

In an age of decimation of civil liberties and individual freedom, carried out in the name of fighting manufactured enemies of choice, any civic choice will shackle us to an interconnected police and security state, hitherto unprecedented in contemporary Sri Lankan political history.

In a tyrannical serfdom, the freedom of the wild ass is no freedom at all, as the popular dictum exclaims, while the search for unbridled power and unlimited terms of office, symbolise these in explicit form.

Modern tyrannies are deceptive. In the age of technology, it has to do with the need to hide its

form a basis for common grounds.

These will be the forces that they will have in place of the freedom they lack. The oppressed would be the first, because they know their fate, to admit that on a rational level such a notion might seem absurd, but they also know that it is only through the imagination that they or their future generation will survive.

The collective consciousness of ordinary citizens is the most potent power that can turn the tide towards a saner environment.

How this is inspired and sequestered by responsible forces, from within or without in the opposition, will determine what



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habituated into perceiving intolerance as the moral-ethical standard and raw violence as the only solution to all problems or differences; future generations only focused on 'getting ahead' and incapable of resisting the unrelenting tide of injustice.

## SRI LANKA'S EMERGING ELITE AND THE DEATH OF A NATION'S SPIRIT

true nature from the eyes of those on whose support and indifference its maintenance depends. Successful tyrannies excel at hiding reality from public view, turning the truth on its head and criminalising its manifest victims.

The greatest purveyor of violence in the country today must surely have state patronage not merely to survive but thrive. Its varied mechanisms, as well as being the leading exponent of the deadly arrogance that has poisoned the atmosphere for so long and having been whitewashed from the discourse must constitute the biggest threat to civil society.

It will very soon install a far deeper malady within the Sri Lankan spirit than had hitherto been experienced. No significant social problem - wealth inequality, underworld violence, racial and religious disharmony- could be resolved while the state remains an entity that continues year in year out, spending more money on military "defence" than on programs of social upliftment - a most certain recipe for a spiritual death of the nation. It should be incandescently apparent that no one who has any concern for the integrity and life of Sri Lanka today can ignore the present status quo.

This is the overarching point that drives our current debates about injustice and militarism through today. The debasement of the national psyche, the callousness toward continuous killing and violence, the belief that the state has not only the right but the duty to bring violence anywhere in the land that it wants: that is what lies at the heart of Sri Lanka's ongoing embrace of endless militancy. A rotted national soul does indeed enable leaders to wage endless wars of attrition, but endless violence also rots the national soul. At times this seems to be an inescapable, self-perpetuating cycle of degeneration and degradation.

Sri Lanka's elite despise the subjugated, poor, malnourished and weak. They feel unequal and want a discriminatory system that lacks any sense of common decency. They are pretentious and cowardly; they encourage religious bigotry without morality or compassion. They help the authorities to criminalise independence and freedom; abuse women and children; revel in vulgar exhibitionism of wealth and opulence, largely in bad taste.

For Sri Lankans to endure what lies ahead they will have to harness the human imagination. It is this imagination that makes possible transcendence from darkness to light. In order to nourish and sustain this imagination, the people need to



follows in the decades to come.

The powerful elite are particularly interested in moulding their younger generation into becoming a chosen people. They want their offspring to be individuals who esteem power and strength with awe while despising and being contemptuous of economic, physical and social weakness in their serfs.

This young generation will be incapable of being outraged with indignation of a society in which the powerful, influential and rich will invariably have their way while the marginalized majority poor and powerless masses are denied even their impotently ineffectual say; a new generation

For centuries, minorities and the marginalised had little control over their destinies. Forces of bigotry and violence kept them subjugated by the majority aristocrats. Suffering, for the oppressed, was tangible. Death was a constant companion.

For a state whose leaders had historically been guided, in most cases by nobler dictates and motivations, like the ten leadership qualities (dasa raja dhamma), and the general populace's belief that all blessed things, like timely rains, fair weather and bountiful harvests, and general well-being and prosperity of the populace follow when rulers reign justly and righteously (devo vassathu kalena, raja bhavathu dhammiko), the present leaves much to be desired, for many good and obvious reasons.

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