

It is not easy to compare the tiny, tear-shaped island at the southern tip of the vast and emerging economic giant India with the Titanic, the British 46,329-gross-tonnes luxury passenger liner, which collided with an iceberg in the North Atlantic on her maiden voyage sinking herself with about 1500 passengers though it was considered to be unsinkable.

But now the booming Sri Lanka is in peaceful surroundings under President Mahinda Rajapaksa who stood up to the ruthless 30 year-old onslaughts by terrorists who were well prepared, groomed and resourced by the diaspora and other foreign elements.

It was due to the firm determination, astute-



A booming Sri Lanka sprung from terrorism

ness and political leadership given by him to the armed forces and the police, and especially to the valiant and heroic army personnel that made possible the solid military defeat of the opponents in their own territory. It is indeed a matter for amusement to recall now the statements made by several powerful countries and even the United Nations that the LTTE could not be defeated militarily. So was the Titanic, which was considered to be unsinkable.



This is exactly what President Mahinda Rajapaksa did after becoming the President about four years ago.

The leaders of the prolonged guerilla war were able to gain time, off and on, to regroup and strengthen their position engaging the previous governments on a merry-go-round to hold consultative meetings in various countries. It was to seek a peaceful solution to the armed conflict which, to the alert onlookers, appeared as a mirage that the governments were chasing and the opponents evading, as the latter's enshrined goal was quite another though the governments were not clever enough to comprehend it.

In fact, it is timely that President Barack Obama in his historic speech at the acceptance of his Nobel Peace Prize a few days ago remarked at the beginning that he would evoke the cause of a "just war".

He said that the deployment of 30,000 more US troops to battle in Afghanistan was to topple the terrorists and bring about peace in that country.

He further said in his eloquent and well-crafted speech:

"Make no mistake: Evil does exist in this world. A non-violent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al-Qaida's leaders to lay down their arms. To

say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism - it is a recognition of history, the imperfections of man and the limits of reason."

This is exactly what President Mahinda Rajapaksa did after becoming the President about four years ago. His thinking cannot have any appreciable divide from that of President Obama though the two countries differ in size, power, resources and wealth like a teardrop and the Titanic.

President Obama's present stance to change the America's attitude towards Sri Lanka may be due to his realization that President Mahinda Rajapaksa was quite right in his approach to terrorism that was seen presumably through a coloured glass by his advisors and other powerful countries a few months back.



A powerful country like America will not take such a stand without thoroughly weighing the pros and cons of the issue aided by his advisors and by personally involving himself in taking the final decision.

The stand taken by America is indeed a wake-up call to other Western and European countries to get up from their deep slumbers and realistically look at things afresh, and take a similar positive stand in their relations with Sri Lanka which, though tiny in size and lean in resources but bigger in its capabilities, aspirations and democratic ideals.

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What is life?

[The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam]

There was a water-drop, it joined the sea,
A speck of dust, it was fused with earth;
What of your entering and leaving this world?
A fly appeared, and disappeared?

Of all who went on this long road,
Where is the one who has returned to tell us the secret?
Take care of leave nothing for your needs on the two-ended
way,
You will not be coming back.

I saw an old man in the wine-shop,
I said, "Have you any news of those who have gone?"
He replied, "Take some wine, because like us many
Have gone, none has come back."

A religious man said to a whore, "You are drunk,
Caught every moment in a different snare."
She replied, "Oh Shaikh, I am what you say,
Are you what you seem?"

I need a jug of wine and a book of poetry,
Half a loaf for a bite to eat,
Then you and I, seated in a deserted spot,
Will have more wealth than a Sultan's realm.

You have seen the world and all you have seen was nothing,
All you have said and heard, that too is nothing:
Running from pole to pole, there was nothing,
And when you lurked at home, there was also nothing.

Suppose the world went as you wanted, then what?
And suppose this book of life were read through, then what?
Let me suppose a century of self-gratification left,
Even supposing we had a century more, then what?

See what I've got from the world nothing;
The fruit of my life's work? Nothing:
I am the light of the party, but when sit down, I am nothing;
I am a wine-pot, but when I'm broken, nothing.

Every now and then someone comes saying, "It is I."
He arrives with favors, silver and Gold saying, "It is I."
When his little affair is sorted out for a day,
Death suddenly jump out of ambush saying, "It is I."

[Selected Poems of The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam
From the Translated version by Peter Avery and John Heath
Stubbs]

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