

**If he continues to be adamant he will perish, even though there be no one to destroy him**

**Veluppillai Thangavelu**

A King, with none to censure him, bereft of Ministers who can rebuke him, will perish even though there be no one to destroy him. This is a quote from Thirukkural written in the form of couplets (two line poems) is an ethical treatise espousing various aspects of life. It is considered as the *magnum opus* of Tamil literature and culture with the highest and purest expressions of human thought.

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Thirukkural has three major parts. The first part (38 chapters) deals with Aram (Virtue), the moral value of human life. The second part (70 chapters) is on Porul (Wealth), the socio economic values of men in a civilized society. The final part (25 chapters) is on Kamam or Inbam (Love) is about ethical living in private life.

The above quote is from Chapter 45 under the heading "Securing friendship of great men." I was reminded of this quote when I read in the papers that President Mahinda Rajapaksa had berated senior SLFP Irrigation and Water Resources Management Minister Sripala de Silva at a recent cabinet meeting over a statement the latter made to the media. Minister Sripala de Silva told the media that mega development projects would not suffice to win votes. The President expressed his disgust over such remarks by a senior member of the Cabinet and a SLFP stalwart. Boiling with anger, he told the Minister that he should not have made such remarks. A crest fallen Mr. de Silva did not have the guts to defend his statement, instead sheepishly offered the typical excuse that his remarks had been misinterpreted. (Daily Mirror - April 05, 2014)

In a parliamentary system of government the Prime Minister will not dare rebuke a Minister since he is only the first among equals in the cabinet. The situation is different under a presidential system. Mahinda Rajapaksa has developed a penchant to criticise Ministers in the presence of other Ministers. Justice Minister Rauff Hakeem is another victim of Rajapaksa's tongue lashing over the presentation of a petition handed over Ms Navaneetham Pillay complaining about the demolition of mosques by Sinhala - Buddhist extremists.

An analysis of the Western and Southern Provincial council results shows even to the un-initiative that the ruling party has lost votes and seats compared to the elections held 5 years ago in 2009. The percentage votes have also dropped, but an arrogant and self-conceited Mahinda Rajapaksa is refusing to read the writing on the wall. Such arrogance will lead to self-destruction, if not self-defeat - even though there will be no one to destroy him.

The Provincial Council results must have jolted Mahinda Rajapaksa beyond belief. The proscription of 16 Diaspora organizations and 424 individuals as 'terrorists' shows his

desperation. The people of the North are terrorised by the summary execution of 3 suspected LTTE second rank leaders and arrest of over 65 persons, including women, for helping the LTTE. It is like hiding the comb to stop the wedding. It also reveals he may outwardly put up a brave face, but inside he must be quivering in his shoes.

At the elections Mahinda Rajapaksa was expecting to better the previous performance of the UPFA. He wanted to show the world his popularity in on the increase by leaps and bounds. As usual state resources were pressed for services. Government vehicles were used with impunity. The state controlled media worked overtime in favour of the ruling UPFA. The opening of Highways and other development projects were fast tracked. A star candidate from the Jathika Hela Urumaya' s Udaya Gammanpila a great champion of Sinhala Buddhism was fielded as the chief ministerial candidate by passing SLFP bigwigs. Not surprisingly Gammanpila's campaign was declared opened by Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, a public servant paid from the consolidated fund.

In fact the date for the election was scheduled purposely two days after the voting on the US resolution calling for an international investigation into human rights abuses and other related crimes. Government used Geneva challenge as a political battle cry. The battle cry of Mahinda Rajapaksa during the election campaign was louder than usual. .

There was a sustained campaign to whip up chauvinistic feelings that the Sinhala Buddhist masses should be ready to respond to international forces conspiring against the country. Mahinda Rajapaksa repeated the conspiracy theory at every election rally he addressed. He boasted that he is prepared to sit in the electric chair. In fact there was fierce competition between Rajapaksa and Sarath Fonseka as to who should take the chair first. Rajapaksa said that there is no doubt that UN and certain Western nations are being misled by the pro-LTTE Diaspora to take punitive measures against Sri Lanka for defeating the Tigers. And LTTE rump being instrumental in producing the 'infamous' Channel 4 documentary – the Killing Fields. He cited Conservative peer Lord Naseby of having said that conclusive evidence had emerged, that so-called witnesses to alleged war crimes in a documentary by Channel 4 were fully paid-up members of the Tigers.

The government controlled print and electronic media in unison castigated the British government for voicing human rights as if they are reborn. How Sri Lankans have not forgotten the way the British soldiers had indiscriminately killed people in colonies it captured including Sri Lanka. The British were also accused of projecting themselves as the godfathers of human rights and pontificate on the importance of protecting human rights.

Television channels aired scripts from the battle scenes to remind the Sinhalese voters that though defeated the remnants of LTTE remained a real threat to national security. This orchestration is to keep the myth of the LTTE regrouping in the North.

The Sri Lankan government accused the US Secretary of State John Kerry of jumping the gun even before his country had brought the third successive resolution against Sri Lanka. The government further claimed that Kerry had even threatened that they would meddle in the process. It is a threat to the sovereignty of an independent nation. “We will do it in Sri Lanka, where the government still has not answered basic demands for accountability and reconciliation, where attacks on civil society activists, journalists, and religious minorities, sadly, still continue,” he was quoted as saying. Mr. Kerry, it was alleged, must be making such a statement which could well have been based on the evidence given by the LTTE sympathisers.

Mahinda Rajapaksa urged people to give a decisive mandate as a fitting reply to UN rights resolution moved by US in Geneva. But the results must have come to him a rude shock although he puts up a brave face for his followers. He described his party's victory in the provincial polls as a mandate against the UN rights resolution on Sri Lanka. "People have given a clear message that no international interference would be tolerated," Rajapaksa said in a statement. As stated above, the listing of 16 Tamil Diaspora organizations as terrorist organizations and 424 individuals as terrorists is an act of desperation directly related to the less than expected showing at the elections both in terms of votes and seats in the 2014 Provincial Elections. There is no other reason one can think of. Let us revisit and take a close look at the election results of both the provinces.

### **Western Provincial Elections**

Table 1

|                            | 2014                |          |              | 2009                |          |              |
|----------------------------|---------------------|----------|--------------|---------------------|----------|--------------|
| <b>Party</b>               | <b>Votes polled</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Seats</b> | <b>Votes polled</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Seats</b> |
| <b>UPFA</b>                | 1,363,675           | 53.35    | 56*          | 1,506,115           | 64.73    | 68*          |
| <b>UNP</b>                 | 679,682             | 26.59    | 28           | 688,253             | 29.58    | 30           |
| <b>Democratic Party</b>    | 203,767             | 7.97     | 9            |                     |          |              |
| <b>JVP</b>                 | 156,208             | 6.11     | 6            | 56,384              | 2.42     | 3            |
| <b>Democratic People's</b> | 51,000              | 2.00     | 2            | 11,970              | 0.51     | 1            |

|                      |           |       |   |           |       |   |
|----------------------|-----------|-------|---|-----------|-------|---|
| <b>Front</b>         |           |       |   |           |       |   |
| <b>SLMC</b>          | 49,515    | 1.94  | 2 | 49,388    | 2.12  | 2 |
| <b>ACPC</b>          | 15,491    | 0.61  | 1 |           |       |   |
| <b>Others</b>        | 36,693    | 0.79  |   | 10,081    | 0.41  |   |
| <b>Valid votes</b>   | 2,556,031 | 95.76 |   | 2,326,886 | 96.32 |   |
| <b>Invalid votes</b> | 113,285   | 4.24  |   | 88,993    | 3.68  |   |
| <b>Total voters</b>  | 2,669,316 | 66.32 |   | 3,820,214 |       |   |

Source - Census Department

### Southern Province Elections

Table 2

| <b>Party</b>            | <b>2014</b>         |          |              | <b>2009</b>         |          |              |
|-------------------------|---------------------|----------|--------------|---------------------|----------|--------------|
|                         | <b>Votes polled</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Seats</b> | <b>Votes polled</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Seats</b> |
| <b>UPFA</b>             | 699,408             | 58.06    | 33           | 804,071             | 67.88    | 38*          |
| <b>UNP</b>              | 310,461             | 25.77    | 14           | 297,180             | 25.09    | 14           |
| <b>Democratic Party</b> | 75,532              | 6.27     | 3            |                     |          |              |
| <b>JVP</b>              | 109,032             | 9.05     | 5            | 72,379              | 6.11     | 3            |

|                          |           |       |   |           |       |   |
|--------------------------|-----------|-------|---|-----------|-------|---|
| <b>SLMC</b>              | 1,419     | 0.12  | 0 | 6,553     | 0.55  | 0 |
| <b>Others</b>            | 8,748     | 0.54  |   | 3,336     |       |   |
| <b>Valid votes</b>       | 1,204,570 | 96.19 |   | 1184511   | 95.78 |   |
| <b>Invalid votes</b>     | 47,276    | 3.81  |   | 52,082    | 4.21  |   |
| <b>Total votes</b>       | 1,252,296 | 66.32 |   | 1,236,593 |       |   |
| <b>Registered Voters</b> | 1,873,804 |       |   | 1,873,804 |       |   |

Source: Census Department

In the Western Province 46.65% voted against the government compared to 35.27% in 2009. In the Southern Province 41.47% of voters voted against the government compared to only 32.12% in 2009.

In the just concluded elections it appears that a large percentage of Tamils kept away from voting. May be out of frustration and apathy. But there is a reasonable presence of Tamils in the Western Province, Colombo District and Colombo City.

In the Western Province there are 5,821,710 people. The Sinhalese number 1,771,319 (76.69%) Muslims 450,505 (7.74%) Ceylon Tamils 335,751 (5.77%) and Hill Country Tamils 61,826 (1.17%)

Likewise in the Colombo district there are 2,309,809 people. Out of this Sinhalese number 1,771,319 (76.69%) Muslims 242,728 (10.51%) Ceylon Tamils 231,318 (10.01%) and Hill Country Tamils 27,336 (1.18%).

The following Table shows demographic composition of the Western Province, the Colombo District and the Colombo City.

**Table 3**

| <b>Ethnicity</b> | <b>Western Province</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Colombo District</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Colombo City</b> | <b>%</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|------------------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|--------------|
|------------------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|---------------------|----------|--------------|

|                       |                  |            |                  |            |                |            |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------|------------------|------------|----------------|------------|------------------|
| <b>Sinhalese</b>      | 4,905,425        | 81.26      | 1,771,319        | 76.69      | 265,657        | 41.36      | 6,942,401        |
| <b>Ceylon Muslims</b> | 450,505          | 7.74       | 242,728          | 10.51      | 153,299        | 23.87      | 846,532          |
| <b>Ceylon Thamils</b> | 335,751          | 5.77       | 231,318          | 10.01      | 185,672        | 28.91      | 752,741          |
| <b>Indian Thamils</b> | 61,826           | 1.06       | 27,336           | 1.18       | 13,968         | 2.17       | 103,130          |
| <b>Malays</b>         |                  |            |                  |            | 11,149         | 1.73       | 11,149           |
| <b>Burghers</b>       |                  |            |                  |            | 5,273          | 0.82       | 5,273            |
| <b>Col. Chetty</b>    |                  |            |                  |            | 740            | 0.11       | 740              |
| <b>Parathas</b>       |                  |            |                  |            | 471            | 0.07       | 471              |
| <b>Others</b>         | 68,203           | 1.17       | 37,108           | 1.61       | 5,934          | 0.82       | 111,246          |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>5,821,710</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>2,309,809</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>642,163</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>87,73,682</b> |

Source: Census Department (2012)

If a presidential election is held today, and if Rajapaksa is pitted against a common opposition candidate he will likely lose the election. The Thamils votes and to some extent Muslim votes will tilt the balance in favour of the opposition. All that is required is a swing vote of 6 - 7% at the polls. Mahinda Rajapaksa knows he is vulnerable and so decision to postpone the presidential election till 2016!

Yet, Mahinda Rajapaksa claims rather clumsily that he is only concerned about the votes he received in the country not about the votes overseas, in a reference to the vote at the UN Human Rights Council on a resolution against the country.

The resolution, which called for an international probe into alleged war crimes by Sri Lanka during the civil war that ended in 2009, was adopted with a 23-12 vote with 12 abstentions, including India, in the 47-member UN Human Rights Council's session at Geneva on Thursday.

Sri Lanka will now have to cooperate with an international investigation into alleged human rights abuses or face the consequences.

Though the government in an act of bravado has rejected the resolution, refused to implement, refused to recognise or cooperate with the UN international probe, it is unlikely the government will be allowed to go scot free. In less than 3 weeks we can expect the announcement of the members of the probe, terms of reference and the time frame within which to conclude the process.

Like a wise king Mahinda Rajapaksa must face the reality, listen to criticism and make peace with UNHCR without putting his head in the sand. If he continues to be adamant he will perish, even though there be no one to destroy him.