

Sajith Premadasa and suddas

Young Sajith Premadasa who aspires to become the leader of the UNP has come out with the most severe verbal attack on the suddas or the white western international community. In a speech delivered at a meeting held in support of the Sarath Fonseka, the joint (not the common) candidate of the UNF and the JVP, he has warned the suddas against any interference in Sri Lanka in connection with the so called white flag incident. In that speech he has spoken of the suddas as *paradeshakkarayas* (literally foreigners but degrading), imperialists etc., and has vowed to defend the honour of the armed forces against such intervention.

At first sight it is surprising to hear a UNP leader criticizing the westerners the way Sajith Premadasa has done as the leaders of the UNP in general are by nature and nurture are supposed to serve the western masters unconditionally. We do not know what Ranil Wickremesinghe has to say on the courage of Sajith Premadasa and whether he would join the latter in calling the westerners including Philip Alston of the UN and others as *paradeshakkarayas* and colonialists. Even the JVP leaders are lagging behind young Sajith in denouncing the *paradeshakkarayas* and the government should take note of this latest development within the UNP.

However, what is not clear is whether the General (retired) Sarath Fonseka made the relevant statement or not. As we have already argued if he had made the statement that Sunday Leader attributes to him then he has committed hara-kiri and the government should consider the possibility of framing charges against him and bring him before martial court. If the editor of Sunday Leader has misreported him then action will have to be taken either by the government, Sarath Fonseka or the UNF to frame charges against her in an ordinary court of law. In any event Fonseka had to retract his position within twenty four hours in order to be in the race.

However, Sajith Premadasa would not favour any one of the above courses of action and would only think of settling accounts with the suddas. From the speeches made by Sajith Premadasa and some others in the UNP it appears now that the UNP had been supporting the “war” or humanitarian operations against the LTTE. The UNP has all of a sudden become a party of war mongers and they would defend actions taken by the armed forces during the operations.

These days everybody seems to be saying that the LTTE should have been crushed and further that they had always believed that the terrorist outfit could have been defeated. However, this leads to some contradictions that need to be resolved though politicians may not be interested in such exercises. We have to ask the leaders of the UNF whether they supported the humanitarian operations from the beginning or at any time during the operations. At what stage did they switch over from negotiations with the LTTE strategy to that of operations against the LTTE?

The stalwarts of the UNP who could not distinguish Medavachchi from Kilinochci and Alimankada from Pamankada and those who said that the General (retired) Sarath

Fonseka is not fit to lead even the salvation army are now happy with the General (retired) and probably know Medavachchi from Kilinochchi. If we go by the statement of Sajith Premadasa and many others of the UNP and the UNF, the alliance would defend the actions of the armed forces unreservedly.

Now where does it leave poor Solheim? What has Blake got to say on these developments? Though one is inclined to say that the politicians change their policies there is a deep hidden message that all these somersaults has given. What is clear is that while Ranil would have lost the elections, for the UNF to even field a candidate against the President they had to look for somebody who had been associated with the operations against the LTTE in some capacity.

When young Sajith Premadasa comes out against the suddas it implies that even as a temporary measure the UNP has had to change from its pro western policies to some kind of nationalistic policies. I am not trying to say that the UNP has become a nationalistic party overnight, but for them even to do politics at present in the aftermath of the LTTE defeat they have had to get hold of a candidate such as General (retired) Sarath Fonseka who had been involved with the operations against the LTTE.

It is people like Sajith who have come to the forefront and not people such as Ravi Karunanayake, Jayalath Jayawardhane or Mangala Samaraweera whose politics starts and ends with scheming. Though the JVP has lost its nationalistic credentials as a party that supported the operations though not from the beginning as they were against “war” around 1992 -94 period, people still identify that party as a party that supported the operations against the LTTE.

General (retired) Sarath Fonseka is nowhere when compared with Mr Mahinda Rajapakse who stood up to pressure from the western powers and also India at the beginning. Though it could be a temporary phenomenon the victory over the terrorist outfit LTTE has changed what the pundits call the mindset of the Sinhala people. The average Sinhala person whether he traditionally votes the UNP, the SLFP or even a so called floating voter is for the “war” and in this era politics is possible only if a party is on the side of the “war”. Thus at least temporarily the UNP led UNF has to support the operations against the LTTE, and the General whatever the reasons for his change of sides had to be the candidate of the UNF.

In spite of Ranil Wickremesinghe, Ravi Karunanayake, Jayalath Jayawardene and others people such as Sajith have come to the forefront and speaks against the suddas as it is the only “manthra” the majority of the Sinhalsas are prepared to listen at present. The left candidates such as Vickramabahu and Siritunga have been left out already and the elections with all the mud slinging is now confined to the Sinhala people and to those Muslims and Tamils who are prepared to be with the Sinhals. The other Tamils and Muslims with their politicians and theoreticians are also left out as they cannot identify themselves with the “war”. This is an election brought out by “war” and to be in politics these days a party has to identify itself with the “war” whether it likes it or not.