

This expression, "elephant in the room," is interesting. Wikipedia gives the following explanation of this idiomatic figure of speech. "Elephant in the room", Wikipedia states, "is an English metaphorical idiom for an obvious truth that is being ignored or goes unaddressed. The idiomatic expression also



applies to an obvious problem or risk no one wants to discuss. It is based on the idea that an elephant in a room would be impossible to overlook; thus, people in the room that pretend the elephant is not there have chosen to concern themselves with tangential or small and irrelevant issues rather than deal with the looming big one."

The metaphor of the elephant would give the reader some sense of the drama of relationship between the President and General Sarath Fonseka. If one is prepared to forget or ignore the tragic part of SF's plight one could discern an amusing moment in the situation.

Immediately after the capture and destruction of the LTTE General SF was introduced to the world by President Mahinda Rajapakse as the 'Greatest Army Commander in the world.' His brother Gotabhaya did not disagree. The initial logical problem is how such a priceless

FOR PRESIDENT RAJAPAKSE, SARATH FONSEKA IS THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

leader (according to the President's own definition) could have been dragged to jail in total violence of procedure; incarcerated; kept for over a month in jail without charges and confirmed in jail thereafter. The war warrior still languishes in a solitary cell condemned to three years hard labor. Further body blows followed: SF was stripped of the stripes of valour that he had earned of his own bravado and courage over thirty years of service in the army. Likewise, his pension- a normal entitlement for service in the army- was taken away. That was not all: his Parliamentary seat won while in jail was also grabbed out of him.

Why I refer to this as the logical problem is because it all simply does not add up. There is an inherent contradiction. How can a man defined by authorities as being so priceless be treated this way? If priceless, he should have been shown mercy for even an act of subsequent treason that he may have committed (SF has not yet been found guilty of treason). One has to look at the big image painted by the same authorities namely that he was the greatest army commander in the world. Can any subsequent offence overwhelm that fact?

There are many theories circulating to explain this turn of events. That he was planning a conspiracy is one. There has been no evidence for that; it was a canard spread by a section of government. The moot point is that this imprisonment came only after the General contested President Rajapakse. His alleged offences were dug out thereafter. As a matter of fact even when he was dragged away by force no warrant was presented and for over six weeks no charge sheet was available. No explanation was given to the victim as to why he was taken away. This all means there were no known offences that the General had committed that could have prompted such a move. The decision to lock him away was taken first and a justification was designed subsequently. This is plain for a secondary school child to see.

The act of jailing him could have looked more

credible had he been charged via normal civil courts where strict procedure is available. The Military Court is a special court established to keep serving members of the forces under tight discipline. Its procedures are very loose as quick action is demanded if recalcitrant soldiers are to be disciplined for wrong doing. There is even capital punishment allowable under this system. All this is because the army by necessity has to be kept under iron control. General SF had left the army by the time of the alleged offences. He achieved the government - conferred sta-



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The government acted and acts compulsively just in order to build and maintain a myth on which it has thus far successfully gathered public support. The myth is that the war victory was a pure act of political leadership and that SF's role was minimal. In order to maintain this myth SF must be put down and hidden if he cannot be got

government.

During the White Flag Case now concluded SF went to town in the guise of a statement from the dock under oath. SF stated that Major Hathurusinghe, one of the Military Court judges, had been guilty of corruption as the latter had been paid a monthly allowance by the LTTE! SF also gave statistics to suggest that the President's brother, Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapakse, is guilty of huge corruption in purchases. SF also points out how he had openly disagreed with the President and Gotabhaya over military strategy. For instance when the latter had wanted SF to lead his command to attack weak enemy camps first he had insisted that he would like to attack the strong ones and that it all worked out.

SF has also just issued a detailed statement about how the war was fought and won. This statement gives details that would serve to embarrass the government on the eve of a conference of forty countries called by the government to explain how the war was won. The conference is on while the key ground architect of victory is in jail. Countering government's attempt to monopolize the war victory SF points out that the contribution of MR was not any different to the contributions by his predecessors and that the real difference came from a difference in army capability. SF states that he had brought the war to a point of no return so that MR had had no option but to stand up to Western overtures at the last phase of the war.

SF concluded his address by alleging that there is a plot hatched by government to kill him While in prison or in transit. Frightening memories of Lasantha Wickramatunge come up.

No island is an island in today's context of digital communication and social media-in the era of the computer, internet, the mobile phone, Facebook, and Twitter; the era of Earth satellite spies. Sri Lanka is being watched. The age of national sovereignty is over. If it were not, how come the NATO Forces bombard Libya and force Mubarak out of Egypt? How can the US enter a foreign territory and kill Osama Bin Laden?

So here we have an elephant in the room that the President is trying hard to ignore. Try as the President might, it is impossible. Government can only pretend that SF is locked away and out of sight. Nevertheless, the jailed SF is nagging at the government in a myriad of effective ways.



Graphics - Shanalee

tus of the greatest Army Commander in the World after all that. Thus it was most inappropriate that he was referred to the Military Court. From the government's point of view the Military Court is appointed by the President as Commander-in-Chief according to his own fancy and even its judgments are ratified by the latter. The matter thus becomes hey presto.

The preliminary objection raised by the accused that the Military Court comprised persons who had been punished by him when he was General was overlooked, thus undermining natural justice. The charges were frivolous and the punishment hideously excessive.

ridden of altogether. If wiser counsel prevailed MR would have at the commencement publicly shared the joy of victory along with the General. Such a course would have been better for the nation. Continuing to peddle this myth is going to prove expensive for the government because it is going to have to pursue a violent and disastrous path.

The treatment of SF is without doubt unjust and in this sense the jailed warrior remains an incessant and embarrassing public reminder of an unjust and ungrateful regime. Furthermore, like the rubber ball that cannot be put down in water SF keeps surfacing as a huge nuisance factor to the



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ශ්‍රී සුගත තරුණ සම්මා සම්බුදු රජාණන් වහන්සේගේ සදහම් දේශනාවන් ගෙන් නිව්, පහන් වූ ගරු සම්පන්න මිනිස් පරපුරක් බිහිකළා පමණක් නොව, බුදු රජුගේ ශ්‍රී පාද ස්පර්ශයෙන් දේශයන් ආලෝක වත් වී, තිලොවම ඒකාලෝක වූ බැව් තෝරනසකි. හව අන්දකාරයෙන් මුදා ගත් සුන්දර ලෝකය ශිෂ්ට සම්පන්න මිනිස් සමූහයක් ඇති කරවීමට මෙහ-

ඊකාර වූයේ, මහාවංශයට අනුව, ක්‍රිස්තු පූර්ව තෙවැනි සියවසේ මෙද භාගයේ දුමදිව සිට ලක් බිමට සම්ප්‍රාප්ත වූ අනුබුදු මිහිදු ගිම්පාණන් ප්‍රමුඛ විරසය.

බුදු දහම ගත දැනුමක්, ඵලෙන්ම හැඟීමකින් සිටි ලක් වැසියාට මේ සම්ප්‍රාප්තය තිමදිර සූරිය රජවියෙන් ප්‍රබ්දි, දස දෙසම මන්ද මාරුතයෙන් මහගර සුච්ච දනුරුවමින් හැනී සිටි මානෙල් මලක් මෙන් විය.

චදිත මස්සක පව්වේ, දඩ කෙළිලෝල, දෙවැනි පැනිස් රජු වෙතද පසු පස ලුහුබිඳීමත් සිටියදී, මේ රමණීය තුමි භාගයේ තියසල වානාවරුණය බිඳුමින්, "තිස්ස, තියස්, හව්නිභූ තියා නම ගමින් ආමන්තූණය කිරීමට හැකිකාවත් ඇති මේ පුද්ගලයා කවිඥයි රජු විමතියට හා නොසංසුන් බවට පත්වුවාට කිසිදු සැකයක් නැත.

"මහ රජ, අපි බුදු රජුගේ සිටිවත් වෙමු. නොපට අනුකම්පාවෙන් පමිබුදිපයේ සිට පැමිණියෙමු."

මේ පිටරැටියා මිහිදු මහගරහත් වහන්සේස සි වැටහී ගිය දෙවැනි පැනිස් රජු දුනු හි බිම හෙළා මිහිදු මහ රහත් වහන්සේගේ ඉදිරියට ගියා.

ප්‍රශ්න මාලාවකින් රජුගේ බුද්ධිය උරුමා බලා පැහැදිලි අනුබුදු මිහිදු රහත් වහන්සේ වුල්ල හත්වී පදේපම සුදුසු දේශනා කොට, රජු හා මනුෂ්‍යේ විරස සරණ යෑමෙන්, සිරිලක බුදු දහම මුල් බැසගත් බව අපි දනිමු.

මේ උතුම් වූ මහින්දාගමනය තියාම අද අපි ශ්‍රේෂ්ඨ ශිෂ්ටාචාරයකට හිමිකම් කියන ජාතිකත් බවට පත්වී සිටින්නෙමු.

අප සතු ආර්ථිකය, දේශපාලනය, අධ්‍යාපනය, සෞඛ්‍ය, සංස්කෘතිය මෙප ගැනවී අත් ජාතීන්ගේ ගරුබුහුමන්වලට ලක්වී ඇත්තේ ඇත්ත වශයෙන්ම මේ මහින්දාගමනය යි. අනුබුදු මිහිදු ගිම් පානන්ට කෘතඥයා දැක්වීම සඳහා පොසොන් පුර පසලොස්වක දා රට පුරා නොසොකුන් විවිධ ආකෘත වත් පිළිවෙත් සිදු කිරීම අතිවර්ණයෙන්ම සිදුවේ.

මේ සියල්ලටම වඩා ශ්‍රේෂ්ඨවනුයේ අයාමාන, හිමිලක බුදු දහමට සරලත සේ අපේ දිවි මග සකස් කරගෙන, ලෝකික හා ලෝකෙන්තර සුවය විනීය දාන සීල භාවනාදියෙහි යෙදීම, බුදු රජාණන්ට කෙරෙන පූජාවත් පමණක් නොව අනුබුදු මිහිදු ගිම්පානට කරනු ලබන සමරුමකි, උතුම් පූජාපහාරයකි.

ආචාර්ය මාතු ලියනගේ