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He did the almost impossible. I say almost because he handled his material in such a way that he could get away claiming innocence and insisting the interpretation of what he said can be done according to the views and intentions of the interpreter. He could even boast of having thrown enough of a length of the rope for anyone who wants to, hang himself with.

Let us see what exactly he said on that occasion.



He started by saying that it was significant for that great king to send a message to the current President through his famous giants because Mahinda Rajapakse was the ruler (mind you he did use the term king) to bring the whole island under one rule after Parakrama Bahu the Great did that long ago. In fact, displaying his expert knowledge of the history of the island, he went on to say that Rajapakse was the sixth ruler (king) to do so in the history of our motherland.

That really laid the foundation for what he had planned to build as an authentic historical anecdote. Now, let us move to his marvelous anecdote.

Bhaddakacchana, the queen who was a close relation of King Suddhodana (father of Siaddhartha, which remained unsaid) came to Sri Lanka as the consort of Pandukabhaya. Later, Mahanaga, a descendant of this queen came down to Ruhuna and established his lineage into which was born Dutugemunu, who brought the entire Southern Sri Lanka, or Ruhuna under one rule to start with, to be followed by his historic victory over the foreign ruler Elara.

Only indication or the 'dead rope' as might claim if challenged, was his reference to Dutugemunu as the ancestor or the great, great, grandfather of Mahinda Rajapakse, the recipient of the said message.

This was enough for the oppo-

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sition papers to go to town which they did with vengeance. That created a big uproar in the country. It did not appear to have made any impact on the followers and admirers of the President, but one wonders why such a connection was ever made between Rajapakses and Suddhodhana although it was simply drawing a long bow.

This brings to mind an earlier instance concerning the then ruler of the island, Ranasinghe Premadasa. At some meeting where the big man was present, one of his followers, obviously to make a big impression on the boss, came out with an assertion that stunned the President.

'Our President is even more virtuous than a Buddhist monk.'

Was the stunning statement made by none other than the former Minister of the UNP, Rupa Karunatilake. Premadasa, on his part, did not hesitate in calling upon the offender to immediately withdraw the statement. Obviously the venerable monks present on that occasion plus the laymen were impressed immensely by the action of their leader.

I wonder whether a contrast can be made her with that incident. Perhaps, the current President did not find what our artist did offensive as Rupa Karunatilake's statement was to Premadasa then.

I must reveal the name of the great artist for the benefit of those who are unaware of his identity. He is the well-known film and theater personality Jackson Anthony.

It is up to the reader to make his or her assessment of the great man's discovery or revelation.

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