

## **Return to Normalcy: New Directions for Positive Peace in Sri Lanka**

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### **Abstract**

Since the ending of the war between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lanka Government, a debate has sprung up in Sri Lanka about the directions in establishing positive peace. As one can expect in a democracy this is of course a healthy discourse. Sri Lanka already has a road map to peace. The debate is taking place about the finer points. Sri Lanka from its own experience from the liberated Eastern province has somewhat a success story on rebuilding, reintegration, and peace. Though it may not be able to use the success in the East to tackle a bigger problem in the North as together the North and East represents the majority of the Tamil polity of Sri Lanka. In the absence of moderate Tamil political parties it is indeed a challenge for the government of Sri Lanka to take the necessary steps in the new direction from negative peace to positive peace and to return to normalcy. This report is an attempt to keep up with discourse on the new directions in positive peace that can be brought about in the political, social, and cultural spheres of Sri Lankan people.

### **1. Introduction**

*There is no way to peace. Peace is the way.*

#### **A.J. Muste**

Thirty years of terrorism in Sri Lanka ended in May 2009 with Government armed forces claiming victory. One of the most dangerous terrorist leaders of our times was killed in the IV Eelam war marking the end of violence. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was once defined by Dr. Magnus Ranstorp, expert on terrorism as “[LTTE is] probably the most sophisticated terrorist organization in the world.”<sup>1</sup> On 19th May, President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Commander-in-Chief of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces was able to announce the victory and declare the three decades old insurgency is over. He stated that “Our motherland has been completely freed from the clutches of separatist terrorism.”<sup>2</sup> End of war brought about a negative peace. Aftermath of a bitter war Sri Lankans are now relieved. This writer’s personal experiences with the war begin during undergraduate years. Throughout the adult life writer learns to live with the killings, bombings, curfews and emergency laws. Similar to this writer, an entire generation of Sri Lankans has grown up not knowing peace. For the people in the North and East, it was even harder as they experienced

only the war, military campaign of the LTTE and the campaign for independence from Sri Lanka Government. Dr. Noel Nadesan, the Editor of *Uthayam* wrote that the President “deserves the congratulations of Sri Lankans regardless of their ethnicity.” He further stated “more than any other community, the Sri Lankan Tamils owe him their thanks for ending their misery.”<sup>3</sup>

In this research note, I do not plan to go into a detailed history of the conflict in Sri Lanka or dwell upon the civil war or war on terrorism but rather focus on what is to be done next. In Sri Lanka the people from the North, South, East, West and Central province want peace. Therefore my objective is to discuss the immediate need and the avenues for positive peace as discussed in Sri Lanka at present time. This paper will address solely the future directions for positive peace. This paper limits itself to the question in hand in Sri Lanka than addressing peace as a self-regulating process. The distinction made here is what Johan Galtung made between negative peace (-P) meaning absence of war and positive peace (+P) in promoting human potential with economic and political structures in place.<sup>4</sup> In this case the end of civil war within a nation which has brought about -P must now be turned to +P with social justice for everyone in place.

This research note derives its local discourse data gathered from discussions by political analysts, political scientists, peace activists, politicians, journalists and the others in the print media in Sri Lanka from end of May to beginning of August 2009. I have used *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies* (2007) by Charles Webel and Johan Galtung and *Peace Building: A Field Guide* (2001) by Luc Reyckler and Thania Paffenholz as text books to refer on the world wide accepted norms on working towards positive peace building.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Hope for the Future

Sri Lanka is a plural society. Pluralism is defined by the *Merriam-Webster 3<sup>rd</sup> New International Dictionary* as “a state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain an autonomous participation in and development of their traditional culture or special interest within the confines of a common civilization”. By adopting pluralistic ideals and policies, groups can maintain their separate identities without threatening inter-group harmony. The Sri Lankan Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Malays and others together with the Buddhists, Catholics, other Christians, Hindus, Muslims and other religious followers should be able to live without suspicion of each other in the renewed hope for the future without violence.

The hope for the new directions in positive peace in the plural society of Sri Lanka came the very next day after the ending of the war, from the Head of State, when the President of Sri Lanka made his address to the Parliament. He stated: “At this victorious moment, it is necessary for us to state with great responsibility, that we do not accept a military solution as the final solution. ...Mr. Speaker, It is necessary that we give to these people the freedoms that are the right of people in all other parts of our country. Similarly, it is necessary that the political solutions they need should be brought closer to them faster than any country or government in the world would bring. However, it cannot be an imported solution. We do not have the time to be experimenting with the solutions suggested by other countries. Therefore, it is necessary that we find a solution that is our very own, of our own nation. It should be a solution acceptable to all sections of the people.”<sup>6</sup>

If we are to take lessons from history, the President’s commitment to peace is somewhat similar to what President Abraham Lincoln said in his famous Gettysburg address. President Lincoln’s words at Gettysburg run true in the case of Sri Lanka, when Lincoln said: “It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause of which they gave the last full measure of devotion-that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have

a new birth of freedom.”<sup>7</sup>

It is also important to note that his address to Parliament, President Rajapakse started the speech in Tamil language. This is an important fact that in a plural society an attempt to reach out to the Tamil people extending mutual respect is a first step towards social harmony. This was indeed a new direction in positive peace. It is the first time in the nation’s history when a Head of State started his or her speech by speaking in Tamil language before delivering full speech in Sinhala. President also stated in the beginning of his long speech that the war against the LTTE is not a war against Tamil people and the aim was to liberate Tamil people from the LTTE. This was a reassurance given by the government to the Tamil people on the occasion of celebrations in Sri Lanka on the victory over LTTE. It is noteworthy that during this week, Tamils living in the metropolitan areas and in suburbs went about their work with no threat of fear unlike in the past from the celebrating Sinhalese or Muslims.

### 3. Political Solution

In the discussion of positive peace strategies for Sri Lanka, discourse of a political solution by many within and outside the country has been going on for a long time. But with the LTTE portraying themselves as the sole representatives of the Tamil people, their main focus was always the state of Eelam and nothing less than Eelam. This is the reason whatever said and done LTTE kept its war machine active. Therefore, it is only now with the defeat or elimination of the LTTE and with the establishment of negative peace that Sri Lanka can discuss and act on a real time political solution. It is also natural that in a democracy such as Sri Lanka with a highly literate population who records large numbers in participation in parliamentary elections, a debate on this subject to come up after the victory over the LTTE. From the side of the government, the commitment for the idea of a political solution was reiterated further in the joint statement issued by the UN Secretary General and the Government of Sri Lanka soon after the end of war on the visit of the UN Secretary General to Sri Lanka. It stated that: “President Rajapaksa and Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon agreed ... Sri Lanka had entered a new post-conflict beginning. In this context, the Government of Sri Lanka faced many immediate and long-term challenges relating to issues of relief, rehabilitation, resettlement and reconciliation. While addressing these critical issues, it was agreed that the new situation offered opportunities for long-term development of the north and for re-establishing democratic institutions and electoral politics after 2 ½ decades. The Government expressed its commitment to ensure the economic and political empowerment of the people of the north through its programmes. Further, President Rajapaksa and the Secretary-General agreed that addressing the aspirations and grievances of all communities and working towards a lasting political solution was fundamental to ensuring long-term socio-economic development.”<sup>8</sup>

The importance of a Political solution was never in doubt. Even the Deputy Leader of the main opposition party, the United National Party (UNP) recently acknowledged that a political solution is of critical importance.<sup>9</sup> But what is this political solution? Perhaps it is necessary to discuss here what would constitute a political solution. Towards a proposal to a political solution the government appointed an All-Party Representative Committee (APRC) which started its work in January 2006. It was established by the President. The mandate of the APRC was to draft a set of constitutional reforms that would enhance the democratic rights and freedoms of citizens so as to ensure long-term stability and economic growth. This is exactly the social justice which would stand for positive peace. Yet for this exercise to be successful the proposals of the APRC must be accepted by a significant majority of the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and other minorities. According to the Chairman, the APRC has reached agreement on various issues. Only drawback has been that the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) the right wing Sinhala Buddhist party were not represented in the APRC. With the impending completion of the report of the APRC government may set up a Parliamentary select committee to evolve the final set of proposals to address the issue of non

representative political parties of the APRC.

A new direction for positive peace would be TNA parliamentarians entering the active mainstream politics of Sri Lanka as well as the peace building efforts through the APRC. Dr. S. I Keethapongcalan, a prominent political scientist state that “since what was considered the barrier to a political solution, the LTTE, has now been eliminated, a political solution should work. Also since there is a vacuum created ... Tamil community should take this as an opportunity to create a discourse”.<sup>10</sup> At the victory parade on June 3, the APRC Chairman spoke of a political solution. Later at a press briefing, the Media Minister in an apparent reference to the APRC said that Government would implement proposals by the APRC for a political solution.

Commitment for a political solution is visible in the actions by the Sri Lanka Government since the end of the war and it indeed is a new direction for positive peace in Sri Lanka.

#### **4. Devolution of Power**

The debate on devolution of power in the country has been going on for more than two decades now. At every election we had so far this topic has come into heated debates during times of political campaigns. It started with the signing of the Indo – Sri Lanka Peace Accord in 1987. The two main political parties have been vacillating between accepting and rejecting of devolution of power depending on the mood and the circumstances in the country and external pressures. Both parties have one time or another have presented documents on devolution/federal (Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) under President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumararatunge) was willing to discuss the concept of devolution (UNP’s Ranil Wickramasinghe’s willingness to discuss the LTTE’s Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA). But both parties vehemently opposed the idea of devolution when they were in the opposition while the governing party was taking steps towards devolution. This is the situation at present. It needs to be understood comprehensively by the people of the country.

In the new direction for positive peace and to return to normalcy, the government must run a campaign to educate people that devolution will not separate provinces or divide the country. It would be decentralization as what is already in place in Sri Lanka. This is an important factor in Sri Lanka’s relations with its powerful neighbor who has been ally in recent years. This should not be ignored or delayed any further. At the end of the war, in a statement issued by the Indian government official spokesperson on Sri Lanka said: “It is our view that as the conventional conflict in Sri Lanka comes to an end, this is the moment when the root causes of conflict in Sri Lanka can be addressed. This would include political steps towards the effective devolution of power within the Sri Lankan Constitution so that Sri Lankans of all communities, including the Tamils, can feel at home and lead lives of dignity of their own free will.”<sup>11</sup>

#### **5. Implementation of the 13th Amendment**

13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the constitution was added in 1987 with 2/3 majority of the Parliament. It introduced the Provincial council of power sharing within a unitary state. But of course, the national policy could only be laid down by an act of Parliament. The 13<sup>th</sup> amendment is part and parcel of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. Therefore the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment is already in force for the past 22 years in Sri Lanka except for some constitutional provisions which deal with police and land powers. The ongoing discussion that invariably goes hand in hand whenever the devolution of power is discussed is the implementation of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment provisions on police and land powers. The APRC has suggested a National Land and Water commission for both the Provincial and Central governments.

The current wave of opposition to the implementation of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment comes from two hard line nationalist

parties who are also close allies of the present government. It is ironic that they too have contested in the Provincial council elections that were introduced under the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment.

These parties must realize that this is a too critical issue to be put to a side. It is their responsibility to educate their party supporters on the issue. The week the hostilities ended and the negative peace established the Indian National Security Adviser and the Foreign Secretary visited Sri Lanka. In their discussion with the President they emphasized the urgent necessity of arriving at a lasting political settlement in Sri Lanka. Towards this end, the Government of Sri Lanka indicated that it will proceed with implementation of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment with firm step towards the direction of positive peace. The Government of Sri Lanka also indicated that it intends to begin a broader dialogue with all parties including the Tamil parties in the new circumstances for further enhancement of political arrangements to bring about lasting peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka.<sup>12</sup>

According to Dr. Dayan Jayatilke, the former Sri Lankan ambassador to the UN Human Rights Council and a senior academic at the University of Colombo, “today is the best time for the implementation of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment. It is in our national interest and a guarantee of our national security.” He further says that the “India – Sri Lanka partnership will be strengthened in the post war era by the implementation of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment.”<sup>13</sup>

The commitment of the government in the implementation of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment is a necessary direction for positive peace. At present President Rajapakse has the opportunity that no leader in Sri Lanka ever had. He successfully eliminated the LTTE taking up the challenge to keep to Sri Lanka as one country. Thereby he has already established the negative peace by the absence of war. Therefore there is no doubt about the integrity or patriotism of the President of Sri Lanka. Hence he has the necessary background in place to bring about a political solution, preferably proposed by the APRC, decide on the devolution of power, and finally take steps to implement the constitutional provisions of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment that should have been implemented long before. No one in the right mind would dare to accuse him of betrayal to the nation, as he is the one who led the march to victory over terrorism and freed the country from terror.

## **6. Strengthening of democracy**

Democracy is a prime peace builder and an effective confidence building measure says Luc Reychler.<sup>14</sup> Sri Lanka has always been a democracy and it is difficult to predict anything else with the people who had enjoyed democracy with their interest in politics, high participation at elections and the commitment of state to protect the democracy. Today it is necessary to further strengthen the existing democracy in Sri Lanka for positive peace. Strengthening democracy is the only way to raise the confidence of the minority communities where they could emerge out of the culture of fear that has gripped them over the past.

## **7. Representation of Tamil people from North and East**

In Sri Lanka from the time of independence until about 1985 well educated, moderate Tamil politicians represented the Tamil population of the North, East as well as other cities. The elimination of the traditional Tamil political leadership was started by the LTTE. The rise of the LTTE in the early 1980's was accompanied by the silencing of the wide political spectrum of the Tamil community. The LTTE practiced a fascist political culture, and proceeded systematically to eliminate politicians, intellectuals, and activists struggling for Tamil political rights. Yet, there remained a few Tamil politicians in almost all political parties and the majority of them are with the two main political parties of the country. But with the end of the war the emergence of more Tamil political parties from the North and East is necessary in order to get involved in the important step of rebuilding of Tamil polity among the Tamil people.

A new direction for positive peace with the strengthening of democracy would be the re-emergence of moderate

Tamil political leadership. There are already few onetime rebels who have embraced the democratic process. It is possible for the former LTTE cadres (once the government clearance is given would rally around them and form a political base. In fact more should be encouraged to do so but without the label of “Tamil Eelam.”

The existing Tamil National Alliance (TNA) is the collection of splintered Tamil parties who previously accepted the LTTE leadership and won well in the last election and represents the people in the North and East. They could not do much in their constituencies for the fear of antagonizing the LTTE leadership. The general public always viewed them as the political front of the LTTE. They will need to decide the direction of their future political strategies in the context of positive peace. Recently TNA Member of Parliament Suresh Premachandran stated that the “TNA welcomed the proposals put forward by the APRC experts committee ... that the TNA thought it was a good working paper – a good beginning.”<sup>15</sup> Likewise the TNA member N. Sri Kantha’s declaration, “United we stand, divided we fall” (borrowed from Benjamin Franklin) reflects TNA’s attempts to adjust itself in the post war politics.<sup>16</sup> The continued presence of TNA in the post war All Party Committee on Development and Reconciliation chaired by the President will be of immense importance to the Tamil people and others in positive peace building. The TNA joined the electoral process in the North, starting with the local government polls for municipal council in Jaffna and *pradesiya sabha* in Vauvuniya held in August, they lost Jaffna and won the election in Vauvuniya.<sup>17</sup> Likewise TNA needs to move forward with constructive suggestions for the government to act upon. On this the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) will meet President Mahinda Rajapaksa in the near future for discussions on its future political plans, General Secretary Mavai Senadhirajah said on August 16, 2009.<sup>18</sup> Political empowerment of the Tamil people is the responsibility of the Tamil Political parties. In further strengthening democracy, the Tamil politicians and political parties must act with maturity and play a major role in voicing the Tamil people in peace building in the coming years.

## **8. Political Parties without race or religious identity**

Another progressive step in strengthening democracy and a new direction in positive peace can be identified in the government decision to draft laws to outlaw political parties bearing the identity of a religion or a race. This new law in Sri Lanka will give powers to the Election Commissioner to de-recognize political parties.<sup>19</sup> This is a step that has been long overdue in the secular state of Sri Lanka.

## **9. Rule of Law**

A compulsory direction in positive peace would be the reinforcement of the rule of law in all of Sri Lanka. In his address to the Parliament (mentioned previously) President stated that “From now on it is only the laws enacted by this Parliament that will be in force in every inch of Sri Lanka.” The concept of Rule of Law is firmly established in the Sri Lankan society and it is worthwhile to be used as a tool where the law and order has broken down in the past.

It is also interesting to note the thesis of Prof. H. Shinoda’s (from the University of Hiroshima) on the Rule of Law. Prof. Shinoda advocates for the “Rule of Law Approach” which looks at peace building from a strategic point-of-view, said to be the most effective. His approach received high praise in Japan as incorporating a new point-of-view, the rule of law, into peace.<sup>20</sup> Since Japan is a country and particularly Hiroshima is a city that has successfully built a peace culture since World War II it may be of interest to Sri Lanka academics to look into this idea in depth. Sri Lanka is a democracy which has an independent judiciary to maintain the rule of law where citizens individually or collectively could seek intervention of the Supreme Court.

## 10. Constitutional Reforms

Finally in strengthening democracy, post war constitutional reforms have been widely speculated and talked about at present in Sri Lanka. According to the constitution, the incumbent President has the option to seek a fresh mandate anytime after the completion of four years of office in the first six year term and President Rajapakse is most likely to make use of this constitutional provision for re-election. With the huge public support he received recently in defeating terrorism in the country, he will now seek a mandate to implement a political solution aimed at reconciliation, ethnic harmony and rebuilding the country. It is widely speculated that constitutional reforms would be on the cards too.<sup>21</sup> Among them would be a consideration to create an Upper house in the Parliament, similar to the senate we had in the independence constitution. Establishing a senate will incorporate the representatives from the country's nine provinces.<sup>22</sup> Such steps as constitutional reforms are necessary to cater for the liberated and to make good governance.

## 11. Rebuilding Confidence

While the war was going on Sri Lanka Government took steps to set up centers for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP). During the last days of war saw thousands of people fleeing from LTTE strongholds to the liberated areas and finally to the IDP centers. Currently there are three zones of IDP centers in Vavuniya. There are about 270,000 people, approximately 160,000 adults and 110,000 children, all of them are Tamils from the North. The centers have banks, grocery shops, barbers, food collection sites, hospital and a school.<sup>23</sup> This was the help extended by a responsible government for the survival of the people from the war torn areas. This act established the negative peace around these people with non violence and in the government efforts in reconciliation and reconstruction it will be a step towards positive peace.<sup>24</sup>

Now that the war is over, IDP issue is on the spotlight in international media and international community. The peace time task of looking into civilian welfare has been taken over by the Sri Lanka military in these IDP centers. But the centers are run by the civilians, mostly the government officials. The greatest challenge that faces Sri Lanka today is rebuilding the lives of these IDP's. It must also be remembered that apart from the Tsunami of 2004 Sri Lanka never had to deal with logistical and administrative challenge with such large number of displaced persons due to any reason. It is indeed a formidable task considering the numbers of persons who have had traumatic experiences for so long temporarily lodged in these centers.

Still Yasushi Akashi, the Japanese government representative to Peace Building, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction appointed in 2002 visited Sri Lanka (he has been to Sri Lanka around 18 times) on June 9, he visited IDP center in Vavuniya. On this visit he commented that normal conditions of the IDPs would be a daunting task for any country, and in this context, highlighted that Sri Lanka has been coping with the humanitarian situation with tenacity and sincerity.<sup>25</sup> It is true to say that currently the provision of basic needs such as water, sanitation, shelter and food is sufficient in these centers.

Similar sentiment was expressed by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) representative in Sri Lanka, Amin Awad. He said that the post-war milieu in the country is very promising and IDPs have a very bright future. Awad, a Sudanese national who has handled refugees in 11 countries, further extrapolated that according to his experience with regard to IDPs, the camps in Vavuniya are in good condition and the humanitarian work being carried out is very satisfactory.<sup>26</sup>

An argument put forth by some section of the international community is that international Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's) to be allowed in to handle the welfare in the IDP camps. Sri Lanka has had the experience of international NGO's and volunteers working in the immediate aftermath of the Tsunami of 2004. There were so many

mistakes resulting in confusion, wastage, corruption and finally with the blame on the Government of Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is understood why the government want to limit the number of international organizations in this work with final responsibility lying with the government of Sri Lanka. In the resettlement of the IDP's government has drawn up a plan with the target date set as the end of the year. Though many outsiders talk of the IDP's confined to these centers they forget that there are former LTTE cadres mingled with the displaced population in these centers. It is the responsibility of the Government to identify them out prior to resettlement. Therefore reintegration should be done in terms of contribution to positive peace building. There is a another practical challenge to the government, which is of course the task of de-mining before the people are resettled in the North. Replying to a question on resettlement, the President said that "Every square centimeter has been mined by the LTTE and de-mining has to be certified by the UN."<sup>27</sup>

## 12. Rehabilitation of ex -child soldiers

One of the most vital issues to be addressed in establishing positive peace is the caring of ex- combatants and that of ex-child soldiers. They require extra care and thoughtful assistance. Their experiences in the LTTE have had a profound impact on their emotional development. With the ending of the war immediate action was taken in the rehabilitation of ex- child soldiers. Sri Lanka as a signatory of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child is duty bound to ensure the purposeful rehabilitation and reintegration of those engaged in armed conflict. According to the Commissioner General for Rehabilitation, four areas for rehabilitation have been identified which includes vocational training, spiritual rehabilitation, psychosocial rehabilitation and social integration. The children between the ages of 12 to 18 years have already been separated from the group of IDP's in the centers. There are over 455 children, the majority of whom the LTTE had forcefully recruited at its last stage of the battle.

The Sri Lanka army reverting to its civilian tasks started a rehabilitation center initially with 76 children at Ambepussa. This is conducted by the Army cadet corps which comprises of trained and experienced teachers in the civil setup before volunteering to become part of the Cadet corp. The routine program at this center starts the day at 7.30am and follows school curriculum of learning math, computer science, English, Sinhala language and vocational training courses. Children are given diet of daily rations of a soldier. Then the group games like cricket, netball follow with afternoon spent on reading and watching television. The light goes out at 10pm. The UNICEF coordinates their travel to visit the relatives in the IDP centers and trace the missing families through the ICRC.<sup>28</sup> James Elder, a spokesman for UNICEF in Sri Lanka, calls the centre a genuine attempt to help child soldiers learn how to be civilians. From 2003 to the end of 2008, UNICEF recorded more than 6,000 cases of child recruitment by the rebels but the number is thought to have soared in the final months of the war.<sup>29</sup> With the rehabilitation they have become the most potent symbol of hope in post war Sri Lanka. In the other IDP centers when the General Certificate of Examination, Advance level examination was held in August, 166 ex – child soldiers were able to sit for these examinations.<sup>30</sup> Using sports to build harmony, Sri Lanka national cricketer Muttaih Muralidaran conducted a cricket camp for school boys between 13– 19 in the town of Trincomalee.<sup>31</sup>

The National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) of Sri Lanka too has a program for the teenage mothers among the IDP's, a considerable number making this group. With the doctors of the University of Colombo's Faculty of Medicine they run regular health camps for these children. In addition, the NCPA is constantly appealing to the public to foster the children who have become orphans of war.<sup>32</sup>

### 13. Other Surrendeers

Demobilizing and reintegration of former combatants is usually seen as a development effort in the post war situations.<sup>33</sup> But there are no blue prints for this exercise. It has to be done on country's security, political, and socio-economic circumstances. According to Commissioner General of Rehabilitations measures have been taken to rehabilitate over 10,000 ex-LTTE cadres, in the North by the Government. The process to classify the ex-cadres into different groups considering their age, gender and involvement in the outfit has already been completed and the ground work to move them into new rehabilitation centers is nearing completion. Former female cadres of LTTE numbering 1,700 have also been separated and housed separately.<sup>34</sup> The exercise of rehabilitation will take years as they have to build up new livelihoods, reintegrating to economy and society. This is also an area where the civil society can actively play a role.

The success of reintegration of these ex-combatants would be the ultimate test on the ability to forgive the past, reconcile and build positive peace. These ex-combatants though in the ages between 18-35 were also recruited by the LTTE as child soldiers. Hence they too are without proper basic education. In order to make their transition into the civilian life to become successful they would need some skills in the form of vocational training. In addition they need psychological counseling and spiritual rehabilitation.

Several rehabilitation programs have already started as initiatives by the government. With the end of hostilities in the East, one such center in Welikanda started as far back as in 2007. They were given training in masonry, wood works and plumbing. In addition trades such as agriculture, electrical wiring, aluminum fabrication which is in demand in the Middle East were introduced. Through the assistance of the Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau few of them have found jobs in the Middle East.<sup>35</sup> These experiences from the East can successfully be applied in the North.

### 14. Diaspora contribution

There is a huge Tamil diaspora in the western countries. Earlier the LTTE succeeded in galvanizing the support of the Tamil diaspora in building up the military machine of the LTTE and created what could truly be called the "Eelam Incorporated." It said to have generated an estimated US\$ 200 to 300 million per year, and "after accounting for its estimated US\$ 8 million per year of costs within LTTE-administered Sri Lanka, the profit margin of its operating budget would likely be the envy of any multinational corporation."<sup>36</sup>

It is time for the Tamil diaspora to accept its duty to invest in rebuilding the lives of their kith and kin providing assistance for economic and infrastructure rebuilding of the areas in the North. It is up to the second generation Tamil diaspora who have been misled by LTTE propaganda to take up the challenge, learn about the Tamil society and cater to the quest for peace in Sri Lanka. The investment in betterment of human lives is the best investment the Tamil diaspora can give back to its community.

### 15. Culture of Peace

"Peace" is a difficult term to define. It is a word somewhat similar to love or happiness which one often recognizes easily only by its absence. What is, and might be peace, Johan Galtung tried to answer when he and others proposed the important distinction between positive and negative peace. Positive peace denotes of the simultaneous presence of many desirable states of mind and society such as harmony, justice and equity. Negative peace denoted the absence of war or violent human conflict.<sup>37</sup>

The United Nations declared that the year 2000 the 'International Year for the Culture of Peace.' The UN wanted

this *Declaration on a Culture of Peace*, so that governments, international organizations and civil society may be guided in their activity by its provisions to promote and strengthen a culture of peace in the new millennium.<sup>38</sup>

To make Sri Lanka's path to positive peace a success, the need to cultivate a culture of peace is essential. This is not a hard task. Both Buddhism and Hinduism have the concept of *karma* where what you do in this life, good or bad will be settled in future births. Buddhism teaches to forego attachment, to let go of anger against others and move towards compassion for an offender through deep understanding. It is forbidden to harm another. In Hinduism, forgiveness is considered a virtue and there are divine examples, such as the Goddess Lakshmi in the scriptures. From the Buddhist religious tradition a former President of Sri Lanka J.R. Jayawardane speaking at the San Francisco Peace conference quoted that "hatred will never cease by hatred but by love."<sup>39</sup> His stand for Japan at the Peace conference was that Japan needs to be forgiven and not punished anymore for crimes of the World War II. J.R. Jayawardane's speech was a landmark in Sri Lanka's international relations but more than that it portrayed a traditional culture of peace.

Sri Lanka, historically has been a peaceful country, there was no bloody struggle in Sri Lanka when we fought for independence from the British. Compared to the turmoil that was in South Asia and Burma, Sri Lanka was an oasis of peace. In fact at the time what M.K. Gandhi advocated was true in the case of Sri Lanka than in India, seeking independence from the British in a non violent and non cooperation movement against unjust laws.

In more recent developments, the Hague Appeal for Peace in their Global Campaign for Peace Education says "A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice non-violently, live by international standards of human rights and equity, appreciate cultural diversity, and respect the Earth and each other. Such learning can only be achieved with systematic education for peace."<sup>40</sup> So the emphasis is on, education at all levels is one of the principal means to build a culture of peace as stated in article 4 of Declaration on a Culture of Peace.

## 16. Peace Education

Peace education is to develop knowledge supporting alternatives to violence, whether that happens in formal, informal or non – formal education. Peace education will prepare learners to achieve the changes necessary for peace. It aims at developing awareness of social and political responsibilities, guiding and challenging people to develop their own learning from individual and collective actions. It encourages them to explore possibilities for their own contribution to resolving the problems and achieving better conditions for living their lives by themselves and with others.<sup>41</sup> The subject of Peace studies has been a fully developed discipline in the world for the last 40 years or so.

One of Sri Lanka's most eminent sons, the former Vice President of the International Court of Justice, C.G. Weeramanthy strongly advocates "Peace Education as the need of the hour in Sri Lanka."<sup>42</sup> In a lengthy article to a daily newspaper he goes on to recommend celebration of a peace week, establishment of a peace university and general peace education. To this end Justice Weeramanthy established the Weeramanthy International Center for Peace Education and Research in Sri Lanka. He recommends Peace studies, cross cultural understanding and International Law as necessary instruments in a peace culture. Very appropriately Justice Weeramanthy sees justice as the pre requisite to peace and peace education as a pre requisite to justice.

In fact Peace Education has already taken root in Sri Lanka. There are academics in the Sri Lankan universities who have done their postgraduate studies in world recognized Peace Education centers such as George Mason University in the USA and Bradford University, UK. In addition many take part in global peace education networks through many peace education centers and foundations available in the West, and in Japan. A new look into peace education in Buddhism is also a challenge the Buddhist clergy can take up in Sri Lanka.

## 17. Peace Journalism

Journalism can strongly influence the society. In a democracy like Sri Lanka, information is open and free. Media provides the public with information to participate in democratic life. But media must also be responsible. If unethical the freedom of speech could become a dangerous weapon, for example hate media. Peace journalism on the other hand could be defined as promoting peaceful conditions of life and resolution of conflict, or countering hate media by presenting issues fairly, offering alternative sources of information and broadcast nullifying or mitigating messages of hate media.<sup>43</sup> Peace journalism has emerged since the mid 1990's as a new field within Peace and Conflict Studies. In defining peace journalism it can be said that Peace Journalism is when editors and reporters make choices – of what stories to report and about how to report them – that creates opportunities for society at large to consider and value nonviolent responses to conflict.<sup>44</sup>

The Peace Journalism has an essential role in the rebuilding of war torn society of the North and East of Sri Lanka. Peace Journalism could be the most effective tool too. A new direction in positive peace will also be in Peace Journalism as opposed to the War Journalism we had in Sri Lanka for the past two decades or so. We had many columns, reports on the status of the war and its directions. War Journalism has to be rechanneled into Peace Journalism. It is also important to remember that media's role in positive peace building is significant. Media can easily work towards to prevent future conflicts. Promotion of Peace Journalism is a step towards positive peace in Sri Lanka.

## 18. Conclusion

Sri Lanka today stands as a prime case study on the efforts of positive peace building. The world community, as it once eyed the conflict and war in Sri Lanka is doing the same in watching and monitoring the country's directions towards positive peace. Still this is not something that can be planted by experts outside of Sri Lanka. It has to be realized by the Sri Lankans who live in Sri Lanka. The educated, peace loving citizens of Sri Lanka wants nothing less than positive peace for the country which once was compared to modern Singapore in Asia.

Though there is enormous amount of discussion and writing going on about a political solution, the facts shows us that in establishing peace that it is not the only aspect to consider. It is of course a necessary action. But addressing the question of ex-combatants successfully, making them responsible citizens of Sri Lanka is a priority. The normalization of the lives of those who are in IDP centers is another first to address where the government is making a good progress. Development of a peace culture through Peace Journalism is essential. In all this the objective should be to have a unification of negative peace and positive peace to make strong peace in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka should be able to set an example as a predominately a Buddhist country that "Peace comes from within. Do not seek without."<sup>45</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Magnus Ranstorp is the Research Director at the Centre for Asymmetric Threat Studies, Swedish National Defence College.

<sup>2</sup> President's address to the Parliament on the ceremonial opening of Parliament, May 19, 2009

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Mirror*, May 28, 2009

<sup>4</sup> Johan Galtung (1969), Violence, peace and peace research, *Journal of Peace Research*, 6,3 :167 – 91

<sup>5</sup> Charles Webel and Johan Galtung (2007) *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, Routledge: London and New York; Luc Reychler and Thania Paffenholz (2001) *Peace Building: A Field Guide*, Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

<sup>6</sup> For the Full text of the speech, please see *Sunday Observer*, May 24, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> For the full text of President Abraham Lincoln's address see [www.gettysburgfoundation.org](http://www.gettysburgfoundation.org)

<sup>8</sup> SG/2151 May 26, 2009

- <sup>9</sup> *Daily Mirror*, July 27, 2009
- <sup>10</sup> *The Sunday Times*, May 24, 2009
- <sup>11</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 18 May 2009
- <sup>12</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 21 May 2009
- <sup>13</sup> *Daily Mirror*, July 4, 2009
- <sup>14</sup> Reychler, *Peace Building* (2001) p. 216
- <sup>15</sup> *The Sunday Times*, May 10, 2009
- <sup>16</sup> *Daily Mirror*, July 13, 2009
- <sup>17</sup> *Daily News*, August 10, 2009 and also see [www.sleleton.gov.lk](http://www.sleleton.gov.lk)
- <sup>18</sup> *Sunday Observer*, August 16, 2009
- <sup>19</sup> *The Sunday Times*, August 9, 2009
- <sup>20</sup> [www.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/index.html](http://www.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/index.html) and read Research now on Prof. Shinoda.
- <sup>21</sup> *The Hindu*, July 6, 2009 (also July 7 and 8), Please see N. Ram interview with President Mahinda Rajapakse
- <sup>22</sup> *The Sunday Times*, June 28, 2009
- <sup>23</sup> Dr. W. Sermal Perera, *IDP's in Sri Lanka: As the three of us saw it on 16 July 2009* (he was accompanied by I. G. Chandran and Dr. Veronica Chelliah). [www.defence.lk](http://www.defence.lk)
- <sup>24</sup> See the Galtung's definition of peace with eight components in -P and +P in Charles Webel, *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies* (2007) p.188
- <sup>25</sup> *Daily News*, June 10, 2009
- <sup>26</sup> [www.defence.lk](http://www.defence.lk) (June 22, 2009)
- <sup>27</sup> *The Hindu*, July 6, 2009
- <sup>28</sup> *Daily Mirror*, July 8, 2009
- <sup>29</sup> *The Economist*, July 16, 2009
- <sup>30</sup> *Daily Mirror*, August 11, 2009
- <sup>31</sup> *Daily Mirror*, August 15, 2009
- <sup>32</sup> [www.childprotection.gov.lk](http://www.childprotection.gov.lk)
- <sup>33</sup> Reychler, *Peace Building* (2001) p 405
- <sup>34</sup> *Sunday Observer*, August 16, 2009
- <sup>35</sup> *Daily Mirror*, July 4, 2009
- <sup>36</sup> Report of John Solomon and BC Tan, *Jane's Intelligence Review*, August 2007, pp 18 -20
- <sup>37</sup> Charles Webel (2007) *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, p. 6
- <sup>38</sup> UN proclamation 52/15
- <sup>39</sup> Lord Buddha
- <sup>40</sup> [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) and see cyber school bus on Peace Education
- <sup>41</sup> Charles Webel, op. cit. pp. 295 - 6
- <sup>42</sup> *Daily Mirror*, July 10, 2009 and July 11, 2009
- <sup>43</sup> Reychler, *Peace Building* (2001) p. 306
- <sup>44</sup> Charles Webel, op. cit. pp 248 – 54
- <sup>45</sup> Lord Buddha