's Muslims"* by well known jour-

nalist and author Latheef Farook is a timely publication as it highlights the plethora of problems, sufferings and grievances of Sri Lankan Muslims and their pathetic predicament owing to discriminatory policies, Tamil militancy and the failure of the community itself to resolve its burning issues.

As rightly pointed out by the former Chief Justice Sarath N. Silva "Muslims have been a peaceful ethnic group interacting with other religious and ethnic group7s, cordially interlinking those cultures with their own culture. They never organized themselves for armed insurrection or destruction".

Contrary to the common belief that Muslims are a wealthy community, the reality is that around 70 percent of the community lives below the poverty line. More than 130,000 northern Muslims, forcibly and mercilessly driven out from their homes and lands on pain of death by the LTTE, languish in refugee camps in appalling conditions for almost 19 years. Around one percent of the community perished in the tsunami and, adding insult to injury, Muslim survivors were discriminated even in the disbursement of aid that flowed from donor countries.

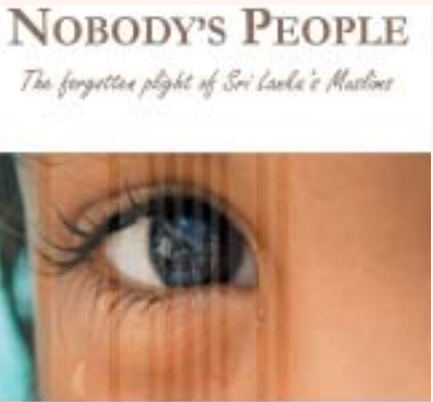
Muslims were discarded by the now defunct 2002 February Ceasefire Agreement between the government and the LTTE and taken for a ride in the P-TOMS agreement that died a natural



The author

death. It is a tragedy that the entire population of Mutur and Thoppor who were 95 percent literate and self-employed were reduced to paupers and made refugees when the LTTE and the Government fought their battle there.

In the East, they face numerous obstacles in trading, farming, paddy cultivation, fishing and livestock breeding activities jeopardizing their very means of livelihood while, in the rest of the country, poverty, unemployment, educational and



LATHEEF FAROOK

several other problems have raised their ugly heads in this gloomy scenario.

Despite frustration and privation, Muslims always sought peaceful solutions to their grievances for co-existence with

for territorial integrity and unity only to face death, devastation, loss of properties, deprivation of livelihood and displacement with no appreciation from the authorities.

In spite of their miserable plight, it is a travesty of justice that peacemakers, columnists, commentators and others, both here and overseas, call for solutions to the grievances of the Tamils and conveniently ignore the plight of Muslims as if they are non-existent. In the midst of this calamitous situation, there is a growing feeling among the community that Muslim parliamentarians have abandoned them for power and benefits and do not represent their desires and aspirations any more.

Under the circumstances, the book also suggests Muslims should shed disastrous communal politics and join hands with reasonable and moderate mainstream political forces to face challenges under the present unfolding political scenario in the aftermath of the LTTE's crushing defeat.

Thus, this book seeks redress for the numerous grievances of this downtrodden community, particularly in any initiative to solve the ethnic conflict in the larger interests of the country. It is only by considering each group as stakeholders in any future settlement that we could ensure lasting peace to the country so that all its citizens could live with dignity.

BOOK REVIEW

the other communities, notwithstanding diabolical efforts to sideline them. Nor were the Muslims party to the ethnic crisis. They vehemently opposed calls for the division of the country and firmly stood