

To those not inclined to perceive the unobtrusive thread of tragedy that underline what's happening the antics of Lanka's political leaders can be viewed just as one watches one of the countless teledrama's being screened in the island that is paradise. It is like a soap opera with successive and open-ended episodes or like a reality TV show-both kinds representing the play of actors to a contrived script. In other words, it seems like fiction to a sensible outsider. Unfortunately it is not.

Look at the images: Wimal Weerawansa on a saline-aided fast unto death; the blocking of the UN office, Dr Mervyn tying



THE POLITICAL SOAP OPERA IN LANKA

a Samudri official to the Mango tree, General Fonseka-war hero- put behind bars and stripped of his stripes; Anoma, his wife, crying outside; KP -architect of the LTTE war machine- now made a buddy like never before; the President initiating constitutional reforms to further strengthen himself and keep himself in power for another term; MPs from the

nessing a fancy dream; it seemed so ridiculous to them that they hardly thought of condemning this frolic of a senior Sri Lankan Minister.

Like an actor on stage who doesn't realize that he is sans costume, our friend Wimal was fasting with the saline drip on him! It was a fast unto death with no fear of death. This comic episode ended even more comically when the President appeared on the scene, crept up to Wimal, and gave the fasting angel a glass of life-giving water. Wimal lost no time but got up to the liquid. The fast-unto- death had lasted just two and a half days and of course Wimal was clean-shaven right through- out this arduous period.

Opposition crossing over to the government to get their money's worth; and so on the list is ongoing.

To the superficial person Sri Lanka is never without fun.

Wimal Weerawansa, self-confessed patriotic hero (all patriots are self-confessed ones) and firebrand has gone through "many evolving moons," in the words of Alexander Pope. He abandoned the JVP platform of fighting against the capitalists and quickly smelt the ethereal perfume that the capitalist world offers. He got his hairstyling done by professionals, ornamented himself with a luxury mobile phone and flew in the streets of Colombo in a luxury car backed by a myriad of

One could imagine that no politician would fast unto death in Sri Lanka. Since the current JR Bahubootha Vyawasthawa came into operation, and particularly over the recent years, Sri Lanka has witnessed the building up of a most corrupt and greedy ruling class that is driven by opportunism and the consequential grab for office. The dismantling of checks and balance has made politics the quick road to personal wealth. We had another senior Minister, Champika Ranawaka, who was reported to have admitted at an interview that the Public Service is corrupt right down the line and that the machine of the bureaucracy had to be oiled for it to work.

The jumping scene of the politician is an exemplification of the office-grabbing drive. If our ordinary politicians are players in a puppet

foolish peace moves of Chandrika Kumaratunge and Ranil Wickremasinghe were based on that assumption. Once upon a time one of our military leaders was in India praying to Sai Baba seeking career benefits for himself while his soldiers were besieged by the ruthless LTTE. On his return, that man gallant man was gifted for his absence from post with an ambassadorial appointment by the powers of the time. he was confirmed in his faith in Sai Baba.

Sarath Fonseka was a soldier of different metal. He convinced his President that the Tigers can be wiped out and he carried the war to a state of no-return. Mahinda reciprocated with considerable resource-support and he deserves accolades for that. But now, it is suggested, that the war was not won because of Fonseka but solely because of the political head. In the ancient days political leaders were trained in battle (eg King Dutugemunu) but now it is no more. The irony is that once-failed military leaders are now adjudicating on Fonseka and that the minions whom Fonseka punished for dereliction of duty are now on top of the latter. In the days to come "dhusta Fonseka" may languish in prison. In our teledramas weerayas can become dushtayas and vice versa. All is fair in war and opera.

Let's come to another episode. It is about

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security vehicles that made him look impressive.

However, this time it was the height of comedy when Wimal decided to stage "a fast-unto-death." He warned everyone (even the President) not to try and persuade him to get off the fast as he would lay down his precious life unless the UN Secretary General, Ban Moon, abandoned his decision to appoint a panel of advisors over the subject of Lanka's conduct of the war against terror. To Ban Moon it was like a fly on the body of an elephant. Undaunted Wimal, in heroic fashion, got his supporters to block the UN office. Perhaps he thought he was bringing in a global crisis. All that Ban Moon had to do was to shut down that office. In the meantime, global leaders were wondering whether they were wit-

show President Mahinda Rajapakse is the one who pulls the string. The President is busy building up a centre of gravity around him holding up a huge carrot to MPs of the Opposition. It seems divine retribution that the UNP is the victim because it is that party which brought in the Bahubootha Vyawasthawa. The latest to cross over are the Muslim Congress of Hakim. Of course, he has joined "in the national interest"- as all others before him had done. Other potential jumpers are stewing trouble in the UNP.

About poor old Sarath Fonseka much has been stated that little is needed to be mentioned here. He was the operational architect of the successful routing of Prabha, the terror. Three decades of Army Commanders before him could not achieve this remarkable feat. They had successfully persuaded their respective political bosses that the Tiger cannot be defeated. The

Servant-a Samurdi officer- by tying the latter to a Mango tree. The reason was that the officer had not attended a meeting arranged to discuss the dengue menace. The video that has been circulated makes it all clear. However, Dr Mervyn said that he did not tie the poor fellow but that the latter had tied himself as an example to others. One thing about our politicians is that they assume the public are stupid. Perhaps they are right. How else could Dr Mervyn get over 150,000 preferential votes? During that election Dr Mervyn had displayed huge banners illegally across highways describing himself as the 'moon' of the sun and the moon (Ira - Sanda) in Gampaha- the sun being Minister Basil.



Shyamon Jayasinghe

However, Dr Mervyn had a tougher time over the Mango tree incident. Samurdi officials had more political clout than the Rupavahini boys. They struck work in unison. Ministers crowded around them and fussed over them. Powerful Minister Basil made several overtures. But the Samurdi officials stayed put. It was a huge compliment to the latter that they rose to a man to defend their member from humiliating treatment. It was indeed one of those rare edifying moments seen amidst a growingly selfish Sri Lankan ethos. President Rajapakse, after waiting unshaken for two weeks, was constrained to intervene. He removed Dr Mervyn from his portfolio! Dr Mervyn left his office challenging aloud that he would be back soon as Cabinet Minister.

Whether our soap opera viewers can witness such an episode is left to see.



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