

When the guns become silent

The longest wars of history did see their flags of white. Ours will not be different. The smell of cordite will drift away and the dust will settle. The ones who walk in crutches will bear witness to an untold tragedy. They could be the lucky ones, the rest lie unnamed, in mark-less graves buried in a hurry in shallow sand, lost in a war they didn't understand. Their mothers pray in kovils and temples, divided by lines that need to be erased.

My wife and I were in Dubai, a few months ago, to talk to people who are connected to AFLAC, a humanitarian organisation that we are associated with and the gist of the address was how to help the needy in Sri Lanka. After the meeting we were driven back to our hotel by Nagarajah, as Tamil as a Palmyra tree. He made a request for AFLAC to find someone who had a kidney deficiency. He would take care of him; that was the promise.

Back in Sri Lanka inquiries were made

and a kind doctor from Ragama found someone in absolute need of assistance. Jayasiri is 32 years old; has been on dialysis for four years and now needed a kidney transplant. His father left his job and collected the gratuity; and then pawned their home to meet the medical expenses that reached cloud high. It was only the beginning. The surgery needed a lot more money and the answers were in "no hope" land. They were God fearing Catholic people, the praying type and someone volunteered to gift a kidney. No pieces of silver, just the ultimate generosity, and a stranger in saffron robes became the matching donor. A Montessori teacher in Kandy coordinated the monetary matters and the stage was set.

None of these people had known each other before; the Tamil gentleman and the Catholic boy and the Buddhist priest were total strangers, the doctor and the Montessori teacher and my wife paddled the same canoe. That was the team. The house was redeemed; all medical needs supplied, logistics dealt with and the transplant took place a few days ago. It wasn't cheap, and

the promise made in Dubai was totally fulfilled. People gathered through kindness and care and the spirit of giving had reached a zenith. No rewards asked and no medals given, there was a human need and that was all that mattered.

Ours is a land of gentle people, generous and kind, that is what we have been. Don't tell me "NO", I have seen it a thousand times in a thousand places that spreads from Kankasanthurai to Devundara. Such is the essence of Sri Lanka; the proletariat who in the core value of life who know how to care. That is our hope for the redeemed future when the white flags flutter in peace. It is the common man who will make the difference and not the empty promises from political platforms or the vociferous bloating in boast on television screens in meaningless accusations and arguments. It is the ordinary Sri Lankan who 'dares to care' through ethnic and religious separations that will herald a new day of peace.

When the guns are silent - I pray people of this land will remember to forget.

At such times the footprints of the Palmyra man and the saffron robed sadhu should be a vision to us, how they carried the Catholic Jayasiri is a covenant of kindness. We need such lessons to make us aware how beautiful this land could be when delivered from the carnage that ruined.

The sorrows will remain and those who made supreme sacrifices will always be sacred in memory. The mothers who cried and the fathers who buried should find some solace. The need would be for the widowed wives to simmer their sadness with time and the orphaned children to wake to new and hopeful beginnings. Then we might walk as one nation to be counted as decent human beings.

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(names have been altered for privacy)

Capt.

Elmo Jayawardena

Shouldn't Media reporting be Balanced and un biased?

The function held on 15 February at the Box Hill Town Hall to celebrate the 61 st. Anniversary of the Independence of Sri Lanka was reported in the "Morning Show" program on Channel 31, on Sunday 22nd February, under "Melbourne Events".

I was dismayed, somewhat frustrated and justifiably angry at the snippet which

was shown to report the event.

It is true that no one expects a full coverage of an event of this nature, in a programme such as the Morning Show. It is also true that in reporting an event such as this, an adequate coverage of significant moments during the proceedings should be shown, without bias, of course within the time permitted.

The reported segment which according to my timing was in excess of four and a half minutes covered many speeches (in my opinion, some interesting and others irrelevant) and cultural segments, but was conspicuous by its absence of the President's Message, (or at least to its reference), which was read in three languages.

The whole purpose of the function was to commemorate the independence of the

country we love. To ignore the message of the Head of State of the country in my book, is sacrilegious and unforgivable. I sincerely hope the lapse was not politically motivated.

I am strongly of the opinion that the reporter (or if he was edited out) or whoever who was responsible, should be taken to task and the Morning Show redress the situation in a future programme, in an appropriate way.

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(Melway ref: 207 K12)

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