

World was taken by surprise at the announcement that this year's Nobel Prize for peace has been awarded to President Barack Obama. Some would have even raised the question why not George W. Bush? If they did, it should not be just ignored as silly or irrelevant, for it was the former President of the U.S. that started the process of ridding the world of the threat of terrorism. What Obama is doing or, to be exact, vowing to do, is to bring that operation to a successful conclusion.

There is a difference though. Unlike his predecessor, Obama is



Lanka, and the suffering they undergo. That is why in many of these countries, demonstrations by LTTE activists carrying Elam flag are allowed and even encouraged by some politicians. As some cynic pointed out they would not tolerate an Al Qaeda flag anywhere, because that is a terrorist organization.

Terrorism, peace and even human rights are relative terms, to be interpreted and understood in the proper context. In other words, they are to be judged against the parties that talk about them and the ones referred

fight, against Al Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan, a fight he supported all the way through. Even there success seems a far away dream, with the bleak prospect of it turning out to be a second Vietnam. Al Qaeda is becoming more and more threatening making their defeat far more difficult than originally envisaged.

That makes the question more complicated, the question as to what makes Obama the winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace. That is where the non-Westerner gets stuck, not knowing how to unravel the mystery. It is only the Western mind that can grasp the subtleties of world peace and even terrorism. We Easterners have to seek the guidance and assistance of the more enlightened, Western thinkers and analysts in resolving

this type of mystery.

However, one has to admit the

victory of Sri Lankan army over the LTTE does little in bringing about world peace. That again puts our motherland and its leaders in proper context. Do not overestimate yourself or what you achieve, is the quiet lesson that is taught to them. On the other hand, let us give Obama the credit he deserves for what he has so far done in working towards a world without conflict. At the very least, he stands out as the most powerful man in the world who has begun to talk peace in a sober and non-threatening language, and with humility that others can appreciate and approve of.

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not dividing the world into two camps, us and them, i.e. those who agree with Bush and those who do not. It was a simple Bush doctrine. Anyone disagreeing with him was enemy. To Obama's credit we should accept that he addresses the rest of the world with respect, and not in the threatening tone that Bush was accustomed to.

But is that enough to single him out for this prestigious award? How about Sri Lanka's Mahinda Rajapakse? One could ask. But rest assured no one will. Rajapakse is not a name that sounds palatable for the Western tongues. What did he achieve for the cause of world peace, they might even question. Crushed the invincible LTTE terrorists? No, they would again point out. LTTE supporters are there with us, planning their next move, they would assert. They may even be thinking of recognizing the Elam Government in exile that some activists in Norway or Canada or even the U.S. would be planning.

This is not wishful thinking. Many Western powers are still struggling to come to terms with the defeat of the LTTE, which they claimed to be so powerful that no army could ever take them on. Remember David Milliband, Eric Solheim and even Hilary Clinton still regretting the fact that they could not save Prabhakaran and co. They would not lie low easily. While Solheim was openly working for the Tigers, the other two are beholden to them for the support they got from the LTTE activists in their own lands. Rumbblings are heard now and again about the plight of the Tamil people in the North of Sri

to. That is a complexity that many Sri Lankans fail to grasp and digest. Once understood, one can be perfectly at ease and convinced that what the West is teaching him is nothing but the truth.

Coming back to the issue of the Nobel Prize for Peace one can think of some Israeli and Palestinian leaders who were given such prizes, such as Simon Perez. I have a feeling that even Yasser Arafat was given some such prize once. All these were given those awards for bringing peace to the Middle East, i.e. between Israel and Palestine, which is the longest and the most serious conflict that even provoked Osama bin Laden to orchestrate the 9/11 operation. Has the problem been resolved with the awarding of these prizes? No. They have some back to square one again. The promising start apparently given to the Middle East peace process by Obama also seems to have faced a stumbling block. That was signaled by the Israeli foreign minister just before the most recent talks.

Then it is obvious that Obama got the award for some thing else. What can that some thing else be? Is it the ending of the invasion of Iraq by George Bush, Tony Blair and John Howard? True Obama opposed the invasion right from the start, but he is still stuck in the country, having inherited the unwelcome war by virtue of his elevation to that high office. Then there is the real

It is against this background that one has to look at the movement launched by Rev. Athureliye Ratana of the JHU calling upon the General Secretary of the U.N. Ban Ki Moon to investigate the human rights violations committed by the U.S. This no doubt is a powerful way of countering the moves by me one some U.S. diplomats and politicians to charge the Sri Lankan army and the government on human rights violations in the war against the LTTE.



I for one, do not think the monks in parliament or the Bhikkhu M.P.s make much of a contribution to political change in the island. Although there was some enthusiasm after the sudden death of Rev. Gangodawila Soma in doubtful circumstances, and people were carried away by that and the physical attraction of a few celebrity monks like Kolonnawe Sumangala and Uduwe Dhammaloka, that euphoria is now dead and gone. Some of those monks themselves have betrayed the cause, jumping camp and looking for personal gain. As one in my student days who trekked miles and miles to listen to the militant monks like Walpola Rahula in late forties, I looked forward to the days that monks would be leading social change in the country. All those hopes and expectations are now gone. I have realized that politicians are the same whether attired in white or yellow. However, I take my hat off to this very articulate M.P. in robes, for daring to challenge the world super power on the very issue that it is trying to charge Sri Lanka on.

Rev. Ratana is not likely to have the success that David had against Goliath. According to the Bible, the shepherd boy David not only

stood up against the powerful Goliath, he vanquished him with his sling and just one stone. The modern day Goliath now taking on the Goliath of world politics, would need more than a sling and a stone even to dream of any success. It is for the attempt and the approach to world peace that Obama has earned the Nobel peace prize. Extending the same argument one can safely say that Rev. Ratana too deserves at least an honorable mention for his movement.

Why so, one might question. No one dares to challenge the U.S. on its human rights record. No one would think of reminding the U.S. of the killing thousands and thousands of innocent Japanese men and women of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by dropping the atomic bombs on them. For the U.S. and its politicians it was an exercise in testing the capacity of their new invention. Even reputed U.S. scholars have pointed out that it was an unnecessary exercise because the U.S. as well as the Allies had by then were aware of the intentions of the Japanese who were thinking of surrendering. To make it worse, some observers have emphasized that if Japan was peopled by a white race, the bomb would never have been dropped

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on them. That again speaks for the peaceful intentions of the super power.

No one dares remind their 'Big Brother' about the innocent Vietnamese killed by the poisonous Agent Orange dropped on them, that in the name of saving them from the evil of communism. No one would even try to remember that even now there are children born with deformities as a result of the poison thus unleashed. The U.S. has neither accepted responsibility for these atrocities or ever apologized to the people of Vietnam. They were probably more interested in finding about MIAs, the U.S. soldiers supposed to be missing in action in Vietnam. They were truly more important than the hapless Vietnam peasants, for after all, they were true Americans.

Let us not talk of what the U.S. did in Chile in bringing down the popularly elected leader Allende, or what they did in other Latin American countries. Let us not talk about the invasion of Iraq although it was not authorized by the U.N. One has to be realistic and understand that the two words represented by the letters U.S. are far more powerful than what is meant by the two letters U.N. One has to keep in mind that the U.N. can do nothing if the U.S. does not approve. This is the stark reality of world politics and world peace.

However, it is heartening to note that there is a simple monk in our motherland prepared to take on that all-powerful modern day Goliath. Good luck to him.

Send in your contribution to
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