



The funny irony is that racism is a myth. Living and thinking over two thousand five hundred years ago the Buddha (Vaseththa Sutta) emphatically undermined racism as a myth.

“There are no “white” or “coloured” signs on the graveyards of battle.” John F Kennedy

Can individuals see themselves through the prism of their common humanity? Looking at almost every society today this seems a far way off. Racism is a contemporary reality and it does no good but creates welts and deep wounds in the body politic.

The funny irony is that racism is a myth. Living and thinking over two thousand five hundred years ago the Buddha (Vaseththa Sutta) emphatically undermined racism as a myth. “Both the Theravada as well as the Mahayana schools of Buddhism speak of man in the context of a larger concourse of sentient beings.” (KN Jayatilaka & GP Malalasekera). One would expect, therefore, the Sinhala Buddhist to shy away from this evil. Yet, irony follows irony and the answer is “no.”

Many of the more articulate Sinhalese living overseas appear to be fanning racism feverishly. When it comes to parting with their money for the cause, however, they are not as unstinting as their parallel racist Tamil brethren. These days, I have been at the receiving end of a stream of emails from such overseas Sinhala extremists. Strangely, some of them belong to the learned community. The mental focus of these individuals is still where we were in 1956-60. They raise tedious arguments about the ratios of the two communities and about how the government should “fairly” deal with the issue. By “fairly,” they mean fairly to the Sinhala community. Constitutional clause 13A has become a big noisy issue. Now, with the elections on, the spectre of the LTTE invading Lanka is being artificially conjured up by these persons. These guys are predominantly adorers of Mahinda Rajapaksa, who is hailed by them with the cliched slogan, “a leader with a backbone.”

Identity is the foremost issue to the Sinhala Diaspora because in their host countries they are bewildered and confused with a perceived loss of identity.

They perceive themselves as deemed ‘inferior.’ I live in Australia but I do not experience anything near inferior treatment. It is perception and not reality; but the perception eats into their being, I suppose. Another proximate factor is the presence of Tamil racists in big numbers; many of them in the vanguard of the LTTE Diaspora.

The downside is that these guys unleash their venom in a vicarious struggle that goes on in Sri Lanka.

Despite all these noise, however, I suspect that to ordinary Sri Lankans the ethnic question has receded in their public conscience particularly after the rout of the LTTE in Sri Lanka. The current priorities of the collective social conscience back home in Sri Lanka is around home economics. More precisely, how to match income with household expenditure. Related resource issues are how to get good schools for their kids, how to get efficient transport, how to get housing, how to get affordable medical treatment and so on. In this context it is heartening to note that the UNFGG Manifesto is a marked attempt to focus on the burning issues of ordinary Lankans. The campaign is well targeted unlike MR’s campaign where one notices a recycling of the old and boring issues located on a racial spectrum.

The section of febrile Sinhala Diaspora is least concerned with such issues. They have more than solved such personal and family issues for themselves by virtue of the fact that they are citizens of those affluent foreign lands. Here is an extract from an email of one such guy from America who I will call ‘Sudath,’ who originates a lot of this email.

Writes Sudath: “The Californians like me spent their leisure at the renowned golden beaches (Torrance, Hermosa and Redondo) along the Pacific coast with their families--kids and grand kids--My five kids and their spouses and seven grand kids join us whenever they can. Al my kids, especially the 2 sons are are great swimmers and and I join them for afternoon swims-either at the Pacific ocean or at home in their pools-out seven grand kids are there too. This is just to let you know about our lifestyle here tied to family life. I also play rounds of golf during the weekends--my two sons are good golfers.”

demand. They do not smell that by fanning bitter divisions they put our people in trouble. The concern is about them alone.

The racism of these guys is so extreme that it extends to an antipathy toward the Estate Tamils of Indian origin. On 17 Jul 2015, another of them who I will call “Asoka,” had this to say:

“...It was, again JR and his budding kindred - Ranil who put in to the dustbin Sirima-Shasthrie Pact to expatriate Kallathoonis of several decades, and gave millions of Indian (upcountry Tamils) Kallathonis Sri Lankan Citizenship.”

He has a Buddhist name and I took the opportunity to remind him that as a Buddhist he should develop an empathy for these oppressed and suppressed and exploited estate workers and their families who lived through generations in line- housing. They toiled and sweated under the sun to make our tea bloom in world markets and bring us an export commodity that has been Sri Lanka’s mainstay for many, many years. They made our bread and butter. What’s wrong in granting them citizenship? I asked Asoka and he was silent. At least, he was silent.

Another individual, a lady, is a Professor in an American University, who I will call simply, “Professor,” joined the email conversation and castigated the estate community for having robbed the jobs from our upcountry peasants. Although a professor, she did not know that she was historically wrong in this observation. Professor is also a diehard fan of the former regime and she laughs at yahapalanaya.



At a meeting in Melbourne when someone stated that Sri Lanka is a multicultural country one of the above herd scoffed at the expression. MR must be content as here is another supporter for him.

A man from London, who I will call “Jagath,” came out in one of his emails with

an astounding theory that Sri Lanka belongs to the Sinhala, and that Tamils and Muslims are guests! I made sure he wasn’t a comedian.

This thorny problem can never be solved unless we think on the path of our common humanity and find solutions on that basis. One cannot meet racism through counter racism. One must meet racism only by going beyond. The Black Power Movement in America was arrayed to fight White racism. It failed and merely compounded the problem because it was a counter racist attack on racism. Jean Paul Satre called it, “anti-racist racism.”

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