

Sri Lanka's political evolution has clearly arrived at a crisis stage that demands just one great imperative action by the people, namely the abolition of the institution of Executive President. The current incumbent in office, Mahinda Rajapakse (MR), has done one salutary service and that is to demonstrate the serious fault lines in the system by reducing it to the level of absurd drama that the JR Jayawardena-led United National Party government script leads it to. Even three-wheel drivers and ordinary folk on the streets cannot escape the sense of the absurd.

Governance has been seriously compromised and the basic need for law and order and public confidence in what the rulers do has been totally obliterated. The character of the powerful executive created by the script has been able to capture every democratic institution-the Cabinet, the Parliament, the judicial system, the policing agency, the electing mechanism and the media all of which must necessarily have some measure of independence and teeth to checkmate any possible abuse of power. One must realize that executive power spreads all the way down the line of command right unto the Pradeshiya Sabha politician.

A fundamental reality of the use of power is its potential for abuse if gone unchecked. That is the nature of human behavior and it is doesn't vary with a JR, a Premadasa, a MR or even 'gentleman' Ranil Wickremasinghe. There are no angels in politics and even gentlemen can become villains when

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the taste of power is experienced. When Lord Acton famously said, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely," he was commenting on human behavior. The truth applies to anybody in a position of power-a CEO in a Company, a Principal in school, a club manager, or even a simple foreman or supervisor. For the good of all we have to keep power holders under watch. The drive for power is ingrained in all of us and its abuse when won seems to flow naturally.

It is obvious MR will not preside over the demolition of the office he holds although he pledged it in Mahinda Chinthanaya. He is not a Gandhi or Nelson Mandela. In that event, socially conscious leaders must plot and plan a realistic and democratic way to have get this job done. The powerful regime has succeeded in creating a nation of glitzy hines or vultures who are prepared to sacrifice any principle or anyone for personal gain. In such a context the initiative of Revd. Maduluwawe Sobitha and his team must be commended. They are courageous enough to swim against the tide. It is heartening to observe that there remain still some saviors our country.



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HOW TO END THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL

On the other hand, my worry is that the project of Revd. Maduluwawe Sobitha is ill-designed and at the outset. He has to go

goal that puts them in the picture or serves their vested interests. A local UNP leader or JVP leader will work hard for their party leader because thereby he /she will have a stake in the future administration. Why should he work his bones out for a distant single issue leader?

Fifth, the project assumes that the different established political parties will set aside party ambitions and interests to spend their money and time to work for a single issue candidate. This ignores political realities.

Sixth, campaign coordination is going to be problematic unlike in the case of a party candidate. This was the experience of some organizers of the Sarath Fonseka campaign for Presidency.

Seventh, the project ignores the political party power imbalance in oppositional ranks. Any move that ignores such a reality will be fraught. Come what may, it is clear that the UNP has had/had a solid minimum base of thirty per cent of electoral support island-wide at the worst of times. No other party can get anywhere near that guaranteed start. It also enjoys the confidence of minorities. Eking out the deficit twenty one per cent is realizable in these better times. In terms of electoral support all other opposition parties lag behind the UNP with a huge gap.

In view of the above considerations, unless a charismatic personality emerges like SWRD in 1956 it appears obvious that a coalition under UNP leadership is the more practical solution. It would be cruel irony to let the Party that brought in this curse liquidate it. The deadline to end the office of the Executive President must be a guilt-edged in such a campaign. The six month period is unrealistic because the new President will have to dissolve Parliament and obtain a two third majority in order to change the constitution

back to the drawing table along with his advisors. The first question that arises is whether a single issue candidate can arouse an appeal among the broad electorate particularly of rural Lanka at a Presidential election. Isn't the single issue character something too abstract for digestion to the very large majority past the Colombo intellectuals? It lacks the flesh and blood and the emotion that can provoke the imagination of the public. This deficiency will play out badly at a Rajapakse election when a different rhetoric is on. The candidate has to have a more total appeal that pricks the day to day issues that ordinary people in villages and towns face.

Secondly, the single issue project by definition will not be able to mobilize grassroots leaders who will be asked to work for a 'candidacy' and not for their future political leader. The local leader mobilization is crucial at elections and such leaders can be enthused to act and work only toward



Thirdly, funding is a serious consideration. Will business and other interests fund an impersonal one-issue candidacy? 'No,' is the answer. Funding a party leader and party that can be brought to power is an entirely different matter. Next, they are not going to fund two successive campaigns.

Fourthly, if the single issue candidate wins he will naturally have a competitive advantage over rivals at the subsequent parliamentary election. Hence, one cannot reasonably expect an aspiring party leader or party to be enthused to work for a situation that will eventually leave him/it out of the political landscape.

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මිස්ට්‍රියො වාසි ශ්‍රී ලාංකික දේශික දේශිකාවන්ගේ නිර්මාණ හඳුන්වා දෙන ප්‍රභවයේ පිදිරසිංහ සමග දිල්ලැක්කි දිනේෂා විජේසූරිය ඉදිරිපත් කරන “සාහිත්‍ය සම්භාෂණ” එස්බීඑස් ඉවුම් විදුලියේ සිංහල සේවයෙන් සෑම මසකම අවසන් අගනරුවාදා දහවල් 11 ට FM93.1.

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