



To be sure, it is still a case of work-in-progress. More measures have to be taken to fully remove authoritarian rule from our constitution. Yet, the course is firmly set with the voting for the 19th Amendment.

Without doubt, here was the crowning glory of the 100 days' program of the Maitri-Ranil government. Sceptics have had to hide their faces. The latter made a mountain of the backward and forward movement of events that occurred in the past three months-the rolling and tumbling and so on. But to many of us the bumps on the road were anticipated obstacles given that the government had to work within an unprecedented framework of a minority government. Equally, to many of us

made himself larger than life arising out an obsessional narcissism. For instance, it is said that the girl who sang "Maharajaneni" got a road named after her. Incidents like this resonate with Sarachchandra's comic King in Mahasara.

On the other hand, the Rajapaksa situation was more serious than that. Many dissenting voices were never heard after the dissent. About 20 journalists are reported to have either disappeared or being killed. A high profile editor had been brutally murdered in broad daylight near a Security Zone. The hand of Mahinda or his powerful brother in charge of Defence, Gotabhaya, may not have been behind these. But the fact is these gory inci-

dent feels shame in the presence of the miserable, Zeus will destroy them, too."

This is precisely what was occurring in Sri Lanka during the period of authoritarian family rule. People worshipped power and the powerful; and they were psychologically trapped in that loyalty. Many in the 'Bring-back Rajapakse Crowds' were such trapped loyalists. President Maitripala Sirisena was on record saying that it is usual in periods of counter-revolution to have people oppressed during the pre-revolutionary situation calling for a return of that situation. He cited the instance when slaves rallied against Abraham Lincoln after the liberation. A perceptive observation that was.

Besides, countries that went through monarchy tend to have lingering social traces of admiration for authoritarian figures. Sri Lanka's feudal past had been virtually invoked by the Rajapakse family rule and one could well argue that the period of absolutism that ended with 19A was marked by a kind of growing neo-feudal society where power was worshipped down the line to the government-blessed Provincial Council and Pradeshiya Sabha rulers.

The centralization of power in the executive on top naturally flowed down the lower executive line. The independent police were no more. School heads had to kneel before political bosses. There was no appeal that could have been confidently made to the judiciary as people began losing faith in the in-

dependence of judges. In this way. Institutions vital to the orderly life of the people had been politicized. Probably Lanka was not far from the stage where magistrates would, like Azadak in Hunuwataye, openly demand money from litigants.

19 A not only signaled the shift of power from the Absolute executive to Parliament. It also meant the creation of independent institutions free of political influence. It was thus an event of considerable significance in our history. There are other significant facets of this law: For the first time we saw politicians across different hues joining even at the last moment to unite in a good national cause. We also saw civil society playing a lead role and this is most important for a democracy to work. The Most Reverend Maduluwawe Sobitha needs a huge "sadhu." If not for him and his band of assistants like President's Counsel Jayampathi Wickremaratne the campaign would not have got off the ground. The Movement for Social Justice that they formed helped create the required social consciousness that was subsequently picked up by political Leaders like Ranil Wickremasinghe, Chandrika Bandaranaike, and the new President. Considerable negotiation was on even at the last moment and these leaders showed a great deal of pragmatism and personal resilience to get the law passed. They showed yet another

THE EXPULSION OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

the final overwhelming passage in Parliament was more than a little bit of a surprise.

It was all about the pull of the gravitational field. On 8th January 2015 the silent revolution had happened. Power shifted away from Mahinda Rajapakse and family. That was the constitutional reality that a Nugegoda-type crowd could not unseat. Satellites loosened and eventually broke away toward the new force of gravity. Political power is about the play of gravitation. The colloquial Sinhala says, "Wasee Peththata Hoyya." This is another illustration. No politician wants extinction because he rides on Tiger and cannot get down.

Mahinda Rajapakse made full use of gravity by enhancing his power through the 18th Amendment. Mass psychology came to believe that he, and after him his family, will rule Lanka forever like in a monarchical line. Mahinda enjoyed the idea. He believed in self-glory and self-grandeur. Some of his first foreign visits after election in 2005 were to meet dictators. There was Gaddafi. There was Mugabe. There was that Burmese fellow. Even some tiny dictators in tiny islands. This evinced his fascination for authoritarian governance. Wonder how many of you read a wonderful little piece published in Colombo Telegraph by a Melbourne Sri Lankan psychiatrist-Prasad Mohotti, MD. His caption: "Is Mahinda Rajapakse suffering from the complex of self-love.?" Prasad goes on to bring in various illustrations from the former President's period of rule that suggest a man who

dents did happen under the latter's' watch and that nothing constructive had been done to investigate and bring the culprits to book. Political revenge was taken with ease: The Army Commander who fought on the ground coordinating, strategizing, and driving his forces to victory over Prabhakaran was brazenly and heartlessly put to jail in most controversial circumstances. The 43rd CJ Shiranee Bandaranayake was impeached in outrageous manner contrary to the Constitution and later stalked on bribery allegations. The list grew. Favourite convicts were pardoned and charges against favourite buddies were suppressed. Mahinda openly admitted he had 'the files.' People began nicknaming this as 'Marapalanaya.'

This style of governance infected the others down the executive chain. They showed a "no-care attitude," and a sense of entitlement. Lands belonging to poor shanty dwellers were taken away without compensation. A new business law was passed that became a kind of Sword of Damocles held over dissenting business men who owned property. This malicious exercise of power spread over a ten-year period. Consequently dangerously new social values were creeping into society modelled on the behavior of rulers replacing traditional Buddhist ways of responding to obstacles and challenges. "A time will come," said a Greek myth, "when [people] will have grown so wicked that they will worship power; might will be right to them and reverence for the good will cease to be. At last, when no man is angry anymore at wrongdoings or



historical instance where the key to success is pragmatic compromise. The President remained throughout in Parliament that evening and night without sitting on his dignity. Can you imagine: here is a President keen to divest himself of enormous power!

Another pointer: Doesn't the 19 A event give us a hint of a promise to the solution of another key national problem, namely that of the Tamil question? Sri Lanka must go deeply into reconciliation mode and resolve to iron out this festering crisis that has been dodging the country for many decades after independence. If diverse politicians can get together like this, even with initial reluctance, why can't they do a repeat to join hands above party lines and solve this issue amicably and fairly? Sri Lanka is now two nations. Let's make it one nation and focus priority on the economy in order to bring prosperity to all.



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VCE Chemistry 2015

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