



TAMIL WRITERS GUILD

The Spider and the Fly – a cautionary tale

President Mahinda Rajapakse has to be judged by his actions and not his words

It is clear from the recent course of events in the heartlands of northeast Sri Lanka that President Rajapakse has ordered his security forces to terrorise the Tamil population and to cause maximum damage to their properties, in order to repress their demands for self-determination and political autonomy. There is presently a genocidal blood bath unleashed on the Tamils of Trincomalee by the Sri Lankan Army and the Sinhala thugs. The prospect of a federal solution thrashed out in the Oslo agreement between the Sinhala government and the LTTE only a couple of years ago, is now lying disembowelled by Rajapakse and his rabid anti-Tamil chauvinistic supporters. Even the agreement reached between the Sinhala government of Rajapakse and the LTTE only a month ago in Geneva to bolster the main peace agreement has been shot to pieces by the Sri Lankan government continuing to order its armed forces and their paramilitary supporters in the north and east to carry out wanton killings of Tamil civilians in cynical disregard of their own agreement.

In any other walk of life, given the long history of abrogation or non performance of signed contracts by the Sinhala government, the defaulting party would have been legally required to perform or the aggrieved party would have had its rights restored. But in this case, there is no one prepared to enforce the Sinhala government, not even the international community, to deliver on its agreement. The co-chairs to the peace agreement are so fixated on saving their relationships with the Sri Lankan government at any cost, that they are unable or unwilling to persuade or force the hands of the government to honour the terms of the agreements that the co-chairs themselves set out to uphold.

It is a tragedy indeed that the vested interests of governments that underwrite a peace agreement, overtake and supersede the impartiality and moral courage required of them as arbiters of the terms of peace agreements entered into in conflict situations. The attitude of these governments is utterly incomprehensible in that they are prepared to bully and adopt a wholly one-sided approach to ban the LTTE, the sole representatives of the Tamils, in their own countries while at the same time strutting the stage as neutral co-chairs of the peace talks involving the Sinhala government and the very same LTTE. In this farce, the Tamils are served up as mere pawns in the hands of the Sinhala government to be ultimately gobbled up.

I am reminded of the poem, the Spider and the Fly by Mary Howitt.
I have chosen the following three verses to illustrate my point that Mahinda Rajapakse is the spider that is weaving an intricate web into which he hopes that Tamils will walk in.

Will you walk into my parlour? Said the spider to the fly,
'Tis the prettiest little parlour that ever you did spy;
The way into my parlour is up a winding stair,
And I have a many curious things to show when you are there.
Oh no, no said the little fly, to ask me is in vain,
For who goes up your winding stair can ne'er come down again.

Alas, alas! How very soon this silly little fly,
Hearing his wily, flattering words, came slowly flitting by;
With the buzzing wings she hung aloft, then near and nearer drew,
Thinking only of her brilliant eyes, and green and purple hue;
Thinking only of the crested, poor foolish thing! At last
Up jumped the cunning spider, and fiercely held her fast.
He dragged her up his winding stair, into his dismal den,
Within his little parlour; but she ne'er came out again!



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And now dear little children, who may this story read,
To idle, silly flattering words, I pray you ne'er give heed:
Unto an evil counsellor, close heart and ear and eye,
And take a lesson from this tale, of the spider and the fly.

It is not the first time that the Sinhala government and the Sinhala majority have reneged on political and constitutional arrangements to protect minority rights and to award the Tamils their democratic rights guaranteed under the UN Charter, as a historic and distinct nation living in their homelands. It must be clear to Norway, the intrepid internationally renowned peacemaker, that even after three years of its indefatigable mediation in the conflict, that a Sri Lankan government of any persuasion is both unable and unwilling to deliver on its signed promises because of the inherent ethno-religious bigotry of the mass of its Sinhalese supporters.

It is by analysing the facts and accepting hard reality that any successful solution can be reached, in a political quagmire that has been allowed to fester for over 55 years. It is no use pretending that the historically entrenched Sinhala Buddhist mindset, which claims hegemony over the whole country and is brainwashed to believe that the Tamils are intruders in their own country, will ever be prepared to concede the democratic rights of the Tamils of Sri Lanka. The Sinhala politicians are all flag bearers and drumbeaters of the Sinhala claim and, after the nearly three score years of parleying with the different Sinhala governments and their leaders, Tamils have come to accept that there is neither the intent nor the mandate within the Sinhala political parties to arrive at an amicable negotiated political settlement within the framework of a single state of Sri Lanka.

It is with such objective thinking that we have arrived at the only viable solution remaining to be explored by both parties. If the two nations of the Sinhalese and Tamil people are to live side by side in amity, then given the long history of the claim of the Sinhala Buddhist masses and their political leaders and the competing rights of the Tamil people, it has to be a two- state solution along the basis of the traditional and well-established homelands. In a world where in recent times East Timor, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have been given separate statehood to stop further serious acrimony and where they now exist in concord, the two proposed states of Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam will exist in complete friendship and total respect for each other and for their welfare and traditions. The current and continuing loss of lives and property in an unwinnable war or shadow war will be staunch, and the resources and talent of the two nations will be conserved and directed towards the development and improvement of the lives of the people of both the States.

After all these years of frustrated effort as a result of immutable forces within the Sinhala polity, the co-chairs of the Sri Lanka and LTTE peace talks will have to make an objective assessment of the political situation in the country as well as the fundamental and historic factors that continue to bedevil the current and crumbling peace agreement. It is axiomatic that the Sri Lankan government will never allow even the agreed federalism to the Tamils, because they will continue to be intimidated by the reactionary Sinhala Buddhist forces prevailing in the country. Further talks with the Sinhala government will only entrap the Tamils, just like how the spider dragged the fly up his winding stair.

The co-chairs have the influence and power to stop an inevitable war for separation, which will bring about countless deaths and immeasurable destruction to both nations. The UN and world powers have proposed a two state solution for Israel and Palestine and the situation in Sri Lanka calls for precisely the same solution.

Editor
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