

IMPEACHMENT

The argument of the ethnic minority parties in favour of the Presidential system was a formidable one: a President elected by the entire country as a single electorate would be more sensitive and responsive to minority demands than would a Prime Minister elected by a micro electorate. And a President, not controlled by or accountable to an ethnically divided Parliament, was in a better position to give a fair deal to minorities, went on the argument.

This 'minority argument' was linked, in a broader sense, to an important dimension of the 1978 Constitution, to which not many have paid sufficient attention. The type of institutional disequilibrium between the very powerful executive and the subordinate legislature had an unmistakably Gaullist spirit. Perhaps, the constitutional Gaullism was not entirely in accordance with the established Westminsterian tradition in Sri Lanka. Nonetheless, Gaullism of the present Constitution had a potential that could have been utilized for positive ends. The President with all his authority and powers could have emerged as the

ultimate mediator and arbiter in national crises.

The role of the ultimate arbiter had to have one fundamental characteristic, that of being non-partisan. In a society which was bitterly fragmented along political party lines as well - a negative feature of excessive politicization of a

The argument of the ethnic minority parties in favour of the Presidential system was a formidable one: a President elected by the entire country as a single electorate would be more sensitive and responsive to minority demands than would a prime minister elected by a micro electorate

populace - standing above party loyalties and interests was an awesomely difficult task. One could not ideally be an impartial and consensus-seeking umpire, particularly in Sri Lanka, when one was still a leader of a political party which commands the hostility of other parties. Both Messrs. Jayewardene and Premadasa failed to uphold this non-partisan principal as expected from them by the

mediatory spirit of the high office they came to occupy. The President was, to begin with, a UNP President and not necessarily the Sri Lankan President.

Paradoxically, both Presidents Jayewardene and Premadasa sought to establish images of their being well-springs of social justice and authority by resorting to primordial sentiments of state power. Being at the apex of the entire political pantheon, they at varying degrees ritualized the state. Potential Gaullism thus gave way to shades of monarchism. In a society where political power still invoked many trappings of the pre-colonial state, it was too easy to succumb to drives towards paternalistic accumulation of power and dispensation of justice.

A basic issue suggested by the present crisis then is the democratization of constitutional foundations of the Sri Lankan state. It cannot, and should not, be reduced to a dualistic typology of models, Presidential vs. Parliamentary. Such reductionism, as it has already happened, is certain to limit the terms of the debate to which the public, after years of being mere onlookers, have come to participate with vigour and enthusiasm.

The Cosmic Dance

Corpus Delicti

It was the imperial renaissance of Louis Bonaparte that caused Marx to make the oft-quoted statement about history repeating itself. Since Aryanam Kshathra has had more than its share of Bonapartes, it seems only logical that the historical dramas of the past should be recreated here as divine comedy.

Aryanam Kshathra, we are told, is Paradise (or at least only a few leagues from it). A paradise is merely an aristocratic garden of the Achaemenid period. Within the ancient Iranian paradise flourished trees which bore the fruit known to the Latins as *Persicum Malum*, the Persian Apple¹. And so, is it not apt that Indra, the ex-Lord of Hosts, should conspire with Mithra, the ex-Lord of Agreements, to change the Kshayathyanam-Kshayathiya, Akhenaton, into a Persian Apple. For Indra and Mithra had always coveted the Peacock Throne, and wished now to seize it.

In order to transform the Kshayathyanam - Kshayathiya (KK for short, but not to be confused with that other KK, the

Magus of the Bitten Leg, who was now the alter-ego of Akhenaton)² it was found necessary to convoke the Coven of the Immortals to an incantation of a curse consisting of fifteen parts. And it came to pass that Indra forwarded to Shiver, the Convenor of the Immortals, the text of the said curse, and Shiver accepted it.

Such was the strength of the curse that the entire land of Aryanam Kshathra was gripped by a fever, and this was even before the curse had been recited. So great was this fever that the epidemics of Force-speed and Lightning-strike fevers were soon forgotten.

Indeed, the fever was such that Pruthuvi, the goddess of the soil, was able to call upon her followers to forget their eternal squabbles and to gird their loins for a struggle against Akhenaton. "We have always been for the supremacy of the coven," she said, "now those within the pantheon realise their folly in elevating one of their number to be Kshayathyanam Kshayathiya. And she put aside her feud with Soorya, the



COSMIC

sun, and offered her support to Indra and Mithra. And Soorya forgot his anger with Pruthuvi. And Chandra, the moon, made peace with her brother Soorya and all was sweetness and light.

And even the ever fighting denizens of Valhalla, the Aesir³, agreed to support Indra and Mithra. Thor and Tyr forgave Loki for the murder of Baldur in ages past. "For," said Tyr, "did not Odin, the all-knowing, say at the beginning that the very Institution of the Kshayathiyam - Kshayathiya was a devaluation of the supremacy of the coven? And did he not say that a struggle would emerge within the Pantheon over this very issue?" And Thor, swinging his hammer, swore that Akhenaton was the supreme manifestation of the world-swallower, Fenrir, so that conditional support could be granted to Indra and Mithra, who were merely minor manifestations. Loki declared that the whole of Aryanam Kshathra should know the truth of the matter, and that the truth was now more sought after than the innuendoes issuing from the lakeside residence of Vayu, the God of Wind.

Indra and Mithra, together with several lesser gods and immortals, addressed a gathering of mortals, and to hear them came the denizens of Indraprasta and other lesser mortals. And Indra came out with his reasons for attempting to lay the curse on Akhenaton. "The KK gets too big for his boots," he said, "why should we have a Kshayathiyam Kshayathiya, when a plain Kshayathiya, merely *primus inter pares* in the pantheon was sufficient? In place of the old Kshayathiya, we have Vazurgd Framadar, who is powerless. The entire pantheon is powerless. The KK appoints the chief Magi without reference to the pantheon, and gets them to do his bidding directly, ignoring the supervising gods."

"Indeed, Akhenaton has declared for the monotheistic heresy, pouring scorn upon the pantheon and upon the coven of immortals. He has devalued the power of the coven! Furthermore, he not only squanders the heavenly wealth on his Tel-el-Amarna, instead of using it for the benefit of the immortal host, but he has, without reference to the Pantheon, provided Mardouk with weapons!" And the gathering was wroth.

Akhenaton was cut to the quick by these accusations. He immediately called upon those immortals who were of his persuasion to repudiate the curse, and to forward to Shiver a counterspell to fix the hex. He then called upon Vayu, to counter the accusations with counter-accusations. Vayu laid down the bucket of excreta that he had been carrying (in fulfillment of a holy vow) and sprang to work.

Vayu instructed the heralds of the gods to go forth and spread among the mortals the word of Akhenaton. "Look!" cried the heralds. "Do you not see the wonders of Tel-el-Amarna? Akhenaton has reconstructed Indraprasta there, for the benefit of you poor common mortals. Have not your crops been bountiful? Indra and Mithra want to take these away from you."

And Vayu summoned many of the Magi to debate in the face of the mortals. And the pride of place was granted to the Kapatiyanam-Kapatiya, the Magus of the Bitten Leg.

"Akhenaton is restructuring the fabric of creation," he declared, "so that the Arya and Turya can co-exist and co-habit. I am a great one for co-existence and cohabitation. Am I not a great Magus, second only to the legendary Magi of yore (and of course to the greatest Magus in history, the K K Akhenaton)?"

And Akhenaton sent his emissaries to Mardouk, saying "I am in a bit of a fix over this hex, so can you give me a hand? We had our good times, and I didn't say anything when you bumped off Ea, so let's get together for old-times sake." And Mardouk answered in erotic terms. "My emissaries of love," he said, "those Turya immortals shall take their place in the coven and ward off the incantations. In the meantime, a little less heat please." And Akhenaton ordered the host to desist.

The lesser gods of Turyanam Kshathra were wroth. "Mardouk bumped off Ea!" they declared. "Whilst Akhenaton gave bows and arrows to Mardouk, we joined hands with the gods of Aryanam Kshathra. Yet Akhenaton helped Mardouk to quell us! We will overthrow the KK with this curse."

Finally, of course, it turned out that Akhenaton had another ace up his sleeve. Shiver had been unshaken by the visions of a new world, but Akhenaton appealed to the Philistines. "In the name of Baal," he declared, "those who would lay a curse upon me are but the agents of the Bedawi of Hebron. I cast them out of the temple of Mammon and they would wreak their vengeance upon me. Rally unto me, you of Philistia, and rid me of the agents of the Levites, so that Baal would have his rightful place."

And so Baal dropped in on Shiver and said, "Shiver, you had better not let the Levites win. And if they should lose, the wealth will spring up from the very rocks, like the oil springs of Sumer."

Shiver was discontented and so he undertook a cosmic dance. And gods, immortals and mortals looked on in wonder. And as he danced, visions sprang before the onlookers. Those of Akhenaton saw visions of victory and those of Indra and Mithra saw visions of victory.

And at the end of that cosmic dance, Shiver declared: "The hex is fixed, the curse is accursed, the incantation is a recantation, the Khaled ibn Walid."

And Indra and Mithra were thunderstruck. It was left to a lesser god among their followers to declare: "O Shiver, you are indeed the Creator and the Destroyer." And the curse, having been created, was destroyed.

Endnotes:

1. cf OED: It is suspected by theologians that the original forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden was not the Apple, but the Persian Apple, the Peach. However, the indigenous cosmologists of the National Thought assert that it was in fact a Pawpaw (*Papaya Zeylanicus*); the 'fig leaf' being in fact a leaf of the Pawpaw tree.
2. The initials KK in reference to the 'King of Kings' also appears in the Astro-Hungarian Empire, which was both 'Kaiserlich' (Imperial) and 'Koeniglich' (Royal). In the post-imperial period it was used of Bruno Kreisky of Austria and Kadar of Hungary.
3. The Cosmologists of the National Thought accuse the Aesir of being an alien intrusion in the divine body politic of Aryanam Kshathra, what with the continuing controversy over the killing of Baldur. Incidentally, both the main cosmologists of the National Thought are those who quite recently left Valhalla.