

When I think of the reported post-presidential-election position in Sri Lanka, I am reminded of two stories that appeared in two English books. One is about a mischievous boy on the deck of a ship in mid sea. Having nothing to keep himself busy he thought of a frank to play on the passengers. Going to the edge of the deck and looking seriously far into the sea, he shouted at the top his voice:

'There you are, a huge whale is jumping up in water.'

refused to believe the results announced by the election commissioner. That had to be false, fabricated, they shouted in unison. Their followers had to go with the leaders, and the hue and cry took wings and flew across the land and across the sea.

This leads me to the other story equally interesting. It is about a world-famous astrologer who, for some mysterious reason, decided to publish the exact date and time of his own death. When such a well-known man makes that type of announcement, the whole world takes note of it. It became hot news in most newspapers around the world. When the appointed day arrived for the well-publicized death, the astrologer was waiting at

some fantasy to get behind and blame the whole world for your silly mistakes and misfortune.

It was when the opposition and SF were running out of material to dish out to the world press that SF was arrested. This infused new life to the now dying protest movement, and all allies who rallied round SF came out again, this time with more vigor and determination to teach Rajapakse a lesson.

I am neither competent nor equipped to comment on the rights and wrongs of the detention of SF, but I can see the picture emerging from the now popular tragi-comedy on the Sri Lankan political stage. I have no way of guessing now the drama is going to end, whether as comedy or tragedy.

Some backstage operations are worth commenting on, though. First and foremost, the SF camp operated on a number of miscalculations. By spreading tall stories through hired gossip-mongers, about the dealings of Rajapakse, they expected to turn the whole country against Mahinda Rajapakse.

The faith and respect they had for this man was too great for that to work. Again, their attempt to portray SF as the real hero of the war against Tigers rather than his c-in-c who withstood enormous pressure from Western Powers to stop it, also backfired. Counting the heads at election rallies and deciding the outcome on those figures, a silly practice of SF which should have been noticed and stopped by his supporters, was one of the greatest blunders seen in Sri Lankan elections. Although they were duped by their

home for the big event. As the predicted moment was approaching, he became anxious. No sign of imminent death. Minutes were ticking away and every minute was agony for the intended victim. His biggest worry was the prospect of having to face the world as a living person and be ridiculed by each and every man, whether personally known to him or not. That was the last thing he wanted. He did not want to live as a false prophet. Death was far better than that. He chose death. Right at the predicted moment, he shot himself with the revolver that was ready at hand.

That exactly was the situation SF and his men were thrown into. Whatever were the motive or plans when some hundred of so rooms were booked at a posh Colombo hotel, the fact that an army contingent had surrounded the hotel itself was sufficient for them to cry out to the whole world and say SF was about to be killed or arrested. Yes, that was their strategy, to get as much international publicity and sympathy as possible, in order to create an impression of utter disorder and deceit on the part of the government. When you are in no mood to accept reality you have to invent

own concoctions, the people at large were not ready to believe all that. Even if they did believe some stories about corruption, the stakes for them were higher, and they knew their man did love his country and would never betray it. This was the ground reality that SF and his men failed to understand. On the top of that SF did the rest of damage necessary for voters to reject him. Inexperience becomes an asset very rarely, and in SF's case it was the biggest danger. His suggestion to Rajapakse to decide



between Welikada and Bogambara to spend time after defeat, was the height of arrogance no politician would ever display. His contempt for past subordinates which made him use derogatory terms to refer to them, were unbecoming of a man seeking election to a local council. His condemnation of Gotabhaya Rajapakse, whose role in coordinating the entire operation against Tigers, did nothing but reduce him to the level of a joker.

The final nail in his coffin was driven by his joining forces with R. Sambanthan, who was nothing more than a spokesman for LTTE. Although his allies were trying to convince the voters that there was no agreement, no one in his dreams would have believed such falsehoods. That was enough for people to decide on the man to lead them.

All this was either beyond their comprehension or SF's men simply ignored all warning signals.

Whatever the reason behind this is, it is high time politicians and public seriously think of leaving Buddhist monks to do what they undertake to do as they get into robes.

Just like the mischievous boy on the ship deck, they could not help getting duped by their own frank.

Something unusual too was unfolding during and after the election. For some reason I cannot fully understand politicians of all shades are in the habit of rushing to Malwatta, to get the blessings of Mahanayaka, at the drop of a hat. Even the JVP, who, at one time considered killing opponents and critics in cold blood was fair game, now would not fail to observe the ritual. Perhaps emboldened and even feeling all-powerful, Mahanayaka who earlier stuck to his traditional role of offering good wishes and blessings, this time around overstepped his mark, and was seen throwing his weight behind SF in telling people that SF will not divide the country with TNA backing. This would have been ignored as a slip of the tongue if he did not arrogate the powers of the election commissioner and thought of commenting on some ballot papers picked up by Karu Jayasuriya who again ran to the prelate with them instead of relevant authorities. Obvious reason for the UNP deputy leader's action was whipping up Buddhist opinion against the government. Mahanayaka too fell

AFTERMATH OF A BITTER FIGHT



Naturally this attracted the attention of everyone around and they gathered round him to take a look at this wonderful creature. When prompted by them to indicate the exact location, the boy had no difficulty in showing them where to look.

'Right at that point, keep watching.'

They did keep watching. No whale showed up. That did not prevent the crowd getting bigger and bigger as the news of this discovery traveled to all parts of the ship. The boy who had by this time gone behind the whale-watchers and occupied a comfortable seat to enjoy the fun, could no longer keep away from the fun. He too wanted to take a look at the mysterious creature he himself invented. At the end, he too joined the crowd trying to locate the whale.

Once you create a myth there is no guarantee that you yourself will not get fooled. That exactly is what happened to SF and his supporters who very cleverly created an impression or to put it more precisely, a belief that SF would romp home to victory. His campaigners should be given the credit for using novel methods of disseminating this myth among a large section of the voters. Even the very people who planned this operation could not help falling into their own trap and

