

Terrorism and the alleged 'Sinhalese Buddhist Extremism'

by Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekera

The common definition of terrorism is "unleashing violence on civilians or destroying public property, to achieve a political aim". The LTTE, categorised as the "most ruthless terrorist organisation in the world", have resorted to terrorism to separate the motherland. They justify their acts of terrorism in the eyes of the international community by propagating the message that the "Sinhalese Buddhists" are an extremist lot and the Tamils can never expect justice from them. The LTTE, hence, portray themselves as "freedom fighters" trying to "free" the Tamils from the "clutches" of the "Sinhalese Buddhist Extremists".

The terrorists, in order to achieve their objective, forcibly enter shouses of unguarded villages and cut and chop innocent Sinhalese mothers and infants. The harmless farmers are ruthlessly massacred in the field. They resort to "Ethnic cleansing" and at the same time engage in a heinous International propaganda campaign to portray Sinhalese as "barbarians" to "justify" their brutal acts.

As a citizen of the country if anyone pretends not to know the above "reality" he/she is a cynic/nihilist. If someone is not aware of this reality even after two decades, he/she is a moron. If anyone, knowing this reality, supports or contributes directly or indirectly towards the above LTTE propaganda, he/she definitely is a contemptuous traitor to the motherland.

In this state of affairs, we see some regular articles appearing in Sunday Newspapers, very clearly mentioning about the presence of Sinhalese Buddhist extremists in the country and discrimination against Tamils by same, whilst occasionally and very mildly touching on LTTE violence. When reading through the lines, one can easily understand the motive behind such articles. Pretending as writing in good faith the heinous attempt of the writer is to very convincingly inform the reader and thus the international community, that there are Sinhalese supremacists in this country who see a lurking tiger in every Tamil man/woman, and that

blow them out of proportion and condemn the conduct of the entire Sinhalese Buddhists in the country, there by doing exactly what the LTTE needed.

The obvious implication is to inform and brainwash the reader that the Tamil minority of Sri Lanka are being discriminated against by the Sinhalese Buddhist majority who claims that this is a "Sinhalese Buddhist country". One article said that if the Sinhalese Buddhists riot and kill against a mere concert, one could imagine the reaction of such Sinhalese Buddhists when it came to minority rights. A group of monks sitting on the road has been interpreted as "full horror of religious extremism" and it also mentioned about church burning and anti conversion legislature and said that the Christian minority of the country also are ill treated by the Sinhalese Buddhists of this country.

Is it the true picture of the Sinhalese Buddhists in this country that the writer tries to paint in the eyes of the world? Or, are these type of articles a part of a diabolical conspiracy to indirectly help the LTTE who tells the world that they have no alternative other than Elam/ ISGA due to the continuous chauvinistic attitude of the Sinhalese Buddhists towards Tamils in Sri Lanka? These few writers never talk about the great restraint, patience or the tolerance exercised by the Sinhalese Buddhists when Sri Dalada maligawa, the Temple of the Tooth, which is considered the Crest Jewel of not only Sinhalese Buddhists but of the Buddhists all over the world, was viciously attacked. They write about the Buddhists religious extremists in Sri Lanka but where were these fanatics when scores of innocent Sinhalese Buddhist devotees (mostly old women) were cold bloodedly massacred at Sri Maha Bodhi? What was the reaction of the so called Buddhist religious maniacs, if there were any, to the inhuman massacre of innocent novice Buddhist monks (mostly under 13 years) at Arantalawa by LTTE? Informing the "Christian world" about the existence of the Sinhalese Buddhists in this country is the very thing LTTE wants in order to obtain international sympathy. If this par-

ticular writer goes to a country of religious fanatics and talk about the "extremists" or against their religion, she would be chopped to death. In Sri Lanka there were incidents of tourist women posing for photographs sitting on the lap of Buddha statues and getting away without even a scratch. Where are these Sinhalese Buddhist religious extremists the writer is talking about? If this writer who appears to shiver/faint at the so called "full horror of religious extremism" prevalent in Sri Lanka, would definitely disintegrate into pieces if she saw how, in another country, a religious fanatic cut the neck of a man of another sect of the same religion, in broad day light!. Citing an isolated incident and trying to draw parallels between such "extremists" and a group of disillusioned monks who sit on the road in protest or a bunch of unruly rioters who run for their lives at the first canister of tear gas, is not only hilarious if not contemptuous, but also amounts to treachery as it effects the good name and the image of the whole nation.

Religious extremists are the maniacs who massacre/destroy without even the slightest provocation. Sometimes the only provocation is seeing another observing a religion other than their own. The Taliban destroyed the Bhamian Buddha statues, the world's Buddhist heritage, without any provocation.

There are unruly elements in any society, and the government of Sri Lanka is doing well in controlling such men in our country. There are certain States and State sponsored groups who act as religious extremists who not only discriminate but persecute people of other religions. Do we have such men in Sri Lanka? The Tamils in Colombo, for the last many decades, celebrate "veil", marching in Colombo roads in thousands without any interruption and most of the time with the support and blessings of the Sinhalese Buddhists.

There are more than fifty kovils in Colombo alone and even the Sinhalese Buddhists do patronise same. By grossly exaggerating and blowing out of proportion a single incident, if someone tries to show that there are religious extremists in Sri

Lanka, such a person has to be either a mental patient or on the payroll of the LTTE.

Mainly referring to the war against terrorists, these writers now come up with articles stating that Buddhism is a religion that is premised on loving kindness to all living beings, Buddhism has no concept of martyrdom, there are no militant Buddhists and self immolation has no place in Buddhism etc. etc. Even a child who attends the Sunday school knows that. Non violence is the most prominent aspect in Buddhism and Buddha has said "hatred never ends by hatred but by compassion alone". However even though that is what the writer knows about Dhamma, what she does'nt know is the absurdity or the stupidity of dragging the basic elements of Dhamma into the behaviours/acts of individuals under "all" circumstances. As per the writer, who believes in loving kindness, a husband (a good Buddhist) violently reacting to prevent an intruder trying to rape his wife, is acting against Buddhism as he displays anger and hatred and not *Karuna* and *Maitri*. These writers should be educated in this respect further, for, tomorrow they might start a campaign stating that the Sinhalese Buddhist soldiers should not even fight the terrorists because killing is against Buddhism. As patriots we must be cognizant of the fact that the motherland is being raped by the terrorists and the government, the brave soldiers react to it in a manner it deserves to protect the country. Those who try to compare *Dhamma* with the behaviour of those who rise up for the protection of the nation, are the people who are clueless in both *Dhamma* and the aspect called national security. Sinhalese live with Tamils in unity and harmony. In July '83 riots, which was the work of none other than hooligans/thugs/thieves, how many Sinhalese Buddhists sacrificed / risked their lives to protect innocent Tamils? The writers who put the blame on the '83 riots on the entire Sinhalese nation do not blame the entire Tamil community for the cold blooded massacres perpetrated on Sinhalese by LTTE.

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