



The historic and the unexpected swing of the pendulum at the presidential elections towards the common opposition headed by Maithripala Sirisena shows a strong and determined wave of support for social change and social justice. This has, no doubt, been emphasised as he won by a majority of 449,072 votes. He polled 6,217,162 votes (51.29 per cent) in the 12 electoral districts against Mahinda Rajapaksa who secured 5,768,090 votes (47.58 per cent) was, till the early hours of the following day, considered to be undefeatable and the strong President the country has produced to sweep away the equally strong and ruthless terrorist movement that benumbed the government for 30 years, which the previous leaders failed to do.

The massive strength of voters' power in the Northern and the Eastern provinces, and the Nuwara Eliya and Colombo electoral districts indicated the urgent need for social change and social justice if Sri Lanka were to be the lucky and the most sought-after island nation in the region to shine as the beacon of democracy. Maithripala Sirisena's stunning win at the election confirmed this without any reservation.

Of the Sri Lanka's population of 21,128,772 in 2008, 73.8 per cent were Sinhalese, mostly Buddhists; 7.2 per cent Sri Lankan Moors, mostly followers of Islam; 4.6 per cent Indian Tamils and 3.9 per cent Sri Lankan Tamils, mostly Hindus; and others 0.5 per cent.

History tells us that these ethnic groups lived in harmony till the occupation of the country by the Dutch, the Portuguese and the British (1505 to 1948). It was during this period that the cracks in the



Dr. Mathu H. Liyanage

fabric of the society began to appear due to their commercial activities based on trade and collection of revenue, and the "divide and rule" policy adopted by the British to keep the country under their thumb.

Where communal harmony was concerned, the leaders of ethnic groups, especially the Tamils, fought for independence from the British shoulder to shoulder with the Sinhalese leaders irrespective of the differences they had among them. They laid a solid and strong base for communal harmony. But things changed soon after Sri Lanka gained independence in 1946.

The political status of Indian immigrants who worked in up-country tea plantations and the Tamils' struggle for freedom and equal rights became the first and the foremost problems for the government to solve. The Ceylon Citizen Act of 1948, the Indian and Pakistani Resident's Act 3 of 1948, and the Ceylon Parliamentary Elections Amendment Act 48 of 1948 disenfranchised this minority group. The gap between the Sinhalese and the Tamils widened.

The Sinhala Maha Sabha led by SWRD Bandaranaike and the Tamil Congress of GG Ponnambalam joined the United Na-

Presidential Election results A clear call for social harmony and social justice



It is commendable that The National Executive Committee with President Maithripala Sirisena, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, JVP Leader Anura Kumara Disسانayake, Minister Champika Ranawaka, Sarath Fonseka, TNA Leader R Sampanthan and Minister Rishad Bathiudeen met on January 16, as promised.

tional Party (UNP) formed by DS Senanayaka. Though this coalition fought for independence as a united front, the leaders later led their own parties separately in opposition to the government of the UNP. In the meantime, Bandaranaike reorganized his party under the name of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. To add to more, the Marxist Sama Samaja Party led by NM Perera, Colvin R De Silva and Philip Gunawardena entered the fray.

A faction of the Ceylon Tamil Congress broke away to form the Federal Party under SJV Chelvanayagam. It set the agenda for Tamil exclusiveness, replacing the conciliatory Tamil Congress, as an aggressive political party to fight for the rights for Tamils.

The Sinhala Only Act of 1956 making Sinhala the official language forced the majority of Tamils and even most senior Sinhala public servants to retire. The abrogation of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact of 1957, which provided for Regional Councils, due to intensive pressure from the Sinhala majority, angered and further alienated the Tamils from the Sinhala community.

The 100-day work program cleverly crafted and put before the nation before the election by President Maithripala Sirisena, suggesting such as the abolition of the authoritarian executive presidential system and replacing it with a Cabinet of Ministers responsible to Parliament; establishing independent commissions in the areas of judicial services, police, public services, elections, bribery and corruption and human rights through a 19th amendment to the constitution; providing relief to people by cutting down cost of living by way of reducing direct and indirect on essential goods; raising salaries of public servants and pensioners; and

introducing National Audit Bill and Right to Information Bill, received 100 per cent support from the foes and friends alike.

The above measures are in line with social justice as the rights of all people are considered in a fair and equitable manner. While equal opportunity targets everyone in the community, social justice targets the marginalised and disadvantaged groups in the community.

Political philosopher John Rawls in his book A Theory of Justice has shown that the basic liberties are (a) freedom of thought (b) liberty of conscience as it affects social relationships on the grounds of religion, philosophy and morality (c) political liberties (freedom of speech, the press, assembly and representative democratic institutions) (d) freedom for liberty and integrity of the person, and (e) rights and liberties covered by the rule of law.

Both, the measures embedded in social justice and basic liberties are well covered by the 100-day work program of President Maithripala Sirisena.

It is hoped that the implementation of the program of work would be finalized by the end of 100 days or lay the foundation and corner-stones so that the grand edifice could be built strongly on its suggestions, social (communal) harmony, basic liberties and social justice.

c SLMC Leader Rauff Hakeem was not present though he was expected to attend the meeting. Another notable and praiseworthy feature is that the Committee will have powers beyond that of the Cabinet.

"A democracy exists whenever those who are free and poor are in sovereign control of the government; an oligarchy when the control lies in the hands of the rich and better born." – Aristotle

Tutoring

22 years of experience in tutoring in Melbourne with Proven Results.....!

Coaching for

- Mathematics for Primary and Secondary
- VCE Mathematics: *Mathematical Methods, General Mathematics, Further Mathematics, Specialist Mathematics*

- VCE Physics
- English from Primary to year 9
- Science for Secondary

Scholarship and Selective School exams

Melbourne High, Mac.Robertson, Suzanne Cory, Uni High, John Monash, Ivanhoe Grammar, Trinity Grammar, Melbourne Grammar, PEGS, etc.

Small groups - up to 4 students.....!
Individual classes on request

Neeranjana Kudaligama

0408 356 821

Masters in Accounting (La Trobe)
B. Applied Science (Computer Science and Software Engineering) (Swinburne)
Civil Eng. (Moratuwa)
Ex. Teacher, VSL - Roxburgh Park Sinhala School

Hemantha Devendra

0409 854 597

VIT Registered Teacher
Post Grad. Dip Edu. (La Trobe)
B. Design (Industrial Design) (RMIT)
Mech Eng (Moratuwa)