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Rajith Visanayake

Insulting Sarath

by **Going Global**
(abdulhalik.wordpress.com)

It's true that Gen Sarath Fonseka has been offered a post at the Sports Ministry, as the secretary. He doesn't seem to have accepted it yet and a lot of regular Sri Lankans (along with Sarath Fonseka himself if some reports are to be believed) seem to consider it an insult to his stature.

Taking the man who played such an important role in winning the war and placing him in such a harmless, out of the way position is a Machiavelian tactic to remove his powerful influence from the public sphere. The government appears to be pretty clear on whom it wants its heroes to be.

A presidential election probably won't take place in the immediate future. Mr. Rajapakshe will probably wait 'til his first term ends. Since he will want to milk as many years being the top dog as he possibly can. The last thing he needs is an iconic army general gaining political momentum over the next two years to pose a significant challenge to his presidency.

This could also be a part of a longer term strategy to eventually only associate the Rajapakshe name with the winning of the war; a powerful propaganda tool for an emerging political dynasty.

Mahinda Or Sarath?

by **thekillromeoproject** (thekillromeoproject.wordpress.com)

Given the current political climate that seems to be raining elections like a monsoonal cloudburst, I've been talking to a few people about the latest developments in the country. Almost 90% of the people seem shocked about the recent news of the attempted appointment of General Sarath Fonseka as the Secretary to the Sports Ministry. The consensus seems to be that it's an insult to the achievements of this man to offer him such a lowly post.

While the present government has seen fit to reward former LTTE leaders with chief ministerial posts and even appoint them as Vice Presidents of the SLFP, it seems the General doesn't carry the same weight in the eyes of the government. Maybe the powers that be are afraid that he would steal the limelight away from the politicians who bravely fought the war... from the safety of the political stages in the south and the comfort of their high security residencies.

Strangely enough, no matter who I spoke to, the conversation seemed to ultimately swing in the same direction, with everyone seeming to be convinced the General would be contesting the upcoming presidential elections. Another strange thing was that everyone seemed quite sure that if that were to happen, the General would emerge the winner by a landslide!

So, assuming the battle lines were to be drawn with the General going head to head against the King, who would you cast your vote for?

COMMENTS

Island Girl: Fonseka is the latest victim of Karapincha Chinthanaya. Same happened to Dayan Jayatilake. This is no miracle. Sri Lanka the small miracle

saliya: While I agree with your post, there is one question that you have not addressed. How does the general feel? Knowing what a down to earth guy he is I find it very difficult to think that he would ever contest an election. He has always remained steady but terribly understated in comparison to those before him. Sometimes these war weary generals do like the peace and quiet in certain small positions. They offer them time for self reflection, time to be with families and defeintely to be away from media.

Ahamed Nizar: I was suprised to hear about his being appointed Sports Secretary. A man of his stature should be given a much higher post. People tend to forget with all the billboards of MR and Gota around that it was actually Sarath who did 90% of the War Winning. Maybe its Sarath's introduction into politics and soon if and when he does run for president he knows how everything works. My vote goes for him.

David Blacker: Don't be silly, Island Girl. He hasn't been removed from CDS. The sports slot is just an additional slot. Probably so that he gets a chance to travel out of the country on official business, watch matches etc.

DD: Agree with DB. Anyways he's best of friends with Gota so would never contest against any Rajapakse. I thought you said ex-CJ, Sarath. Now that would be interesting!



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The One Eyed Guy Is A Traitor

by **thekillromeoproject** (thekillromeoproject.wordpress.com)

I'm sure many of you have at some time or the other heard of the saying "In the kingdom of the blind, the one eyed man is king". It's one of those easily understandable sayings that make perfect sense the very first time you come across it ya?

I mean what could be simpler than imagining a country full of blind people who naturally make the one person who can even partially see their king?

But as of late, I've been thinking that whoever came up with this saying was in a way foretelling the future of our beloved paradise isle. After all, people would have to be blind (And stupid too) to continue to vote in and defend candidates who have openly flouted all rules of law and order ya?

But that's exactly what happened in the most recent elections that we had. Candidates who made death threats, burnt down campaign offices and even one who cost the country billions of rupees by trying to fly, were felicitated with a fervor approaching mass hysteria and then given the majority mandate to govern this country!

In fact, judging by the results of the elections, it seems the majority of this country's voters are more than ready to be blind to the violence and corruption that has become part and parcel of the

present political climate of Sri Lanka.

But what about the one eyed man who was supposed to be king of this land? If the saying were to be complete, he would be on the throne and leading the people towards safety and prosperity ya?

Unfortunately, this is where the saying went wrong as far as Sri Lanka goes. Because in the 'Paradise Isle of the blind' being able to see, even with one eye, is the most dangerous thing. Anyone who has the ability to see and comment about the violence and corruption, who can see the yawning precipice at the end of the road, is at risk of being branded a liar and a traitor.

So, in today's context, I think the age old saying needs to be modified a tad to be passed on to our future generations, "In the kingdom of the blind, the one eyed man is a traitor".

COMMENTS

Java Jones: One has to wonder if the majority of the voters actually know what the characters of the candidates they vote for are like, or if they are just voting on 'party' affiliations. If they do know the candidates as we do and still vote for them, then we are upstream without a paddle...



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Why Superwoman Shouldn't Wear Tights

by **Going Global** (abdulhalik.wordpress.com)

I think the feminist movement is fantastic. Their primary objective is to get women on an equal plain with men because women are ostracized on a daily basis. They are put down, manipulated and crushed by a system that treats them like second class citizens. The movement fights for equal rights and justice.

In doing so, they set themselves a vision, a goal. An ultimate picture of what the most liberated woman on earth would seem like. A woman who is free to wear anything she wants, work anywhere she wants, and do anything she basically wants to do, aka Superwoman. But while having a vision is commendable, this fundamental vision of the feminist movement has got its wires crossed.

The ideal that they aim for is somewhat disconnected with their core purpose. They tend to confuse 'injustice' with 'values', and what they fail to realize is that society built up some of these values to protect women in the first place, and not to limit them. If any limitation occurs at all, they are caused by the inherent socio economic nature of our environment. Values are more of a symptom of injustice than the other way around.

On the issue of clothing. Most modern clothing and 'hipness' is designed to accentuate beauty. It is mostly to make a woman more desirable. Whether it be form fitting apparel or make up (red lipstick and a painted face are associations to a sexually

aroused woman) to 'sexy' outfits that reveal more than they conceal, The fashion industry is all about making a woman look attractive.

Feminists rebel against conservative society's tendency to look down upon provocative clothing, and at the same time they demand that men 'respect them for who they are no matter what they wear'. The inherent failure in this approach is the failure to realize that conservative society has adopted such an attitude towards such clothing in the first place only because of perversion that males could potentially direct towards women. The values exist because of perversion. Take away the values and the perversion will remain, but take away the perversion and the values may disappear.

This perversion, it is true, stems from bad morals. But to fix the problem then we have to go into the deepest roots of our socio-political-economic-moral-biological state of being. If you find the solution to the problem of male perversion in the presence of rampant skimpily dressed females then you have arguably found the solution to all the problems on earth. You're possibly then in heaven where everyone is naked and no one has a problem with it.

But back down in Earth, most of the oppression women put up with is due to the erosion of values. It is because of the lack of equal rights and share of voice for women that the justice system

discriminates against them. It is because of lack of respect and reverence for women that crimes like domestic abuse and marital rape happen. It's because of a lack of appreciation and a bias that they are less capable that women find discrimination at the workplace etc.

So correct me if i am confused but the feminist movement shouldn't be fighting against values but fighting for them. And the feminist movement should be fighting against the objectification of women rather than upholding it as the pinnacle of achievement. This objectified version of the independent woman is a manifestation of decades of marketing and clever branding. And the feminist movement has bought into this branded image of Superwoman so much that they've confused their core purpose of liberating women with the obsession of achieving this Superwoman state; blind to the direct contradiction that it represents.

It is possible that my burgeoning understanding of the whole issue is pretty basic and that there is more here than meets the eye. Perhaps certain social 'values' by default degrade women. And i have failed to identify them in classing all 'values' as being inherently good. I may be like a bleeding carp in the ocean of feminism, more than susceptible to fatal shark bites. But i stick by what I've said here on the issue of clothing, nevertheless.

COMMENTS

Nipuni: Well if you actually look at it, Feminism itself has different strands. The Radical Feminists, like Germaine Greer for example, look at it from a Sexual Point of view- women are basically made sex objects at the whim of men. and freedom is for the woman to defy those pre-denominated sexual pathways and choose her own.

Then there is the inherently uppish feminism for the wealthy types. Rich woman with lots of money on her hands but doesn't know what to do with it & doesn't have the freedom to do what she wants with it anyway.

But my favourite, and perhaps one of the most balanced views I think, is a strand of thought that relates to my socio-economic and political consciousness at present. I'm inherently middle class. I dont have so much money that I have the luxury to stay at home & brood. I have to work. so, no limit on the freedom of choice there.

What I could, & do encounter, is a glass ceiling at work. and the issue of what is done & is 'not-done' by a girl in our society.

So the socio-economic & cultural strand of feminism

would give me the arms to fight my war. I believe I should be able to go anywhere I want in the world, alone. My parents & family think not, coz I'm a girl. I use my feminism tactics to say, book a flight to somewhere with my own cash & say, look, I'm going. My feminism allows me independence of thought & action, within limits.

The Puppeteer: There are several different types of feminisms at present that it's all a bit complex. And since there are various types you're concept of 'feminism' can't encapsulate all feminist objectives- There are cultural and sociological feminist groups that are a little more receptive to these issues than other groups.

I don't consider myself a feminist. I think that men and women are built differently, so they are equal in the sense that each has something that other lacks. And they're both at their strongest when they work together.

That being said, women still lack rights in particular countries, so certain feminist movements are necessary. When looking at particular issues we haven't really come far from when men were actually trying to decide if women had souls or when brides were selected much like how meat is bought in a market.

PseudoRandom: I think as a movement, feminism is

somewhat misguided. While the aim is to elevate women to a social status at which they can exercise personal choice, I feel this choice is only accepted by 'feminists' if it falls in line with their own choices. A sort of "either you're with us or you're too oppressed to know what's good for you" argument. This is especially true with regards to fashion.

As for fighting for/against values...well values change not only with the times but also with the region...and I don't think a primarily Western-driven feminist movement can effect practical change in an Eastern culture, and vice versa.

Also (slightly aside), since when were women supposed to be competing with men? A lot of women in the workplace complain that men get more promotions...well maybe the people who get promotions are just better at their jobs! A lot of feminist arguments end up proposing positive discrimination...how is that fair? Real equality would mean a level playing field for the entire workforce, regardless of gender. It irritates me that when a lot of women ask for 'equal' treatment, what they're really asking for is 'special' treatment.OK rant over :-)

Jerry: Superwoman looks better in tights than superman. Deep, I know.

Hooker On A Bus by The Puppeteer (messiahofmadness.wordpress.com)

Sunday evening 8pm, I got on a bus at Bamba and promptly planted myself on the only seat available. More people filed in after me and when it was considerably packed with people standing in the aisle, the bus groaned awake and rumbled up the road.

Less than five minutes later, typical of Sri Lankan public transport, the bus hauled in at another halt to allow more people to squeeze in. A few people scrambled in and weaved through sea of bodies. Just as the new commuters had become one with the mass inside the bus, packed like a can of SPAM, starting from the entrance the sea of people parted neatly to make a clear path for the last incomer. Half expecting to see Moses emerge, I was a bit disappointed when instead a petite woman strolled in with an air of nonchalance about her. At first glance my mind alerted "Ooooooh a prostitute."

I've never actually seen a prostitute before but from what I've been told and what I've read in books, she had all the signs of a prostitute. She was wearing a short, worn out, blue cotton dress printed with a huge floral pattern, the straps of her bra were hanging off her shoulders, and around her waist she had a tattered white belt that didn't really serve any purpose considering she was wearing a dress.

She had also accessorised with lots of cheap jewellery- a thick bracelet of pink beads and dangling earrings of red and green beads. But what was strange was the bottom bits of plastic bottle caps that she had attached to her hair-band that held her mangled, frizzy brunette hair in a bundle. Although the most telling sign might have been the bright magenta lipstick that was smeared on her lips, either that or the fact that people were leaning way from her in such a way you'd think she were a leper.

What got me thinking twice about her being a prostitute was that she looked extremely old. Her dark skin was dry and wrinkled. Even her cheeks had heavy furrows of wrinkles that sagged down to her chin. I'd say she was in her 50's, if I had to guess. But then again, maybe she's much younger because being a prostitute must zap the life out of you.

She stationed herself beside the seat in front of me just as the bus grunted and began to move. The mother and daughter seated there were squirming in their seat and crouching away from her as if she had an invisible force field around her that repelled them.

I couldn't help feeling bad that people were behaving the way they were. It's just not right. So what if she is a prostitute? Who are we to judge her? She's obviously got it tough as it is, she doesn't need people reacting merely to her presence as if she were something foul that the cat had dragged in.

Just imagine being in her shoes. Imagine making a living of allowing men have their way with you and then whenever you step out into the street people scurry away from you or/and stare at you from a safe distance. Even the bus conductor used a rough tone with her. Treated like a pariah, being a prostitute must be the worst and most lonely way to earn a living.

As much as I wanted to observe her a bit more (I found the strange old woman to be quite fascinating), I didn't want to add to the general discomfort she must have been feeling while all eyes were on her, I averted my sight onto the passing buildings across the road. Although I think she seemed rather accustomed to how the people around her were reacting. Like I said earlier, she had an air of nonchalance about her. She didn't really care. She seemed forcedly oblivious to how people were reacting towards her. To me it looked as if she'd programmed herself to tune out everything around her. In fact she didn't show any emotion whatsoever, it was like she was on autopilot.

But then about 10 minutes later, everyone had gotten over the initial shock of being in the bus with a prostitute and returned to spacing out, with the glazed zombie look in their eyes as they waited to reach home. All except for the pair crouched in the seat beside her. At this point the daughter, who was seated by the shutter had her arm around her mother, pulling her away from the little woman who was so tired, her head was bobbing as she was falling asleep while on her feet.

At the next bus halt the person beside me vacated his spot and shimmied his way off the bus. I shifted to the side and the prostitute slid into the space beside me and rested her head on the window. She smelt musty. I can't quite describe the smell. But the best I can say is that it was a sort of stuffy, old, musty smell that hung around her.

I got a few curious looks, people seemed surprised that I didn't mind her sitting next to me. But then I guess they were all just too tired and soon got bored of the whole thing. Except of course for the mother and daughter seated in front of me. They would repeatedly turn around like wind-up toys to gape at her and look at me with wide-eyed disbelief like I had done something scandalous.

I guess the whole experience for me was a wee bit of an eye-opener to the harsh reality of the world.

Besides that I've always been a bit disappointed that I've never had any eventful bus rides. So this easily makes it as the most interesting bus katha I have to share- the strange old hooker.



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Rural Diet Has Become The Urban Diet And Vice Versa!! by Dream Into Reality (rajaratarala.blogspot.com)

One of the comments I had for my previous blog entry on the poor state of the Rural Diet was about what it is that they should or could eat.

My diet bourne out of a lifetime in the West, is to say the least, very poor in quality. It is still difficult for me to eat healthily despite the healthy food I grow around me. Sadly it is out of what one is used to, and it is difficult to change in mid life. If one is interested I will let on, but even I am embarrassed that beggars in Sri Lanka eat a more healthy and balanced diet. My diet was bourne out of English boarding school food of baked beans, fried bread, oily chips, mashed potatoes out of powdered smash tins, and rhubarb crumble. Then as a poor starving student it was just soup and rice, which has made hodi and bath my favorite food even now!! So it is what you get used to that one likes irrespective of how healthy it is.

In the village context, "rata kama" or foreign seems to be gaining popularity, because some years ago, when I gave a Dansala in Hingurakgoda, and asked what they wanted, they said they wanted noodles!! I was more appalled the other day when my man in Polonaruwa said there was nothing to eat. That meant that he had not chosen to grow anything in the home garden despite numerous requests. Home grown food to him is not food! There are enough leguminous crops that grow easily in Sri Lanka, and I grow, Bathala, Manioc and Hingurala that can substitute for rice if the latter is not available.

I digress, but to make the point, I would like to note

that as I sell my produce to my customers in Colombo on Mondays, and every household asks for red rice be it samba or the long grain rathu kekulu. This red rice is rarely sold in the Kade in Godagama not 30Km from Colombo, as they demand white rice. In addition to the various yams I mentioned in the earlier paragraph I sell Kehel Muwa and the following list of greens, freshly plucked on the morning of delivery.

Namely: Gotukola, Mukunuwenna, Kohila, Kankun, Kola Guva, Kathurumurunga, Salad Leaves, Nivithi, Gus Nivithi, and Kanda Kola like Penela, Athaviya, Pol Pala and Monara Kudumbi. I also sell a Kalawampala which consists of Manioc leaves, Passion Leaves, Pumpkin Leaves, Japan Batu Kola and a few others.

There is a great demand in Colombo for such as there is little availability and what there is, the source is suspect due to hygienic reasons. In conclusion I have noticed the need of the urban dweller to eat more healthy food while the rural dweller shuns what is freely available around him. I guess it is human nature to want what you don't have so I rest my observation and let you the reader be the judge.

I firmly believe that as we are creatures of habit, that it is very important to impart healthy eating habits on our children, as they could then eat well without effort. Both the parents and schools have a duty to promote healthy eating and part of the school curriculum should include the education in this area of utmost importance.



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