

*" The things that will destroy us are: politics without principle; pleasure without conscience; wealth without work; knowledge without character; business without morality; science without humanity; and worship without sacrifice"*  
- Mahatma Gandhi

the threat of evil will remain an inescapable fact of life.

One just has to accept that the villains in each case, are but the latest in an endless line of evil-doers, stretching back to savages, heathens, no-gooders and beyond. People will be doomed, it seems, to have the enemy always at their gates, intent on destroying "our" innocent land.

In the shadow of fear, it may feel good to hear a monarch, walking with a swagger

the highest ideals. Innocent young braves are regularly forced to go to war against savage enemies who would otherwise take away human liberties.

Any challenger to the status quo, in desperation, would attempt to ram home the inherent disconnect between the facts of evidence and the attractively woven fables. However, as we see even today, it is not sufficiently powerful because the storytellers find it easy to ignore the disconnect, seeming perfectly comfortable in a realm of pure fiction - which only

Unfortunately for many innocent people in those distant lands, this story also assumes that anyone who is not our ally is a threat and therefore an enemy. Large-scale genocide is also therefore a purifying process, to "rid" the world of undesirables. The great myths also say that "our" innocent citizens will be insecure until everyone is on "our" side.

These beliefs, acted out in policy, surely condemns to tragedy, the very people the

Once upon a time, a certain powerful

## THE WAY THINGS ARE:

### HOW MYTHS CREATE OUR REALITY FOR US

leader was approached by God, and was specifically instructed to "take out" a much diminished and insignificant "dictator". So, being the devout and God-fearing man he was, he did as he was told. No, this is not from some medieval legend. It actually happened just over eight years ago.

For much of history, many people survived through their poor lives on stories. They told stories to interpret their suffering or to distract themselves from their suffering, and to participate in magnificent events as told in A Thousand and One Arabian Nights, to give meaning to an existence that might otherwise seem meaningless. In most cultures, the really powerful stories - legends, myths or sacred narratives, were religious ones.

In the Al-Muththahida, a deeply religious country, it was difficult to perpetuate a religious myth shared by all. Therefore, its leaders nurtured a powerful, shared myth about its history, a mixture of fantasy, fact and wish-fulfilment. Millions of people took them absolutely seriously, and cheered them on. In battle, these leaders become the hero and the very embodiment of the meaning of A-M. Issues usually fall by the wayside, when ever the leader's heroic character takes centre-stage.

Of course, with time, the leaders cynically exploited this to become the rescuer and avenger, an isolate caught in a moral landscape between civilisation and wilderness... They usually portray themselves as being in touch with the common man, while retaining a primitive savagery, which place them beyond the rigid hierarchies of the land. He knows evil when he sees it, and when-ever he sees it, he destroys it...all by himself, and by any means necessary.

The frontier myth is about saving the innocent. They become increasingly adept at playing both the innocent patriot and saviour of the innocent, tapping into that ancient image that the empire they represent, is a place of freedom, innocence and the ideal. Any hint that their historic actions may have done anything to provoke anyone's hatred is therefore met with howls of outrage. The myth that the evil-doers hate "us" because they are so wholly evil and "we" are so wholly good, is perpetrated through the generations.

So, when in times of crises and uncertainty, the God-given duty to save the innocent from the perils of the evil is put forth, with the need to eradicate evil in the name of God. The God-fearing citizenry cheer on the heroes to even greater glory. In this scheme of things, it becomes easy to believe that the threat of evil just springs up on its own, like the spawn of the devil. The masses are also made to believe that



assure us that he will wipe out the demons. The desperation with which people cling to these often told tales increases with each hyped-up tragedy. It also betrays the increasingly deep-seated doubts that evil-doers cannot be vanquished with civilised laws and values. To steer on these doubts, the story must be about more than just saving our lives and fortunes. It must reassure us that "we" are not selfish in our motives, and that our fight is spurred on by much nobler motives, such as ushering in our liberties to the destitute in distant lands.

Overlaid upon that myth of spreading good with boundless compassion, is that the people must believe that whatever the leaders do in distant lands is also all about protecting good people everywhere, protecting civilisation itself.

These are the stories that the aristocracy tells so successfully. Like all great fables, it is built on an utterly simple plot. The A-M, propelled by fate into mortal battle, is willing to endure every hardship, including the deaths of their brave young warriors, to secure the inevitable triumph of

make the concocted fabrications all the more convincing, to the millions of eager citizens.

To confound things even more, stories even form part of official public policy. One, is that representative democracy

#### Lasantha Pethiyagoda

and a free enterprise economy are necessary for anyone anywhere to live a decent civilised life; and the all-powerful leaders takes it upon themselves to ensure that everyone everywhere can enjoy the God-given right to live in a liberal, democratic and capitalist society...so the story goes... "We shall not rest, until that goal is reached."

story-tellers are pretending to protect, as without such tragedies, the story cannot be perpetuated, trapping us in eternal insecurity and a cycle of fear, war, more fear and more war. Strangely though, it would seem that the "liberated" nations have never been better off, rather than at each other's throats, being torn apart and in tatters, inhabited by peoples reduced to utter despair.

The hero in these stories can even claim to be born again in the service of the people. He will also insist that reality is the belief itself, not the fruits of the beliefs or the actions they counsel. In this delirious realm, action and its consequences are nothing. For the believer of the faith he promotes, the daily struggle to stay the course, keep the faith, exercise the will, and finally discipline a recalcitrant reality is, first and foremost, the task of the faithful.

"Reality", (those troublesome facts on the ground), which is the ultimate test of propositions and actions in common sense, is for these leaders an inferior state. So, reality is denounced as a morally compromised domain, which needs to be transformed by strength of will, acting at the calling of faith.

According to the above doctrine, the lesser mortals were in what they called the "reality-based" community. They would scornfully refer to these as people who "believe that solutions emerge from judicious study of discernible reality", the realm of science and principle. In the vision of Al-Muththahida, "our actions create our own reality". Others merely study these actions judiciously, and make various conclusions. In the meantime, A-M will have acted again, creating other new realities, which they invite the judicious others to examine yet again.

A word of warning, however. Any injection of "fantasy" into the above reality can offend the aesthetic senses of the true believers, and they risk paying the price in blood. As everyone should know by now, if you are not with the enemy, and want to be one of us, you must have faith, and believe what you cannot accept. After all, one should not give comfort to the enemy.

සන්නස

වෙළඳ දැන්වීම් සඳහා විවිධ

03 8707 4604 හෝ 0402 025 516

email ads.sannasa@gmail.com