



# Fall of Killinochchi

How does one fight a civilized war with a barbaric army? What is the response of the civilized world to the misery and death of Eelam Tamils amidst state-driven whipped up euphoria and jubilation? In the name of unity of the country, is it justified to carry on illegal census of Tamils in various parts of Sri Lanka in a clear case of racial discrimination and subsequent subjugation argues the regular columnist on Tamil affairs.

S.Visvanathan

**J**ubilation and euphoria has been reported in some Sri Lankan and Indian media, as the racist Sinhala Army occupied Killinochchi. I wonder whether those celebrating know exactly what they are happy about. Are they celebrating the capture of Killinochchi or the victory of the Sri Lankan army over the Eelam Tamils? The Tigers faced not only the Sri Lankan army but also the weaponry provided by Pakistan, China, US and India. India has supplied military hardware and provided military expertise and intelligence to help the Sinhalese in their proxy war against the Tamils.

Holding on to a ghost town, under these circumstances, did not make any sense. Killinochchi was not captured by the army; it was vacated by the Tamil Tigers.

If they had thought they had crushed the fighting Tamils and are in a position to impose a pre determined solution on the Tamils, they were merely enjoying a wild dream. Time and again the Tamil freedom fighters have alternated between guerrilla and conventional warfare. Since the last ceasefire, they had fought a conventional war. Facing an enemy with superior arms, they reverted to guerrilla tactics. There is no doubt that this war will continue and the Eelam Tamils are steadfast in their resolve to achieve their separate homeland.

"And even if the rebellious Tamils were to lose Mullaitivu also, then too they will continue their struggle," Shivaji Lingam, a Tamil MP said in a telephonic interview from Chennai where he is now based. Striking a poignant note, he further said, "Even if the Tigers

agree to give up its weapons, the Tamil people will not agree to that. The fight will go on like it happened in Vietnam."

The main battle will now shift to Mullaitivu district, where the Liberation forces have built seemingly impenetrable underground caves for its leaders. This is from where Prabhakaran oversaw the fight against the Indian Army in 1987-90.

"The latest developments will lead to a long guerrilla war. The Tigers cannot be vanquished," the MP said. So, whoever believes that they could let go their fireworks, will have to hold it back forever. In another development S. Ramadoss, the PMK founder, was fuming mad

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at the attitude of Delhi towards the Tamils.

"This only shows New Delhi's mindless and callous attitude just because at the receiving end of this genocidal frenzy are the hapless and voiceless Tamils. I would like to remind you that those who are being killed are not only our Tamil brethren but also Indians living in an alien soil," S. Ramadoss said in a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

A similar view was expressed by

Vaithiyalingam, a senior BJP leader and member of the party's national general council. In the interview to Tamil media, he criticized the Indian Union Government for not paying heed to basic demands put forth by the Kalaingar Karunanidhi-led delegation. He also warned that such a "careless attitude" might prove to be "too costly" for the Congress party. If national parties are going to lose their hold in Tamil Nadu, it is entirely owing to the blasé manner in which the Congress handled the Eelam issue, he said.

Prabhakaran's Liberation Tigers is a people-based party. As a young man, he was concerned about the plight of the Tamils, both Indian and Sri Lankan. He saw how agitations, based on Gandhian principles, were crushed by Sinhalese thugs and police. Accords signed by Tamil Leaders and successive Sinhala regimes to solve the ethnic problem were unceremoniously abrogated by the Sinhalese. He realised that Gandhian philosophy works only with civilised governments and militant rebellion was the only solution. In the late seventies he formed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

What started as a guerrilla outfit soon emerged as a conventional army with its air force and navy. He tried to avoid civilian casualties wherever possible. When he was poised to capture Jaffna in 2000, he stopped the advance as the army used the Tamils as human shield.

The Sinhalese leaders have no such compulsions, as they are fighting on Tamil territory. At the height of the holocaust in July 1983 when thousands of Tamils were murdered in cold blood by the government and Sinhalese thugs, the then President Jeyawardene went on television to say that he was not wor-

ried about the feelings of the Tamils and if more Tamils were killed the happier the Sinhalese would be. The present army chief, Gen. Sarath Fonseka, said in Canada that the minorities should not make unnecessary demands. For them, he said, "killing of Tamils is like the Whiteman hunting aborigines in Australia in those days."

No one should fault Prabhakaran for the present plight the Tamils are in. He tried his best to find a peaceful solution to the ethnic problem, as the war and embargo caused too much death and destruction in his homeland. At a time when he was on a winning streak in 2002, he called for a ceasefire and invited the Norwegians to help in the negotiations between him and Ranil Wickremesinghe. He was even willing to forego his vision of a separate state for a federal settlement. He placed much hope on the International Community composed of US, EU, Japan and Norway. In the aftermath of 9/11, he felt that the international community would be pleased to see a negotiated settlement in Sri Lanka. However he was unable to foresee that the war on terror was directed against him also.

India was also invited to join in the peace mission, but she adopted a hands off policy on Sri Lanka and would have no part in it. The latest events have shown that India's aim was to see a unitary state in Sri Lanka, where the Tamils live under the Sinhalese yoke. A federal or an independent Tamil state was not acceptable to India, as it might pose a danger to Tamil Nadu. With the Tamil leadership gaining ground, India's intentions would not materialise. At the same time Delhi had to take care of the mood in Tamil Nadu; hence, its nefarious proxy war in Sri Lanka. What the Indian leadership failed to realise is that, once the Tamils are crushed in Sri Lanka, she will not be able to have any control over Sri Lankan foreign policy.

The international Tamil Diaspora will have to face the reality that Prabhakaran may withdraw from the populated areas he still holds, and move into the jungle to conduct his guerrilla warfare. He may have to do this for two reasons - one to avoid civilian casualties and another to conserve his armed forces. During his encounter with IPKF, during 1987-90, he lost less than 700 cadres while the Indian army lost more than 1,200 soldiers. Today he is better armed. The international Tamil Diaspora has to take

care of the helpless Tamils in their homeland.

The civilians will have to bear the brunt in this war, whether they live in Tamil-controlled or the so-called government controlled safe areas. They feel safe to live in Tamil

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Tiger areas, but they have to endure indiscriminate bombing and shelling day and night, and shift every now and then. In the safe areas they live in glorified prisons or concentration camps. White van abductions, disappearances, arrests and harassments are daily occurrences.

It will not be long before the Sri Lankan leaders are hauled up for human rights violations. At that point, India may not be in a position to salvage them. It is hoped that Barack Obama as President of United States, may augur well for Tamils.

Today, many world countries practice double standards. While Israel is bombarding Gaza and killing hundreds, a section of the world community has formed a chorus of protest. On the other hand, during the last weeks, when Sri Lankan Forces were indiscriminately pounding parts of Tamil controlled densely populated Sri Lanka in Killinochchi and around with cluster bombs and shells not a murmur has been heard, except for some voices from Tamil Nadu.

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