

Question per week answered

by Justice C.V.Wigneswaran, M.P

Gurur Brahma.....

Question – Why are Tamils trying to remember the Terrorists and Separatists? Will they not precipitate a blood bath in the near future?

Response– I am glad you asked this Question. Every Sinhalese must know our Response to your Question.

The Tamils are not remembering the Terrorists. They are remembering their dear ones who lost their lives in the war. None of them were Terrorists. They were all our sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, cousins and so on.

Firstly who is a Terrorist? Would you call Keppetipola Dissawe a Terrorist? He was a Sinhala Chief- A Dissawe! He fought against the British. But he is today called a Hero and statues have been erected in his memory. Yet the British called him a criminal, a rebel and made him a wanted man. Therefore firstly you must remember anyone who fights for their rights, individual or collective, cannot simply be called a Terrorist and brushed away. A criminal to the British is today a Hero to the Sri Lankans. Keppetipola Dissawe fought for his people to drive away the British. Our youngsters fought for their people to drive away the Sinhala Military. Our Military even today is almost 99 percent Sinhalese. Therefore they could be called Sinhala Military and not Sri Lankan Military. When the commands were in English in the Forces there were lots of Minorities in the Military - Tamils,

Muslims, Burghers, Malays and so on. I had my own cousins in the Army and the Navy. I had been to Diyatalawa as a Senior Cadet.

It is the Sinhala Military and its supporters who call our dead as Terrorists and Separatists.

A man kills a person. Similarly another man kills a third person. One is brought before Courts under the normal criminal law. Another is brought under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in Sri Lanka. Who decides this? The Sinhala State of course! When the State wants, it would call a person Terrorist or a simple criminal according to its whims and fancies. The fact is both killed someone. One is treated differently from the other because the State intrudes and calls one a Terrorist and the other a simple criminal.

Actually Terrorism was introduced to Ceylon by the Governments of that time. They got their *goondas* to terrorize the Tamils in 1958, 1961, 1977, 1983 and so on. Innocent men were stabbed to death, women were raped and killed, children were cut, chopped and killed, many innocents were put into cars and set fire to. Houses of Tamils were set fire to, simply because they were Tamils. For no other reason! All this was done while the government of the time got its Police and Military to look the other side! It was State terrorism at work!

What had the Tamils done to be treated like this from the time of Independence? Except that they were studious, hard working, conscientious and the British recognized their talents when they were ruling us. The so called Sinhalese leaders of that time were bent on depriving the Tamils of their human rights on account of the recognition the British gave the Tamils for what they were during their reign.

Naturally our youth were compelled to take up arms for the self-defense of our people. State Terrorism begot victim violence. You cannot conduct continuous pogroms against a community and expect them to accept all humiliation and violence and go about their day to day chores as if nothing has happened.

Chief Justice Neville Samarakoon told me and the late Justice Edussuriya that he was in Dubai when the 1983 pogrom was arranged by the government members and he saw on the TV the Police just standing on the road with their guns in hand when Tamil people were being assaulted and killed and thrown alive into burning fires.

The Sinhala youth of today should understand all this. When it suits the powers that be, they name anyone Terrorist and anything he or she does even legitimately as Terrorist activities.

Madam Chandrika has asked recently “Is remembering one’s dead a heinous crime?”

We are remembering our dead relatives. They are no more. They cannot involve themselves in any violent activities nor carry placards asking that the Country be separated. Remembering them or not, the Government is not going to stop the Tamils from complaining and campaigning against the atrocities of the successive Governments and their Military Forces.

So we are not remembering Terrorists nor Separatists. We are remembering those who lost their lives in the war.

Of course the entire war was the outcome of Sinhala Chauvinism in the first instance. If Sinhala language had not been spoken in a determinable land area in the Island of Sri Lanka for over 2500 years by a determinable group of people

and if they had during that period spoken Tamil mainly, it was expected of the Government in power to grant either parity of status to Sinhala and Tamil throughout the Island or make Tamil the Regional Language of the North and East while Sinhala was made State Language. That was not done initially. If that was done initially the feelings between the communities would not have reached such a nadir.

Dr.N.M.Perera on 19th October 1955 said in Parliament thus-

“If democracy is to be treated as an arithmetical concept that whatever the majority decides must be accepted, that if the majority decides that the majority religion must prevail it must be accepted merely because they have got superiority in members, that is not democracy. Where you have different religions, the sovereignty of the majority is automatically checked by those inalienable rights that the minorities have, which cannot be overridden by the mere whim and fancy of a majority. The test of a democratic decision is the morality of the law. It is not merely a counting of heads but whether in point of fact the minorities are given full consideration for their points of view.

Democracy means an adjustment of different points of view, it means giving full weight to the rights of minority communities. That is what democracy means, it is not merely a counting of heads”.

So the anti-democratic step was taken by the Sinhala majority governments first. When the Tamils reacted they were called Terrorists and Separatists. It is a convenient nomenclature thrust upon Tamils.

Secondly about precipitating a blood bath in the future, my view is that our Sri Lankan people have no such intention. But the government's actions seem to be

aimed at getting our people back into violence. That way their shortcomings can be covered.

Conflict resolution theories state that denying human rights and unleashing vicious repression can lead to violence. When you press a rubber ball under the water at some time or the other it would jerk up to the surface. You cannot continue to keep a community of people, and for that the Tamils who are the inheritors of a five thousand or over years' civilization and heritage, forever under shackles. Therefore it is in the hands of the government to provide an acceptable solution to the ethnic problem and prevent the superpowers from creating an environment of violence using our problem to their advantage.

Chief Justice Neville Samarakoon told me Sri Lanka had become a dirty word the world over. That was in 1983. 1983 type of pogrom against the Tamils have not thereafter taken place except the butchering of innocents under the pretext of war. Of course there are hardly any Tamils outside the extended Metropolis of Colombo now unlike in 1983.

As for the North and East the blood bath has to take place by the Military hereafter and not the *goondas*. Every move of the Military in our areas are watched through satellites. Such talk is bravado! Any attempt to precipitate a blood bath in the North or East will drive the World community to make Balkanisation a reality in Sri Lanka. Thanks.

**Justice C.V.Wigneswaran,
Member of Parliament,
Jaffna – 25/11/2020**