

The Rajasingham Jeyadevan affair has predictably evoked much heat amid the Tamil expatriate community particularly in Britain. This is because Jeyadevan is a well-known Tamil nationalist in London. The methodology employed to coerce him into transferring control of a Hindu temple has shocked most people. If this could happen to Jeyadevan it could happen to us too is the dominant thought and speech in these circles.

Since this column devoted much space to this matter in the past two weeks much feedback is being received. I have been receiving a lot of telephone calls and e-mails over this issue. Most of these have been complimenting me for vividly exposing this incident. Some have communicated incidents of a similar nature happening to other Tamils too. I was particularly overwhelmed at the staging of Tamil dramas last week by a new troupe "Karumaiyam" in Toronto last week when a whole lot of people praised me for writing about the incident.

Not all responses have been nice. The tigers and their sycophants have been as usual conducting their tirades against me. This has now become a regular feature. It was not I who abducted or detained or coerced Jeyadevan. Those responsible were the pseudo-saviours of the Tamils. My role was that of the messenger only. But as is usual the felines and their minions have once again embarked on "shoot the messenger" campaign. This is a hallmark of fascism.

Initially the tigerish elements were uncertain about how to proceed because they were unsure of what the official LTTE line was going to be. That came early last week when the accredited political adviser and chief strategist of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam issued a statement to the tiger mouthpiece on the net. Anton Stanislaus Balasingham alias Bala Annai according to "Tamilnet" dismissed Mr. Jeyaraj's claim as a malicious disinformation campaign when contacted by TamilNet over the weekend report.

"At no stage has Jeyadevan's activities here or Sri Lanka or anywhere been raised with me by British officials," Mr. Balasingham said. "As the chief negotiator involved in Sri Lanka's peace process, I have contacts with British government authorities, but at no stage has Jeyadevan's affair been raised with me by British officials," Mr. Balasingham added.. So went the "Tamilnet" report.

After the "Tamilnet" report the LTTE controlled media in Sri Lanka and abroad was let loose on me. It was made out that the whole Jeyadevan incident was a concocted story and part of a "malicious disinformation campaign". None of these media had written, uttered or projected one "word" about the Jeyadevan incident before Balasingham's outburst. As far as these media organs were concerned the whole matter was ignored.

Now the floodgates were open. "The Sunday Leader" and I were condemned without any reference to the details of the alleged "offence". The irony was that the "Leader" was being praised by tiger elements at the same time for that fine investigative piece on "Col. Karunas camp" in Welikande by Amantha Perera and Bandula Weerasinghe. The pro-Karuna media were accusing the "Leader" of setting the stage for a LTTE attack on the camp.

The tiger media projection relying on Bala "Annai's" statement tried to portray the whole Jeyadevan incident as false. The tiger media sought to ignore conveniently reports appearing in other media about the incident. They also ignored the open letter written by Jeyadevan's brother Dr. Narendran to the media. The lengthy statements made to British law enforcement authorities by Jeyadevan and Vivekananthan too were not taken note of. This was understandable because these are not in the public realm.

Apart from the threatening calls tiger elements also commenced a systematic but puerile campaign of sending letters and e-mails urging that I should not be allowed to write in the "leader" because Bala "Annai" had issued a denial. The editor was also challenged to carry Balasingham's statement made to "Tamilnet" and not to the "Sunday Leader". It was clear that the authors of these missives ranging from "Thangam" in Scarborough to "Singham" in Melbourne were acting in concert.

In fairness to Balasingham he had not denied the Jeyadevan incident. He never suggested that writing about the incident was wrong. I had recounted in detail the harrowing experience of Jeyadevan at the hands of the tigers. Not an iota of these was denied. Balasingham's only grouse was the assertion that British authorities had pressured him into getting Jeyadevan released. Instead of explicitly saying so he states that the name "Jeyadevan" never cropped up in his discussions.

It is interesting to note that Balasingham does not even deny that a meeting took place with British authorities. Bala "annai" only wants everybody to believe that the name "Jeyadevan" never transpired in his discussions with the Brits though that gentleman was the topic of the day. This reminds me of a competition held by a Tamil radio in Canada. The competitors are asked to talk for three minutes about a particular thing without mentioning a related word. For example one is asked to talk about the moon without mentioning the sky or talk about the wave without mentioning sea. Likewise Balasingham like Lewis Carroll's walrus "had talked of many things" but not Jeyadevan.

I have to thank Bala Annai for one thing. By not denying any of the other facts in the articles about the Jeyadevan affair and only referring to one Balasingham has indirectly endorsed the veracity of all other facts. This means that all other facts were accurate. Balasingham is not a fool. He knows that one cannot defend the indefensible. Alas! his minions however are not that bright. So they rush into areas like fools where angels like Anton fear to tread. But then tiger minions like "Thangam" and "Singam" can't be anything but dim-witted. Cos' if they were bright they would be tiger minions no?

In spite of Balasingham's denial this column stands firmly by what was written. I reiterate that the LTTE released Jeyadevan only because of pressure exerted on Velupillai Pirapakaran from Britain. There is only one man in England who has that kind of clout with Thamby Praba and that is Bala Annai. Despite his aversion towards Jeyadevan Bala Annai was constrained to get him released because he realised the consequences of not doing so. This was due to a very effective message conveyed to him that British "weather" could indeed turn "nasty".

Balasingham also faults the "Sunday Leader" editor for not asking him about this matter beforehand. Though the SL editor can take care of himself in matters like these I do have to emphasise three points here for Balasinghams benefit. First of all the facts in question were written by me in my column and as is usual practice take full responsibility for what appears in my column. Of course the editor bears overall responsibility but it is not his or her duty to check out all facts in a column.

Secondly even if the Editor had contacted Balasingham and he denied the facts it would not have altered what I wrote. As stated earlier I bear responsibility for my column and firmly stand by what I write. As a matter of courtesy to the Editor I may have added a line that Balasingham is denying it but emphasised what I wrote clearly.

Thirdly if indeed Balasingham should protest about what appeared in the "Leader" then he should have done so to that paper and not issued a statement to an LTTE website. As a former "Virakesari" Journalist Balasingham would have been aware of this norm. No paper or journalist is infallible and sometimes errors do occur. But attributing ulterior motives is not a welcome feature.

In that context I must point out this fact. Neither the "Tamilnet" nor any other media organ carrying Balasinghams accusation against me "Sunday Leader" not consulting him have also failed to contact me on the same matter. The usual practice in denying or contradicting a story is for the person concerned to send it to the newspaper that carried it in the first place. If on the other hand other media organs carry those denials then it is their duty to contact any person mentioned in that statement and get his or her version too. What is sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose too!

Though Balasingham rides the high horse for the benefit of his minions I must state one thing here for the record. Contrary to what Balasingham says I have been sending messages to him through third parties from the time I heard about Jeyadevans plight. This was in the first week of March long before his release on the 9th. Since I do not have any means of contacting Balasingham directly I sent messages through third parties in Britain, Canada and the USA inquiring about Jeyadevan and requesting Balasinghams assistance in getting him released. There was absolutely no response from Balasingham.

Why I tried to contact Balasingham over the Jeyadevan matter was due to a simple yet powerful reason. I felt that Balasingham should intervene in the matter and secure his release because Balasingham owed a debt of gratitude towards Jeyadevan. I think it is relevant to relate the circumstances of that here.

Balasingham was very sick and had to leave the Wannu and go abroad for medical treatment. He had to come to Britain but was unsure of how the authorities would have respond. Besides his British passport had expired long ago. Colombo was willing to provide Balasingham safe passage only if the LTTE complied with certain conditions.

At this point of time Ramachandran alias Anton Rajah explained the position to Jeyadevan and sought his help. Jeyadevan then was politically influential. He approached former foreign secretary Robin Cooke through the aid of Barry Gardiner. Cooke wanted a letter of guarantee from Balasingham that if readmitted to Britain he would actively help promote peace in Sri Lanka and that he would not engage in any propaganda or fund raising activity in Britain. When this was conveyed Balasingham promptly agreed and sent the letter.

Matters started moving but the British High Commission in Colombo was reluctant to issue the new passport in Sri Lanka because of concern that foreign minister Kdirigamar could raise protests. So it was arranged to issue the passport in Singapore. Mrs. Adele Balasingham an Australian citizen also had no valid passport. Again Jeyadevan pressed her case with the foreign office and through British efforts got Australia to issue a new passport to her in Singapore. It was after this arrangement made possible through Jeyadevans efforts that the Balasinghams travelled up to Thailand in a LTTE ship and then made their way to London legally with the help of valid travel documents obtained in Singapore.

Later Balasingham and Jeyadevan quarrelled due to a misunderstanding. When the Terrorism Act 2000 was about to be passed Jeyadevan and some others wanted to initiate a judicial review of it. This was something any citizen could do. Launching a formal legal challenge of the law required a different procedure and could be done only by the affected party. Balasingham misunderstood the position and thought that Jeyadevan was challenging it on behalf of the LTTE. This led to a bitter argument, the use of obscene language and vicious exchange of words.

Though Balasingham was estranged from Jeyadevan after this incident I thought that the LTTE ideologue would be concerned about Jeyadevans plight. At that time I did not know of the full details regarding Jeyadevans detention in the Wannu and thought that he had been detained by the tigers there for some other reason. It was later that I got to know the exact situation. In spite of my efforts to communicate with Balasingham on this matter there was no response. Subsequently Jeyadevan was released through British pressure.

As I learnt more and more about Jeyadevans predicament I realised that I was extremely naive in assuming that Balasingham would have gone to Jeyadevans aid in gratitude for his past services though they were not on good terms currently. I was wrong and learnt to my disgust that Balasingham was fully aware of the whole exercise. What is saddening is the knowledge that Balasingham, Adele Balasingham and Shanthan were in the Wannu for a week even as Jeyadevan was being held incommunicado in Puthukkudiyiruppu. Nothing was done to help the man who once helped Balasingham to reach Britain and achieve good health. Even the winterwind is not as unkind as mans ingratitude!

Finally I want to tell all those tiger elements abroad who are criticising me for writing about Jeyadevans predicament that the time may come when they too suffer his fate. As John Donne said "ask not for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for you". God forbid that anyone suffer Jeyadevans fate but if and when that happens I will write about them too. (ENDS)

CONCLUDED

DBS Jeyaraj..... 24th Mar 2005