

Black Pebbles & White Pebbles



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"...Sometimes, the Tamil response to the international community, takes on the characteristics of the teen age girl's response in the pebble story. It seems that we avoid confronting the international community for fear of provoking its ire. We avoid seeking an open dialogue with the international community on its own strategic imperatives and the true rationale for its actions. We resort to subterfuge. We say that our way is the 'anuku murai' - the diplomatic way to 'approach' issues. We claim that this is the effective way. But has this 'anuku murai' succeeded? Again the result of not calling a spade a spade is that we confuse our own people. We confuse our people by leading them to believe that the international community is without sufficient 'cleverness' to respond to our subterfuge with its own subterfuge and advance its own agenda. We confuse our people by leading them to believe that all that needs to be done is to wake up the international community to the facts and the justice of our cause and all will be well. This is the limitation of our discourse. It is a limitation that we need to transcend. Diplomacy may be the art of lying without getting caught but a struggle for freedom is not..."

Some three decades ago, Edward De Bono related a story in his book on the Use of Lateral Thinking. The story went something like this -

"Many years ago when a person who owed money could be thrown into jail, a merchant in London had the misfortune to owe a huge sum to a money lender. The money lender, who was old and ugly, fancied the merchant's beautiful teenage daughter. He proposed a bargain. He said he would cancel the merchant's debt if he could have the girl instead.

Both the merchant and his daughter were horrified at the proposal. So the cunning money lender proposed that they let Providence decide the matter. He told them that he would put a black pebble and a white pebble into an empty moneybag and then the girl would have to pick out one of the pebbles. If she chose the black pebble she would become his wife and her father's debt would be cancelled. If she chose the white pebble she would stay with her father and the debt would still be cancelled. But if she refused to pick out a pebble her father would be thrown into jail and she would starve.

Reluctantly the merchant agreed. They were standing on a pebble strewn path in the merchant's garden as they talked and the moneylender stooped down to pick up the two pebbles. As he picked up the pebbles the girl, sharp eyed with fright, noticed that

he picked up two black pebbles and put them into the moneybag. He then asked the girl to pick out the pebble that was to decide her fate and that of her father.

Imagine that you are standing on that path in the merchant's garden. What would you have done if you had been the unfortunate girl? If you had had to advise her what would you have advised her to do?

What type of thinking would you use to solve the problem ? You may believe that careful logical analysis must solve the problem if there is a solution. This type of thinking is straight forward vertical thinking. The other type of thinking is lateral thinking.

Vertical thinkers are not usually of much help to a girl in this situation. The way they analyse it; there are three possibilities:

1. The girl should refuse to take a pebble.
2. The girl should show that there are two black pebbles in the bag and expose the money lender as a cheat.
3. The girl should take a black pebble and sacrifice herself in order to save her father from prison.

None of the suggestions is very helpful, for if the girl does not take a pebble her father goes to prison, and if she does take a pebble, then she has to marry the money lender.

The girl in the pebble story put her hand into the moneybag and drew out a pebble. Without looking at it she fumbled and let it fall to the path where it was immediately lost among all the others. 'Oh, how clumsy of me,' she said, 'but never mind if you look into the bag you will be able to tell which pebble I took by the colour of the one that is left.' Since the remaining pebble is of course black, it must be assumed that she has taken the white pebble, since the moneylender dare not admit his dishonesty.

The story shows the difference between vertical thinking and lateral thinking. Vertical thinkers are concerned with the fact that the girl has to take a pebble. Lateral thinkers become concerned with the pebble that is left behind. Vertical thinkers take the most reasonable view of a situation and then proceed logically and carefully to work it out. Lateral thinkers tend to explore all the different ways of looking at something, rather than accepting the most promising and proceeding from that."

De Bono was right to use the story to illustrate the value of lateral thinking. But, the story is of interest for other reasons as well. The crux of the matter was that girl's subterfuge succeeded because 'the moneylender dare not admit his dishonesty'. The moneylender was evil. The moneylender was a cheat. However, even cheats who are intent on securing their evil objectives, dare not admit to their dishonesty, because they fear that to do so, may erode their power and authority in the public eye.

But, it is here that several questions arise in relation to the 'pebble' story. Why did not the girl taken the second option and confront the merchant and tell him that she had seen him cheat - and have the courage to face the consequences? Her martyrdom may have laid the foundations for a more just society. Again, why did not the girl launch a Gandhian style campaign and mobilise the people against the evil merchant - and

campaign for a change in an iniquitous law? By adopting a subterfuge to defeat the merchant's subterfuge, had the girl herself become a cheat? Did she then grow up to believe that a clever subterfuge will get her out of difficult situations?

Again, what if the equally sharp eyed evil merchant (sharp eyed not with fright but with cunning) had seen through the girl's subterfuge, and the merchant himself 'clumsily' dropped the other pebble as he was taking it out of the bag and then insisted on replaying the so called 'providential' game afresh? The short point that the De Bono story misses is that there may be no end to the 'subterfuge' process.

Sometimes, the Tamil response to the international community, takes on the characteristics of the teen age girl's response in the pebble story. It seems that we avoid confronting the international community for fear of provoking its ire. We avoid seeking an open dialogue with the international community on its own strategic imperatives and the true rationale for its actions. We resort to subterfuge. We say that our way is the 'anuku murai' - the diplomatic way to 'approach' issues. We claim that this is the effective way. But has this 'anuku murai' succeeded? Again the result of not calling a spade a spade is that we confuse our own people. We confuse our people by leading them to believe that the international community is without sufficient 'cleverness' to respond to our subterfuge with its own subterfuge and advance its own agenda. We confuse our people by leading them to believe that all that needs to be done is to wake up the international community to the facts and to the justice of our cause and all will be well. This is the limitation of our discourse. It is a limitation that we need to transcend. Diplomacy may be the art of lying without getting caught but a struggle for freedom is not.

Mamanithar Dharmarajam Sivaram remarked three years ago in 2003 -

"..Today it is clear beyond all reasonable doubt that India and the US-UK-Japan Bloc are trying to influence and manage Sri Lanka's peace process to promote and consolidate their respective strategic and economic interests... America may be the mightiest nation on the earth today but that cannot detract an iota from our right to live with honour, dignity and freedom in the land of our fore bears. It cannot for a moment make us give up an inch of our lands to help India or the US Bloc stabilise the Sri Lankan state for the sole purpose of furthering their strategic and economic interests... From 1983 to 86, it was taboo among Tamils to propagate the truth that India was exploiting their cause to gain a foothold in Sri Lanka. The few who dared to speak about India's hegemonistic designs were admonished not to be too rash lest we provoke Delhi's ire and cause a disruption in the weapons handouts by the RAW....The price the Tamil liberation movement as a whole had to pay for not educating the people about the truth of India's intentions was high. At this juncture, even a doddering dullard would find the deja vu inescapable...The Tamil nation cannot afford to make the same mistake again... "

And Velupillai Pirabakaran said some 10 years before that -

"...We are fully aware that the world is not rotating on the axis of human justice. Every country in this world advances its own interests. It is the economic and trade interests that determine the order of the present world, not the moral law of justice nor the rights of people. International relations and

diplomacy between countries are determined by such interests. Therefore we cannot expect an immediate recognition of the moral legitimacy of our cause by the international community... The world is constantly changing and there will be unexpected changes. At a particular conjuncture the international situation might change favourably to us. At that time, the conscience of the world will be conducive to the call of our just cause... In reality, the success of our struggle depends on us, not on the world. Our success depends on our own efforts, on our own strength, on our own determination..." *Velupillai Pirabakaran, Maha Veera Naal Address - November 1993*

The world is not rotating on the axis of human justice. Like the money lender in the pebble story who was well aware of the justice of the girl's plea, the international community also is well aware of the legitimacy of the struggle of people of Tamil Eelam for freedom from alien Sinhala rule. They are not stupid. The international community knows well that they cannot openly justify the rule of the Tamil people by a permanent alien Sinhala majority within the confines of a single state. The international community knows well that the Gandhian leader S.J.V.Chelvanayagam was right when he declared in February 1975 -

"Throughout the ages the Sinhalese and Tamils in the country lived as distinct sovereign people till they were brought under foreign domination. It should be remembered that the Tamils were in the vanguard of the struggle for independence in the full confidence that they also will regain their freedom. We have for the last 25 years made every effort to secure our political rights on the basis of equality with the Sinhalese in a united Ceylon. It is a regrettable fact that successive Sinhalese governments have used the power that flows from independence to deny us our fundamental rights and reduce us to the position of a subject people. These governments have been able to do so only by using against the Tamils the sovereignty common to the Sinhalese and the Tamils. I wish to announce to my people and to the country that I consider the verdict at this election as a mandate that the Tamil Eelam nation should exercise the sovereignty already vested in the Tamil people and become free." *Statement by S.J.V.Chelvanayagam Q.C. M.P. , leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front, 7 February 1975*

But concerned with stabilising the Sri Lankan state for the sole purpose of furthering their own strategic and economic interests, the international community pretends to be unaware of the justice of the struggle of the Tamil people. They are not asleep. They pretend to be asleep. And therefore, for Tamils to respond to the international community on the basis that it is all a question of waking up the international community to the facts and to the justice of our cause is to act out a surreal dream drama.

Let us take one recent example - the European Union listing of the LTTE as a terrorist organisation. Predictably there was no shortage of editorials, press releases, interviews, petitions and appeals by Tamils which questioned

- the EU's 'profound lack of understanding of the dynamics' of the conflict;
- the EU's 'failure to recall the full sequence of events that led Sri Lanka out of war and into peace';

- the EU's 'statist disdain for armed non-state actors'.
- the EU's decision as 'extremely harsh, unfair, untimely and one-sided'
- the EU's decision as being 'ill-timed and premature'
- the EU's decision being the handiwork of a Sri Lankan origin British MEP and that the MEPs who had voted for EU Parliamentary Resolution did not 'know the effects of the tricks of the Sri Lankan government and its propaganda machine'

But all these writings avoid engaging the EU in a dialogue about the EU's own strategic interests and the real motivations behind the EU action. They perpetuate the myth that the EU is a disinterested good Samaritan motivated simply with bringing peace to a troubled island - a good Samaritan, lacking the understanding that we have and misled by a skilful Sri Lanka propaganda machine. It was in the same way that during the 1983-86 period our writings perpetuated the myth that New Delhi was a disinterested good Samaritan without its own strategic interests in the Indian region.

Let us examine each of the reasons suggested for the EU decision in turn.

Was the EU decision due to a 'profound lack of understanding of the dynamics' of the conflict? The Sri Lanka - Tamil Eelam conflict is one of the most researched conflicts in the world. The EU has had the benefit of the research carried out by its own Ministries (and intelligence services) and has had access to the research of US think tanks and US government resources. The EU is well aware of the documented record of ethnic cleansing. Does anybody seriously suggest that the EU decision was taken without a sophisticated understanding of the issues involved? Or did the EU take the decision it did, at the time that it did, because it had a truly profound understanding of the 'dynamics' of the conflict and it was intent on stabilising the Sri Lankan state for the sole purpose of furthering its own strategic and economic interests?

Again was the EU decision due to a 'failure to recall the full sequence of events that led Sri Lanka out of war and into peace'? Or was the decision taken because the EU did recall only too well the full sequence of events that led to the LTTE controlling parts of the Tamil homeland and the EU was now intent on preventing the LTTE from consolidating and extending that control?

Further was the EU decision due to some sort of generalised 'statist disdain for armed non-state actors'? Did the EU have the same 'statist disdain' in the case of Croatia or for that matter in the case of Latvia, Lithuania and the Ukraine? Or was the EU decision directed not by some generalised 'statist disdain' but by specific strategic concerns (that it shares with the US) in relation to the Indian region?

As to the view that the EU decision was 'extremely harsh, unfair, untimely and one-sided', was Indian National Security adviser Jyotindra Nath Dixit right when he declared that 'inter-state relations are not governed by the logic of morality' and that 'they were and they remain an amoral phenomenon.' Is it real to suggest that the EU will act fairly (or be multi partial) at the expense of its own strategic interests and is there not a need to openly examine the nature and content of those interests?

Let us now turn to the other reason that has been suggested for the EU ban i.e. that MEPs who had voted for EU Parliamentary Resolution somehow did not 'know the effects of the tricks of the Sri Lankan government and its propaganda machine'. Is it being suggested that MEPs who had voted for the Resolution and who came from many different political parties were simpletons who were blinded by the brilliance and cleverness of Sri Lanka's propaganda machine? Or was it that the European Parliamentary Resolution simply set the stage for the EU decision that was to follow and that these decisions were not taken lightly but after much consideration? And was it that the EU was mindful of the lessons learned in Vietnam and Algiers when Governments failed to quell liberation movements despite having recourse to superior arms and resources?

"The French Chief of Staff Andre Beaufre wrote about his own experience in Algeria and Vietnam in his 1973 German-language book 'Die Revolutionierung des Kriegsbildes': 'The surprising success of the decolonization wars can only be explained by the following: The weak seem to have defeated the strong, but actually just the reverse was true from a moral point of view, which brings us to the conclusion that limited wars are primarily fought on the field of morale.' In order for... states to quickly and effectively wipe out "revolt", which could get out of hand despite technical superiority (read: better weapons) due to the political and moral convictions of the mass movement, it is necessary to make comprehensive analyses early on and to take effective action in the psychological arena... Ever since the U.S. Defence Department organised the first ever World Wide Psyops Conference in 1963 and the first NATO Symposium On Defence Psychology in Paris in 1960, many NATO leaders and several scientists have been working in the field of psychological counter-insurgency methods (cf. the detailed reports and analyses of P. Watson, Psycho -War: Possibilities, Power, And The Misuse Of Military Psychology, Frankfurt 1985, p.25ff.). The central aim of this defence approach is to destroy the morale of the insurgent movement ... Defaming the insurgents as "terrorists" and punishing them accordingly - thereby ignoring international law concerning the rights of people in war - is a particularly useful means." Michael Schubert 'On Liberation Movements And The Rights Of Peoples',1992

The Tamil response in relation to the EU ban is only one illustration of a more general malaise. For several years before the EU ban, we credited Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar with having skilfully persuaded the US and the UK to ban the LTTE. If Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar had been alive at the time of the EU ban, we would have credited him with having engineered the EU ban as well. But decisions about listing organisations as terrorist are not taken by the US or the UK on the basis of the persuasive diplomacy (and the Oxford Union debating skills) of the Foreign Minister of a small state in the Indian region. They are taken on the basis that they further the strategic interests of the concerned countries.

Hopefully sufficient has been said to show that not much is gained by Tamils adopting the 'anuku murai' of the teen age girl in the pebble story. Indeed, after these many years, it should be self evident by now that it is an approach that has signally failed to deliver. Here, the words of Professor John P. Neelsen in April this year merit our attention -

"...In the context of today's pre-dominance of the international system the parties to any conflict whether between states or within a country have to fight on two fronts: the one on the ground, the other in the field of world public opinion. Despite national news agencies and increasingly powerful regional media, such as Al Jazeera, it remains so far essentially Western. A war can be won on the battlefield by force of arms, and still be lost on the second front, when it is not presented (and considered) as just and worthy of backing, including financial and military support, by the Western media (and their public). Whether or not, the LTTE agreed to pursue internal self-determination merely as a ploy to turn world public opinion in its favour betting that the GOSL would never consent to any meaningful compromise: the strategy has failed, even though the basic assumptions proved absolutely correct. Yet, despite continued intransigence on the part of Colombo, neither the Western media nor their public nor the occidental governments have changed sides. On the contrary, after initial sympathy, governments have not only simply taken this major concession for granted, but have sharpened their criticism of the LTTE..." *International Seminar: Envisioning New Trajectories for Peace in Sri Lanka Zurich, Switzerland 7 - 9 April 2006*

Why is it that 'despite continued intransigence on the part of Colombo, neither the Western media nor their public nor the occidental governments have changed sides'? The answer is not that the Tamil people have failed in their 'public relations' exercise. The answer is that the members of the international community are not disinterested good Samaritans concerned with securing justice for the Tamil people and bringing peace to a troubled island. Each member of the international community is concerned with stabilising Sri Lanka in such a way as to secure its own strategic interest in the Indian region and the Indian Ocean.

But, that is not to say that the best laid plans of men and mice may not go astray. The international community may not be unmindful of something which Sardar K.M.Pannikar, Indian Ambassador to China from 1948 to 1952, and later Vice Chancellor, Mysore University said in Principles and Practice of Diplomacy fifty years ago -

"...Foreign Ministers and diplomats presumably understand the permanent interests of their country.. But no one can foresee clearly the effects of even very simple facts as they pertain to the future. The Rajah of Cochin who in his resentment against the Zamorin permitted the Portuguese to establish a trading station in his territories could not foresee that thereby he had introduced into India something which was to alter the course of history. Nor could the German authorities, who, in their anxiety to create confusion and chaos in Russia, permitted a sealed train to take Lenin and his associates across German territory, have foreseen what forces they were unleashing. To them the necessity of the moment was an utter breakdown of Russian resistance and to send Lenin there seemed a superior act of wisdom... "

More recent examples may include the support given by the US to the Taliban in the Afghan war against the Soviet Union and the support given by the US to Saddam Hussein in the Iraq war against Iran. But then that may be another matter.

The annexures to the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord reflected some of the countervailing interests of India and the United States in 1987. That was twenty years ago. Since then much has happened but not much has changed. Today, US foreign policy is directed to build on its current position as the sole surviving super power and secure a unipolar world (with a 'multi polar perspective' - a la Condoleezza Rice) for the foreseeable future. And this means, amongst other matters, preventing the rise of independent regional hegemony. On the other hand, the central plank of New Delhi's foreign policy is to deny any independent intermediary role to extra regional powers in the affairs of the Indian region and also to further the emergence of a multi lateral world. In this latter objective, New Delhi may count on the 'calibrated' support of the European Union, Russia, China and Iran amongst others.

Given the difference in the end goals that US and India have, it should not be surprising if the policies of the United States and New Delhi in relation to Sri Lanka and the LTTE are not always congruent. But that is not to say that the United States will not cooperate with India. It will. It will seek to cooperate 'as a super power' - and the US believes that it has sufficient instruments in its armoury to do just that. One such instrument is the Norwegian sponsored Peace Process. This may explain the consistently enthusiastic support that the Peace process has received from the United States and the more muted (and calibrated) support from India. This may also help us understand the covert operations of RAW in Tamil areas in the island of Sri Lanka and the material support extended by India to Sinhala governments and Sri Lanka political parties. In the 1980s, RAW gave covert material and financial support to the Tamil militants to secure the same end - Indian hegemony in the Indian Ocean region. It appears that New Delhi's interests remain permanent, though its 'friends' may have changed from time to time.

Having said that, today, the US and India may find common cause in weakening the LTTE - but weaken it in such a way that thereafter each of them may successfully jockey for position and influence in the Indian region. The 'weakening' in this context means the isolation and annihilation of Velupillai Pirabakaran and securing an LTTE under a 'reformed' leadership. B Raman, Additional Secretary (retired), Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India, New Delhi, and, presently, Director, Institute for Topical Studies, Chennai, and distinguished fellow and convener, Observer Research Foundation, Chennai Chapter spelt out New Delhi's own 'legitimate' aspiration a year ago -

" I have been repeatedly writing that the Sri Lankan Tamils need an LTTE minus Prabakaran and that if the LTTE throws him out and gives up terrorism, India and Sri Lanka should be prepared to do business with it. Without the protective role of the LTTE, the Tamils would be at the mercy of the Sinhalese chauvinists. Statesmanship demands that the Sri Lankan leaders should work for such a denouement through special gestures to the Tamils and the other leaders of the LTTE." *South Asia Analysis Group, New Delhi, Paper No. 1217, January 10, 2005*

Raman's concern to protect the Tamil people from Sinhala chauvinism would have been heart warming but for the grim reality of the New Delhi sponsored comic opera of the 1988 Provincial Councils which showed the extent of New Delhi's willingness to appease Sinhala chauvinism and sacrifice Tamil interests in the altar of its own strategic interests.

The political reality is that, on the one hand, the US is mindful that it was after all President Jayawardene's 'growing togetherness' with the US which led to New Delhi's support of the Tamil militant movement in the early 1980s. At that time the US kept its oars in Tamil waters with efforts such as hoisting the Eelam flag in the State of Massachusetts. Today, the same US continues to speak of the 'legitimate aspirations' of the Tamil people. On the other hand, New Delhi has no desire to lose its ability to play the 'Tamil card' to keep Sri Lanka in line in the years to come - even after the successful annihilation of Velupillai Pirabakaran and the weakening of the LTTE. And so New Delhi too proclaims ad nauseam that they are concerned to secure the 'legitimate aspirations' of the Tamil people. Additionally it builds its own network amongst dissident Tamils both in Sri Lanka and abroad to propagate its interests. It is within the interstices of this international frame that the struggle of the people of Tamil Eelam to be free from alien Sinhala rule continues under conditions of excruciating agony and suffering. And it is this same international frame which Sinhala Sri Lanka seeks to use to continue its genocidal onslaught on the Tamil people.

As for Professor Neelson's comments about the continued support of the 'western media' for Sri Lanka, it is not a matter for surprise that the western media broadly follows the political stance of the ruling establishments in the western world. The notion of a 'liberal' news media is an enduring and influential political myth -

"...The notion of a "liberal" national news media is one of the most enduring and influential political myths...the larger fallacy of the "liberal media" argument is the idea that reporters and mid-level editors set the editorial agenda at their news organizations. In reality, most journalists have about as much say over what is presented by newspapers and TV news programs as factory workers and foremen have over what a factory manufactures. That is not to say factory workers have no input in their company's product: they can make suggestions and ensure the product is professionally built. But top executives have a much bigger say in what gets produced and how. The news business is essentially the same.

News organizations are hierarchical institutions often run by strong-willed men who insist that their editorial vision be dominant within their news companies. Some concessions are made to the broader professional standards of journalism, such as the principles of objectivity and fairness. But media owners historically have enforced their political views and other preferences by installing senior editors whose careers depend on delivering a news product that fits with the owner's prejudices. Mid-level editors and reporters who stray too far from the prescribed path can expect to be demoted or fired. Editorial employees intuitively understand the career risks of going beyond the boundaries..." *Robert Parry in Price of the 'Liberal Media' Myth, 2003*

The political reality is that which John Harrington pointed out many years ago -

".... in most cases the media present news and events in a manner that not only agrees with the views of the powerful, but actually supports their domination.... the maintenance of order is the key idea... in earlier times violence and the threat of physical force was used to maintain order. But today control is pursued most effectively through 'controlling the common

sense'the dominated are encouraged to see the world as the powerful do ... (by articulating) different visions of the world in such a way that their potential antagonism (to the dominant view) is neutralised...." *John Harrington in Media, Framing, and the Internet: Dominant Ideologies Persist, 1998*

The western media follows the flag and the dominated are encouraged to see the world as the powerful do. The western media know that to be openly one sided is to be dismissed as being partial and propagandist. The trick is to appear balanced and articulate different visions of the world in such a way that their potential antagonism to the establishment view is neutralised. It is spin that rules. A recent instance is the media coverage of the targeted bombing of school children in Vallipunam. Reuban Nanthakumar's well researched study of the BBC coverage shows how the 'balanced approach' technique was used to neutralise any potential antagonism to the broad political stance of the international community in relation to the struggle for Tamil Eelam. As he rightly points out 'the truth from one side cannot be "balanced" with a lie from another'. Again Michael Rivero may well be right when he said that "most propaganda is not designed to fool the critical thinker but only to give moral cowards an excuse not to think at all" -

"..Most people prefer to believe their leaders are just and fair even in the face of evidence to the contrary, because once a citizen acknowledges that the government under which he or she lives is lying and corrupt, the citizen has to choose what he or she will do about it. To take action in the face of a corrupt government entails risks of harm to life and loved ones. To choose to do nothing is to surrender one's self-image of standing for principles. Most people do not have the courage to face that choice. Hence, most propaganda is not designed to fool the critical thinker but only to give moral cowards an excuse not to think at all." *Michael Rivero in What Really Happened*

Given all this (and more) there is a clear need to expose to the scrutiny of the Tamil people (yes, the Tamil people and not some other people) the stated claim of the international community that it seeks the 'best solution in human rights terms' and explore the unstated interests which the stated claim is directed to secure. Such an exploration will help us to secure solid ground under our own feet. In Subhas Chandra Bose's words, it is only then that we can stand perpendicular - anywhere. Aurobindo was right when he said more than a hundred years ago -

"..It is a vain dream to suppose that what other nations have won by struggle and battle, by suffering and tears of blood, we shall be allowed to accomplish easily, without terrible sacrifices, merely by spending the ink of the journalist and petition framer and the breath of the orator. Petitioning will not bring us one yard nearer freedom; self development will not easily be suffered to advance to its goal. For self development spells the doom of the ruling despotism, which must therefore oppose our progress with all the art and force of which it is the master..."

And Velupillai Pirabakaran too was right when he said in 1993 -

".. In reality, the success of our struggle depends on us, not on the world. Our success depends on our own efforts, on our own strength, on our own determination."

At the same time, strange as it may seem to some, the exploration of the unstated interests of the international community, may also serve to show that the struggle for an independent Tamil Eelam, is not in opposition to many of the underlying interests of the parties concerned with the conflict in the island - and that includes Sri Lanka, India, the European Union and the United States. If Germany and France were able to put in place 'associate' structures despite the suspicions and confrontations of two world wars, it should not be beyond the capacity of Tamil Eelam and Sri Lanka to work out structures, within which each independent state may remain free and prosper, but at the same time pool sovereignty in certain agreed areas. An independent Tamil Eelam is not negotiable but an independent Tamil Eelam can and will negotiate. Tamils who today live in many lands and across distant seas know only too well that sovereignty after all, is not virginity .

Mamanithar Sivaram's admonition three years ago, bears repetition yet again -

"The creeping intellectual/political barrenness (amongst Tamils) should be stopped without further delay. LTTE officials too should stop making pedestrian, boringly predictable utterances on public forums and, instead, make every endeavour to stir the people's reason, intellectual curiosity, their sense of community, their imagination and their intellectual fervour. This is the only way forward to decisively break the vicious circle of political obfuscation by which our people are deeply but blissfully afflicted today. "