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## **“Dictatorial Democracy” in Sri Lanka**

*Democratic institutions form a system of quarantine for tyrannical desires  
-- Friedrich Nietzsche, German Philosopher 1844-1900*

Respect for human rights is an indispensable element of a vibrant democracy. People are not free when there is no freedom of thought, speech, and movement.

The French philosopher Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet 1694-1778), once described the foundation of all democracy : “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it”, without this fundamental foundation, a country cannot be considered democratic.

Countries with vibrant and transparent democracies function on the basis of certain principles. Namely, government based upon consent of the governed; minority accepted majority rule; respect for human rights; free and fair elections; equality before the law; due process of law; constitutional limits on government; social, economic, and political pluralism; values of tolerance; and cooperation, compromise and sovereignty of the people.

Countries which practice these principles - mainly Western countries - can be under the illusion that when others talk about prevailing democracy in their countries, those governments too, practice democracy as outlined above. However, in some cases, this is just a myth of no practical value.

### **Principles underlying democracy in Sri Lanka**

If we take Sri Lanka as an example, the principles of democracy there, are - Government based upon consent of the majority which rules in coalition with extreme political parties for further suppression of the political rights of Tamils; no respect for human rights – (international human rights standards are ignored and government officials including officials of the Attorney General department internationally justify the violations of the security forces, paramilitary and state terrorism); lack of free and fair elections – (vote rigging in elections, and candidates with criminal records - responsible for mass murders, rape and abductions, contest the elections and enjoying impunity.) Furthermore, there is no equality before the law, as the judiciary is biased. Until today, not a single culprit responsible for political murders of Tamils has been convicted; constitutional limits are in the hand of the Executive President and periodic amendments to the constitution are only in favour of Sinhala rule and Buddhism. Social, economic and political pluralism are only for the Sinhalese; for the Tamils, they are not worth the paper they are written on, and merely serve the government’s international propaganda purposes. Values of tolerance have no place – the government encourages criminal activities and today Sri Lanka ranks as the country with the highest number of disappearances in the world. Cooperation and compromise do not exist even in their vocabulary. Many pacts have been arbitrarily broken by the government, which has refused and rejected political negotiations with the Tamils. Sovereignty of the people is wrongly interpreted as sovereignty of the state. Tamil elected representatives are ignored and the government deals only with unelected representatives and the proxies of the paramilitary. This is why it is a “Dictatorial Democracy”, rather than a proper democracy, in Sri Lanka.

### **‘Legalising’ the bullets through forced ballots**

Since 1947, Sri Lanka has had thirteen general elections and five presidential elections. What the Western countries have failed to realise is that until very recently, not a single candidate from the peasant/working class had won Parliamentary or Presidential elections in Sri Lanka. In other words, the majority of voters were casting their votes for the financial benefits from the rich candidates, rather than for the policy of a party. In the North East, since the TULF (Tamil United Liberation Front, present Tamil National Alliance-TNA) was established in 1976, people were voting for the party manifesto and on that basis many TULF/TNA peasant/working class candidates were elected to the Parliament from the North East. Of course this has changed very recently in the South, since the extreme political party, the JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna) became a coalition partner of the major political party and the JVP candidates from the peasant/working class won the elections through the support of their coalition partners. Unlike in the West, the votes are actually bought by the rich candidates.

Since Mahinda Rajapaksa became President, the situation has been dire in the East. The paramilitary cadres who are responsible for many killings including members of civil society, elected representatives and children, are contesting elections with impunity. The voters are voting out of fear of the criminals rather than constructively for a policy.

These manipulated and corrupt elections are portrayed to the international community as the practice of democracy by the "International Propagandists of the Sri Lankan government (IPSG)". Even though some countries know the truth about Sri Lanka's 'dictatorial democracy', they prefer to remain silent. In fact, these elections are "legalising" the bullets through forced ballots!

### **The way democracy works in Sri Lanka**

Now let us look at how the 'free and fair elections and democracy' work in Sri Lanka.

- (1) As soon as independence was given and majority rule was introduced in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), the very first thing that the Sinhalese rulers did was to use the same parliamentary democracy and majority rule to disenfranchise more than a million plantation Tamils in the island and deprive them of citizenship.
- (2) Then, using the same democracy, the Sri Lankan rulers successfully implemented the 'Sinhala Only Act' (one language act); land reform in favour of Sinhala settlers and standardisation in Education making it necessary for Tamil students to score more marks than Sinhalese students to enter the Universities. The minimum constitutional protection that the Tamils were granted in the post independence constitution was removed and many other manipulations were carried out against the Tamils in the name of 'democracy'.
- (3) At the same time, the people from the North East had voted overwhelming in the July 1977 General elections to establish and exercise their "Right to Self-determination" in the North East. This mandate was not only ignored by the government - the 6<sup>th</sup> amendment to the constitution was enacted, which totally rejected the right to self-determination of the Tamil people, (8<sup>th</sup> August 1983). This amendment outlawed the mandate voted by the Tamils.
- (4) Then again another democratic mandate voted by the people from the North East in the last General election in April 2004 was also deliberately ignored by the government. In this election, the political party "Tamil National Alliance (TNA)" won overwhelmingly in 22 electorates in the North East. The people in the North East voted for the TNA election manifesto which stated, "Accepting LTTE's leadership as the national leadership of the Tamil Eelam Tamils and the Liberation Tigers as the sole and authentic representatives of the Tamil people, let us devote our full cooperation for the ideals of the Liberation Tigers' struggle with honesty and steadfastness".

Therefore, elections in Sri Lanka are used as a tool by Sri Lankan rulers at local, regional and provincial levels for their own convenience and for international propaganda.

Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe has been in power for the last 28 years using elections; Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines, Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan and many other leaders also held elections. However it took a very long time for the international community as a whole to realise the hypocrisy of those elections.

The international community has a responsibility to ask and analyse – Why are there elections in Sri Lanka? How are those elections conducted? Who are the candidates contesting in these elections? Are they paramilitary candidates with a record of crimes against humanity?

### **60 years of discussion on constitutional amendments**

For the last sixty years, different governments in power in Sri Lanka have discussed constitutional amendments to give political rights to the Tamils. During the same period, there were two new constitutions (1972 & 1978) successfully enacted by different governments to protect the interests of Sinhala rule and Buddhism. When these two new constitutions were enacted, the government deliberately ignored any constitutional amendments in protection of the Tamils' rights. It is a pity that these facts are not seriously considered by the international community which still believes in and is duped by government 'proposals'!

In an attempt to obscure all these pre-planned manipulations by various governments, the present "International Propagandists of the Sri Lankan Government (IPSG)" are dividing the island's history into two. The first period is from 1948 to 1983 that is to say 'when Sinhala Buddhists made a mistake by not granting the fundamental rights of the Tamils'. The second period is from 1983 until the present day, 'during which the LTTE has been a stumbling block for the Sinhala Buddhists to grant any political consolation to the Tamils'.

In fact, government propagandists are diplomatically admitting that from 1948 to 1983 mistakes were made because it was the period when the Tamils demanded their political rights, only through non-violent methods. During this period there were two pacts arbitrarily broken by the government and unarmed Tamils were massacred, burned to death, raped and their properties were looted and destroyed in all parts of the island by the Sri Lankan security forces and Sinhala thugs.

### **International propagandists and their gimmicks**

President Mahinda Rajapaksa has chosen some International propagandists from the Attorney General's Department, the Ministries of Justice, Defence, Foreign Affairs, Human Rights and from the Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP).

After the declaration of independence by Kosovo, Sri Lanka and its propagandists have been in a panic because many states including three permanent members of the Security Council have recognised Kosovan independence. Therefore these propagandists have embarked on a desperate move to spread misinformation to the international community about the demand for the recognition of the right to self-determination of Tamils.

**A few examples are given below :**

- (1) *"There are eighty million Tamils in the world who do not have a country of their own. Sri Lanka would be the only country where they can install such a State. Quite logically, the Sinhalese majority will not let the **small island of Sri Lanka** - the only country in which Sinhalese is still spoken - to become a dismembered and separated State".*

This is a ridiculous statement which has not taken the history of the island into consideration. Of course, the majority of the diplomats in the United Nations are not interested in more than two thousand years of history of Sri Lanka or any country. They are only worried about current affairs.

Sri Lanka may be a small island, but it is a shame to note that, presently the UN Working group on disappearances has recorded that Sri Lanka ranks as the country with the highest number of disappearances in the world.

On the other hand, the Tamil homeland (Tamil Eelam), the North East of the island is much bigger compared to many UN member states – Bahrain, Bhutan, Botswana, Iceland, Kuwait, Luxemburg, Maldives, Oman, Singapore, United Arab Emirates and many others.

- (2) *"The Tigers do not accept anything short of a separate independent State. This is why there is a war going on".*

In January 1989, the LTTE formed a political party and named it the, "People's Front of the Liberation Tigers (PFLT)". On 12 August 1989, the PFLT representative attended the All Party Conference in Colombo as an "Observer". Twenty-six political parties in Sri Lanka participated in the conference. The same year, PFLT was registered with the Election officials and the LTTE prepared itself to participate in the Elections to demonstrate the peoples' support.

However, the Sri Lankan government prevented the International Community from gaining awareness of the support that the LTTE has among the Tamils and deliberately started **Eelam war-II**.

It is a shame for academics and diplomats to show such ignorance and to tell so many lies in international forums about the recent history of the island. Many highly significant factors such as; the Ceasefire Agreement, recent political negotiations, the LTTE proposal known as 'Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA)' and LTTE being a signatory to the 'Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS)', etc... have all been conveniently swept under the carpet.

- (3) *"Rajiv Gandhi, former Indian Prime Minister was assassinated by LTTE in Tamil Nadu, in South India".*

International Propagandists presume that by talking about Rajiv Gandhi, they can win the support of the Indian government. This is a myth and Indians are not ignorant diplomats.

The last official visit by Rajiv Gandhi to Sri Lanka, to sign the Indo-Lanka accord in 1987, was the most shameful incident for a State and a State Leader in the world. Is there any country in the world which tries to assassinate a visiting State leader, especially while the guard of honour was being given by a host country? On 30 July 1987, when the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was inspecting the guard of honour given by the Sri Lankan Navy in Colombo, a Navy sailor struck Rajiv Gandhi forcefully with the butt of his unloaded gun attempting to assassinate him. The propagandists appear to have forgotten this incident.

It was well known to the world that then Prime Minister Premadasa and the JVP were behind this attempted assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and that the Naval officer who attacked Rajiv Gandhi became a political hero in Sri Lanka. This sailor was released under a general amnesty granted after Premadasa became President.

Citizens of India, the Indian government and countries with which India has friendly relations will not easily forget this attempted murder of their Prime Minister. Also they will not forget the anti-Indian activities and boycott of Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Colombo by the then opposition which is presently in power in Sri Lanka.

In fact, the present government in power, especially the Sri Lanka Freedom Party to which President Mahinda Rajapaksa belongs, was totally against the Indo-Lanka accord signed in 1987. We cannot understand the murmured references to this accord, that these so called academics make, when addressing the international community.

- (4) *"The Tigers kill our leaders, our elected representatives, our children. They terrorise our towns and threaten our territorial integrity".*

A killing is a killing. All killings should be condemned and the culprits brought to justice. Being a government delegation and talking only about the killing of Sinhala political leaders, elected representatives and their children, clearly indicates to the International Community that they are making a distinction between two different peoples, and making reference to another region to which the government has no access.

It is obvious that the propagandists are not concerned about the killing of Tamil political leaders, parliamentarians, children and civilians in the North East. Their omissions cannot be simply a slip of the tongue!

### **Sri Lanka plays desperate and opportunist politics**

In another desperate move by the propagandists, they tell lies, present gimmicks and also stage dramas as if they were Oscar winners. They have the means for travel and to entertain diplomats, they have control of media to disseminate propaganda, they can meet high profile people whenever they want, they can hold meetings as and when they want – so there are people who will listen to their lies and be taken in by their gimmicks.

A few examples of their lies and gimmicks are given below.

- (1) To win the support of the 'anti-imperialist' states like China, Cuba, Russia and others, Sri Lanka pretends to be "anti-imperialist" but in reality it is not.

Previously, the same propagandists used to write articles saying that Tamil and Sinhalese should go beyond their differences and fight against American imperialism. Then at another stage, they turned round and wrote many articles saying that **SRI LANKA SHOULD SEEK COLLABORATION WITH THE US AND CRUSH THE MILITARY POWER OF THE TAMILS.**

These are opportunistic, confused and indirectly even more racist than the Sinhala Chauvinists. These people are daily contributors to a racist English newspaper in Colombo.

We do not think that anti-imperialist states will have forgotten quickly the recent gimmicks of Sri Lanka. In 2006, in an election for membership in the UN Security Council, President Mahinda Rajapaksa promised personally to the Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez that Sri Lanka would vote for Venezuela. When the election came they ignored Venezuela and President Chavez was totally disappointed with the behaviour of Sri Lanka.

- (2) To win the support of the USA, they become pro-American, but then ignored requests from the Americans and then dealt with Iran, Cuba and others.
- (3) In a similar way to win the support of states belonging to the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), they become the saviour of Muslims in Sri Lanka. In reality the Muslims are suffering intensely at the hands of the paramilitaries supported by the government and its security forces in the East of Sri Lanka.

If the OIC countries want to know the real situation of the Muslims in Sri Lanka, they should send an OIC mission to Sri Lanka and allow them to travel on their own to the East and talk to the Muslims. Then the OIC countries will realise whether they should support Sri Lanka or not.

- (4) Another gimmick used by the propagandists is connected with Israel and Palestine. On one side they support Israel and on another side they talk about Palestinian independence and the sufferings of people.

How can these propagandists talk about Palestinian independence while they want the Tamil struggle for the right to self-determination to be suppressed? This shows the desperation of Sri Lanka.

Former President Jayewardene of Sri Lanka once said, *"We are prepared to align ourselves with the devil of terrorism"*.

### **Alitalia Boeing 747 hijacked - where is the hijacker?**

Sri Lanka is no way qualified to talk about terrorism or the fight against it because this was the 1<sup>st</sup> country in the world which gave a hero's welcome to the hijacker of an Alitalia Boeing 747 with 340 passengers on 30 June 1982. This plane was hijacked by one Sepala Ekanayake, a Sinhalese from the down South of Sri Lanka while the aeroplane was between New Delhi and Tokyo. The plane was forced to land in Bangkok airport. After 35 hours of drama there, Sri Lanka's Ambassador in Thailand personally came to the airport and assured Sepala that he could go to Sri Lanka without any fear.

Sri Lanka allowed him into the country, with 300,000 US dollars that the hijacker received as ransom from Alitalia. Sri Lanka took no action on this hijacker for several weeks, until international pressure was mounted. Also Sri Lanka turned down the request from the Italian government that the hijacker be handed over to them.

***Those who talk about terrorism in Sri Lanka should know what the International Community did to Libya when the Libyan authorities refused to return the suspects of the Lockerbie bombing of Pan American Flight-103 that took place on 21 December 1988.***

This hijacker of Alitalia Boeing 747 is a strong supporter of President Mahinda Rajapaksa's Sri Lanka Freedom Party and worked hard in Pollanaruwa, Anuradhapura and Matalan districts during the recent elections.

These are the political leaders and politicians, who are talking today about "terrorism", "fighting against terrorism" and "wiping out LTTE terrorism". It is a real joke.

### **Sri Lankan tax payers' money for luxurious and lavish holidays!**

Presently, Sri Lanka is wasting millions of rupees of tax payer's money, on the "International Propagandists of the Sri Lanka Government". This includes their frequent travel to New York, Geneva and many other cities in the world. These propagandists are happy to question NGOs about who is funding their trips to foreign countries, without realising the fact that they themselves are having luxurious and lavish holidays paid for by the hard earned money of the Sri Lankan tax payers. In fact, the money spent by the NGOs is certainly not the Sri Lankan tax payers' money.

There was a time when Sri Lanka was using the press releases of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other organisations for their international propaganda against the LTTE. But, nowadays, Sri Lanka is criticising these organisations and publicly having arguments in international forums.

When the European Union placed a resolution against Sri Lanka in the very first session of the Human Rights Council, just to prevent this resolution, Sri Lanka suggested that it would accept a group of International Eminent Persons to supervise their Commissions of Inquiry. As was expected, this ended up in problems with the same Eminent Persons.

Now we understand that another set of Eminent Persons is being sought, to become, "His Masters Voice". Civil society believes that no self-respecting eminent persons will agree to this.

Criticisms made of the government by members of civil society, journalists and parliamentarians in Sri Lanka are interpreted as 'terrorist activities' and they are charged under the draconian terrorist law.

The assassination of the courageous Chairperson of the North East Secretariat on Human Rights (NESOHR), Rev. Father M X Karunaratnam, by a Deep Penetration Unit (DPU) of the Sri Lanka Army on 20 April 2008, on the Mallaavi - Vavunikkulam Road in Vanni, shows the scandalous and utter contempt that President Mahinda Rajapaksa's government has for Human Rights.

## Sri Lankan problem needs right diagnoses

In the 7<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, on 5 March 2008, United Kingdom Minister for Africa, Asia and the UN - Lord Malloch Brown, said ***“In Sri Lanka, a country facing a substantial terrorist threat, unfortunately International concern has not made any impact. We condemn terrorism. But countering terrorism requires respect for human rights”.***

It is evident that the international community has taken action on the wrong party, who in fact, is not the problem. It is something like the medicine for a person suffering with high blood pressure, being given to another person who is not even ill. Obviously this action will do no good to either party – and may even do harm.

Therefore, at least now, the International community should realise the fact that the struggle for the right to self-determination of the Tamils is not terrorism, although it is falsely portrayed as such by the international propagandists of the Sri Lankan government.

We hope that at the earliest, the international community will treat the right patient with the right medicine. The patient may be a lunatic who refuses to accept anything, but it is not good to force someone to take medicine, who is not even ill.

Many feel that the recent action in the region of former Yugoslavia by the International community is the best action, because one can see similar symptoms in Sri Lanka.

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