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Diyasena reborn [a look at the contemporary history of Sri Lanka]

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The legend of Diyasena takes us back to the times of Parakramabahu the Great. If I remember correctly, an ascetic had predicted that the king will be reborn as Diyasena 2500 years after the Buddha, to save Buddhism from extinction. Now the legend has been revised to say that Diyasena has come to save the Sinhala identity from extinction. In the course of the revised legend, Dutugemunu was inserted in place of Parakramabahu.

Of course myths are always recreated to suit the ruling elite. In '56 the Sinhala petty bourgeoisie embraced the Maha Bandaranaike claiming that he was the mythical Diyasena. But SWRD could not humble himself to be a parochial Sinhala chauvinist - he was too Anglo Saxon for that. At heart he was a Western liberal, with a radical lifestyle tied to global capitalism.

State capitalism of Bandaranaike was a part of the new arrangement - a structural change - in favour of expanding capitalism. It had nothing to do with socialism. It is true that the Sinhala middle class gained something from it, but they were still second class compared to the Westernised upper elite. In fact, the expansion of Sinhala culture - literature, music, technology - was really guided by the Anglo Saxon elite who were too learned and cultured to be outwitted.

Severe dissatisfaction

Towards the end of the sixties there was severe dissatisfaction among the Sinhala village youth. The JVP gave vent to this dissatisfaction and humiliation felt by the Sinhala petty bourgeoisie. In addition, it reflected their hatred against the capitalist system. But this social struggle against the ruling classes was pushed to a side by their fundamental weakness. They could not tolerate their Tamil counterparts - the doubly oppressed Tamil people. In spite of their slogans against capitalists and the brokering classes, the hate and jealousy of the Sinhala middle class was primarily directed at the Tamil people. Thus the JVP, as it developed in maturity, never could get out of Sinhala chauvinism.

The Tamil middle class got a bad deal compared with their Sinhala counterpart. The populist gimmicks of Bandaranaike's socialism were fascinating to the Sinhala masses. The Tamil masses very correctly suspected this localised socialism as being bogus. While the Anglo Saxon elite sidelined the Tamil upstarts, the populist leaders started kicking them around. Sinhala chauvinism showed its ferocity in a series of pogroms since 1957. Tamil bourgeoisie leaders, as parliamentarians and mass leaders did their best to show their opposition to these brutal terrorist acts. But this only brought vicious repressive terror from the Sinhala regime in Colombo. Tamil youth were desperate and they learned their lesson from the JVP - thus emerged the Tamil armed rebellion. The greatest mockery of history is that almost all the terror tactics of the LTTE were inherited from the JVP.

In this early period the JVP and Tamil liberation fighters looked to each other for support and they were partners in a common struggle. In fact the JVP took the position that it stood for the right of self determination when they came out into the open in 1977. Of course, at that time there was an

independent workers' movement as the old Left parties had come out of the coalition.

Solution

The Nava Sama Samaja Party had already been campaigning for a solution to the Tamil national problem on the basis of equality, autonomy and the right of self determination. This had a positive influence on both these petty bourgeoisie movements. But the Left could not develop into a united fighting force though they united in the general strike in '80 and in '87 as the United Socialist Alliance.

The break up of the Left forces enhanced the separation and sectarianism of both the LTTE and the JVP. The JVP moved into an unholy alliance with the SLFP thus resurrecting the myth of Diyasena, this time as the Sinhala hero of Ape kama - our way. This is, we are told, a movement rooted in the villages, led by a real Sinhala prince! However this movement defeated the Tamil liberation fighters - women and men born, bred and educated in this country, only with the direction and support of the global capital including India.

In fact foreign forces fought on the side of the Sinhala prince. At the same time Maha Rajano's development programme is a slightly revised edition of Regaining Sri Lanka of Wickremesinghe, the Kelama. Why Kelama? Because Wickremesinghe exposed the frauds of the regime to the global capitalist masters! As it is Maha Rajano is begging for billions of dollars from the managing institutes of global capital for the very survival of his regime.

Does the legend say that Diyasena will push the country into destruction and misery, not only for the Tamils but also for the Sinhala, and will then go around begging the global capitalist masters to save it?

P.S.

* lakbimanews 31 may 2009.