

Tamil claims — facts and fiction

A reply to a statement in 'Star India' circulated in Canada

I cannot deny Rajan Thangavelu's statement that Dr. Goebels (Propaganda Minister of Hitler's Nazi Germany) reasoned that if a lie is repeated many times then the people will tend to believe it as gospel truth (Tamils Always at the Receiving End, October 15). This was the very reason why I had to check Thangavelu's possible damning spell when he stated earlier that "No Tamil was ever elected to a predominantly Sinhala electorate and vice-versa" in Sri Lanka.

I give him full marks for his courage in accepting my correction that there were indeed Tamils elected to mainly Sinhalese electorates. If I had not intervened with this correction, Thangavelu's remark would have been endorsed as the truth and nothing but the truth in favour of the Eelam cause.

Thangavelu is absolutely wrong again when he blames the "Sinhala Only" Act of 1956 for having "planted the seeds of the current armed resistance to Sinhalese hegemony and demand of an independent Tamil Eelam."

The claim for a separate state was clearly put forward for the first time in 1949, almost as soon as the island became politically independent.

That year, the Ilangkai Tamil Arasu Kadchi was formed with the aim of the "attainment of freedom for the Tamil speaking people of Ceylon by the establishment of an autonomous Tamil state on the linguistic basis, with the framework of a Federal Union of Ceylon." This Ilangkai Tamil Arasu Kadchi, which translates into the "Lanka Tamil State Party," called itself the Federal Party. The Party was led by Mr. S. J. V. Chelvanayagam and Mr. E. M. V. Naganathan, two prominent Christian Tamils.

Thus when the first national convention of the Federal Party was held in 1951, a claim was made in a resolution that "the Tamil-speaking people in Sri Lanka constituted a nation distinct from that of the Sinhalese in every fundamental test of nationhood."

I would hate to see the 'Sinhala Only' Act be used as a red herring, blaming the majority Sinhalese for the claim for an Eelam by the Tamils. If this is repeated over and over again by Thangavelu, this political-myth would certainly end up as a 'Goebelian truth' among Canadians.

For Thangavelu to say "...the Sri Lankan government is a racist government no better than white South Africa" is a cheap shot. The Sri Lanka Government has tolerated a mono-ethnic Tamil University in Jaffna after the Tamils terrorized and chased out 400 Sinhalese undergraduates and lecturers in 1977. The Sri Lanka

Government has kept University Campuses in the rest of the island accessible to Tamil undergraduates; and it has been the Sri Lanka Government that has demanded equity for the physical quality of life of all Sri Lankans. It has provided non-segregated schools and educational facilities to all ethnic groups with free education for all at primary, secondary and post-secondary levels, non-segregated religious churches, kovils and temples, health care services and spending investment in each area of the island reflecting the rights and privileges accorded to all Sri Lankans. To cap it all the Sri Lanka Government is making every effort to see that the Tamil terrorists in the North who are fighting the armed forces are getting essential food items and the injured terrorists attended to at Government Hospitals.

All this doesn't seem to portray the Sri Lankan Government as advocating an apartheid policy. What nonsense!

Thangavelu knows very well that what the Tamil community in Sri Lanka has enjoyed for

The Thesavalamai, the customary laws of the Tamils, codified by the Dutch in 1706-7, and made operative in the Jaffna Peninsula by the British through Regulation 18 of 1806 was not applicable to the Tamils of Trincomalee and Batticaloa of the Eastern province. When its applicability to the Tamils in Trincomalee came up for review before the colony's Supreme Court in 1875, the principle involved was considered to be sufficient importance — "of great importance and comparative novelty" — to have the review done by a full bench of that Court.

In a landmark decision the Supreme Court affirmed the decision of the District Court of Trincomalee that the operation of the Thesavalamai code was restricted to the Tamils of Jaffna and that code did not apply to the Tamils of Trincomalee or Batticaloa. Well, Mr. Thangavelu?

Thangavelu alludes that any attempt to provide land to the non-Tamil colonists in the Eastern Province was a political strategy that is designed to reduce the Tamils to a minority in what he claims to be the Tamil territorial base.

Past developments, however, do not seem to support such a con-

clusion. In the Batticaloa district there has been an insignificant drop from 71.08 per cent to 70.82 per cent. In Trincomalee where the Tamil population is in the minority, the share has declined from 36.6 per cent to 33.7 per cent. In Amparai, it has declined from 23 per cent to 20 per cent. However, there has been a rapid increase in the Indian Tamil population in most of these districts. For example, in the districts of Yavuniya and Mullaitivu, the proportion of Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils combined has increased from 74.7 per cent to 82.3 per cent.

But we object is State aided and planned Sinhalese colonization of North and East... which is claimed to be the "Tamil homeland" Thangavelu argues. What Thangavelu has difficulty in comprehending is that all land in the sovereign Republic of Sri Lanka except that owned by individuals, is land owned by the State with rights for its use. That colonists whether Sinhalese, Tamil or Muslim settled by the Government in State-land is done so in the national interest as opposed to divisive racist politics.

To accept Thangavelu's claim that sovereign Sri Lanka has no right to settle Sinhalese people in the North and East would be to accept a ridiculous proposition that while the State could deal with State-land outside the boundaries of the North and East provinces, the State forfeits its rights in the North and East provinces in acceptance of the political-myth of the "Tamil homeland".

If one were to pursue the "Tamil homeland" theory to its logical conclusion, it would follow that outside the North and East, which presumably according to Tamil separatists is the "traditional homeland" of other ethnic groups, the Government will have no rights to allot land, house and flats to Tamils. This is manifestly ridiculous and unacceptable in a working democracy such as ours.

He quotes Well Oya as a "concrete example" in the North-East where Sinhalese have been settled as colonists by the State.

There can be little to gain for that inexcusable massacre at the Dollar and Kent Farms at Well Oya, of innocent unarmed, defenceless Sinhalese men, women with infants in their arms and children on the morning of the 30th November 1984, by Tamil separatists in their process of ethnic cleansing in favour of their "Tamil homeland" theory.

One survivor said, "before the terrorists left they all gathered in a circle and I heard them singing a Tamil song about Eelam for their struggle for liberation." It was tough on those "innocents" who died that morning, who went to sleep the night before longing to wake up in the morning to live and enjoy another day in their farms!

Surely, the above facts give little reason for Thangavelu to continue his crusade of pulling wool over the eyes of your readers for his pro-Eelam cause. The times have changed and the facts of Sri Lanka's Tamil ethnic issue will be told loud and clearly in Canada and I can assure Mr. Thangavelu that at the end of the day that the truth will prevail.

by Asoka Weerasinghe

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so long is an unstinted measure of justice, and more than a fair share of the services provided by each government since independence. There is even a Tamil member of Parliament in Cabinet to look after the interests of Tamils and their culture.

Thangavelu makes a pointed question when asking me, if the Thesavalamai Law only applied to the northern Jaffna peninsula, whether that was not sufficient to prove that the peninsula was the "homeland of the Tamils". If that is his argument, then why is it that he is trying to claim the Eastern Province too as part of the "Tamil homeland"?

If he is using the Thesavalamai Law to base his claim of the Northern Jaffna Peninsula as his "Tamil homeland", then this Thesavalamai Law should negate any claim by him that the Eastern province is part of the "Tamil homeland" for the following reason.

