

QUESTION FOR THE MONTH

01/04/2024

Question – Hon' Vajira Abeywardene has advised the Tamils not to put forward a Tamil candidate for Presidency and divide their votes. What have you to say?

Response- My friend Hon' Vajira Abeywardene is the Chairman of the UNP. What else can he say to make the incumbent President win?

But if he looks at the problem we face from the standpoint of the Tamils, he will not say so. We Tamils have continuously voted for Majority community candidates so far. All promised to solve our political problems. After Election, we were not even known to them. They simply ignored us. We remain where we were in 1956 even now. Except for peripheral benefits given on a friendly basis, the political problems of the North Eastern Tamils have not been solved so far.

We have an ethnocracy in Sri Lanka today- a Government of the Sinhalese, for the Sinhalese and by the Sinhalese. The fact that the Tamils have occupied this island from over 3000 years ago and more specifically the North and East continuously for over 3000 years has not been accepted by the Sinhalese. If they accept this historical truth they cannot dilly-dally solving the political problem of the Tamils which is the granting of internal self- determination for the Tamils in their homeland.

The Sinhalese language came into existence only in the 6th and 7th centuries AD. Their first Grammar came out in the 13th Century only. Their first inscription is dated 7th century AD. The history of the Sinhalese speaking people is only around 1500 years maximum. But Buddhism has been in this Country for over 2500 years. For nearly a thousand years the Tamil Buddhists (Demala Baudhayo) sustained the Religion.

The Tamils had a Tamil Kingdom at the time the Westerners came here. The British unified the Country for administrative purposes. But when leaving they should have granted a federal constitution. In fact SWRD Bandaranaike on return from Oxford in 1926 advocated a federal constitution for the Country. The Kandyan Sinhalese before the Donoughmore Commissioners asked for a federal constitution. Why? Because the Kandyans felt that they needed to have their legal right of self-determination to govern themselves as otherwise they would be side lined by the majority Low Country Sinhalese.

Lord Soulbury later regretted giving a Unitary constitution to the Country due to the trickery perpetrated on him and his other Commissioners by D.S.Senanayake and Oliver Goonetilleke.

The news of what happens in the North and East are purposely kept away from the Sinhalese masses even today by the majority community politicians and journalists. Neither the English nor Sinhala newspapers carry any news about the plight of the Tamils.

The North and East are under the Military boot even after circa 15 years since the end of the War. With Military help Dagobas and Buddhist temples and Buddha statues are constructed or erected in areas where no Buddhists live, by mainly Buddhist Priests. The Archaeology Department officials help them from behind.

Now to come to the advice by Hon' Vajira Abeywardene.

It is true the Tamil candidate if he or she comes forward on behalf of the Tamil speaking people of the North and East will not win the Election to the post of Presidency. But who is the Tamil who wants to become the President of a bankrupt Island?

The main argument is that the common Tamil candidate will divide the votes of the Tamils. If the Tamils field a proper candidate they would all vote for the Tamil candidate rather than any from the majority community. That is for sure. The Tamils have been cheated

for too long now. This is a good opportunity to inform the world as to how the Sinhalese politicians cheated the Tamils so far.

If Hon' Vajira Abeywardene does not like the idea of a common Tamil Candidate, would he like our Tamils going to vote in large numbers and spoiling their votes with a big cross across the ballot papers? That way the split that he speaks of will be minimised since less *hora* votes in favour of the Sinhala candidates would be cast.

The need to field a Common Tamil candidate was felt due to the lethargy and indifference shown by the Sinhalese candidates towards the plight of the Tamils, once they were elected.

Also we saw an opportunity to speak directly to the Sinhala Voter base about our problems in the Sinhalese language as well. Presently the ordinary Sinhalese are of opinion that Tamils are illegal immigrants who came during the time of the Cholas in the 10th Century AD. That the Sinhalese are the original occupants of this Island. The Tamils are unreasonably asking for equal rights with the Sinhalese. They think that the Tamils are trying to divide this Sinhala Buddhist Country. They think the Sinhalese are Aryans and the Tamils are Dravidians.

A common Tamil Candidate could refute all these erroneous beliefs among the Sinhala masses and explain the truth to the Sinhalese through Rupawahini programs and other means. Unless the Tamils are understood by the Sinhalese, especially by the Sinhala Youth, the older generation of politicians who brought about the present impasse would never consent to solve the problems of the Tamils.

If only the honest, studious, conscientious Tamil Public Servants were allowed to continue in Government service we would never have reached this stage of bankruptcy. They would not have allowed the Politicians to rob the State. Let us not forget that Former President Ranasinghe Premadasa had three Tamils (the Lingams) to assist him since he had realised the worth of the Tamil officers.

Therefore a common candidate from among the Tamils has become essential to orchestrate the problems of the Tamils from a platform of power. It is an opportunity to put forward our claim for transitional justice. It is an opportunity to place our reasonable request for a Referendum in the North and East to find out what they want politically. It is an opportunity to educate the Sinhala masses of the true history of the people of this Island. It is an opportunity to expose the ethnocratic nature of our successive governments to the world at large.

What would the Tamils gain by voting for the majority community politicians? Nothing for the Tamil community.

In fact, Tamil votes would not be divided if a common candidate is posted. Even those who vote for majority politicians normally would this time join together with the others to support the Tamil Candidate.

Justice C.V.Wigneswaran M.P.