

The uncommon candidate

It is not certain whether General Sarath Fonseka would be the common candidate of the UNP-JVP-TNA- SLFP (Mangala) etc. alliance. Those days there were *thun havula, pas partyia and hath havula* but nowadays everything is mega and we have mega alliances where even the leader of the alliance is very often unaware of the number of parties that constitute the alliance. Whether the UNP led alliance would finally select the General as the common candidate or not, he is one of the most uncommon candidates ever to be mentioned as a Presidential candidate.

To begin with not many Generals have been mentioned as Presidential candidates in the world, while they were still serving. General Sarath Fonseka at the moment of writing this article is still in uniform and is admired by many Sinhalas and some Tamils and Muslims as well, though some of them may not like him. It is uncommon for a General who commanded the army to victory only six months ago against a terrorist group or any other country or nation that took up arms against the state or waged war against the country to be mentioned as a candidate to contest the commander in chief of the armed forces at the Presidential elections. It is also uncommon for an alliance of political parties which include parties whose leaders and members had not long ago thought that General Sarath Fonseka was not even suitable to lead the Salvation Army to think of him as a suitable person to lead the country. Perhaps being politicians they may know that even a person not suitable to lead the Salvation Army is fit to lead the country. It is uncommon for a leader of the calibre of Ranil Wickremesinghe to step down in favour of a person who commanded an army that rescued only a jungle called Thoppigala under the direction of people who did not know Alimankada from Pamankada and Medavachchi from Kilinochchi to contest the Presidential elections. It is also uncommon for a General to agree to contest on behalf of an alliance whose members had humiliated him not many moons ago. I would not call them moony but the moon itself could not have observed many such events on the earth during its life time.

Then of course we have the JVP agreeing on the common candidate according to the news items published in the newspapers. It would be very uncommon for the JVP to agree on a common candidate. The JVP on many occasions in the past have had discussions with SLFP led alliances on a common candidate without being able to agree on a candidate. If the JVP has already agreed or will agree on a common candidate in General Sarath Fonseka it would be uncommon first to have a common programme with the UNP and then to sponsor a common candidate for Presidency.

There are other uncommon features surrounding the candidacy of General Sarath Fonseka. Apparently he has agreed on the letter of resignation and the annexure with the UNP - JNP leaders and they especially the latter have published it in their website giving it publicity. However, the uncommon feature is not leaking to the press through e mails using modern technology but the changes made by the General in his letter of resignation and the annexure. As it is his letter of resignation nobody could question him of the changes but it would not be to the satisfaction of the UNP leadership. General Sarath Fonseka has apparently changed the contents regarding the so called internally displaced

people and it could imply that the previous version had been forced on him by parties with vested interests`. This and other changes could have already made cracks in the relationship and it would not come as a surprise if the common candidate of the UNP led alliance would be the usual commonly losing candidate Ranil Wickremasinghe.

If the UNP led alliance decides to ditch General Fonseka it would be not good for him. General Fonseka is now learning the first lessons of Politics and it would be interesting to see how he responds to all these. What is clear is that the former army commander is not happy to take orders even from Ranil Wickremasinghe and the UNP leadership would not field him as the common candidate unless he is sure to lose. If elected President General Fonseka would not abolish the executive Presidency and unless the UNP leadership has other plans would be very suspicious of the General.

In any event the General is not their man s ideologically especially vis – a –vis the Tamil problem and unless the UNP has some way of making Ranil Wickremasinghe the President they would not think of fielding a winning General Sarath Fonseka for the Presidency. It is unfortunate that barely six months after the most glorious moment in our history for centuries we are at this sorry state of affairs. It is now clear that there had been some rift between the army commander and the government for some time and the non nationalist forces are making use of the situation.

It is true that Winston Churchill was defeated at the first General Elections he faced after being instrumental in winning the so called second world war but it is unthinkable of defeating Mahinda Rajapakse at the next Presidential elections. However, it is not good for the nationalist forces if General Sarath Fonseka were to contest at the next Presidential elections as even though Mahinda Rajapakse would be the winner the nationalist forces would be the loser in the final analysis.

All the non nationalist forces would be very happy to se a contest between the commander in chief and the commander of the army and in such a contest various confidential information is likely to be made public and the non nationalist forces would make hay while sun shines even briefly on them. General Sarath Fonseka should realise that he is being made use of by the common enemy and the common candidate of the nationalist forces has to be Mahinda Rajapakse and nobody else.

The government also should not play into the hands of the non nationalist forces led by the UNP and the westerners and try to avoid this manipulated contest between the common candidate of the nationalist forces and the uncommon candidate of the non nationalist forces and should seek saner counselling from the *vinnus* as defined in the *Kalama Sutra*.