

LESSONS TO LEARN FROM ACHIEVEMENTS OF SINHALA KINGS

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There is much talk today about overcoming the current economic crisis some of which is frivolous and confusing the people abusing the hallowed freedom of expression nurtured by the indigenious culture based on Buddhism, a cornerstone of which is the spirit of inquiry long before it was found to be a *sine qua non* of philosophical excellence. During the days of the European Renaissance of around 1500 the so-called activists were still active for no cause after the real strugglers performed their task.

One such activist a lawyer of all professions in a context when there are lawyers and lawyers told a rabble rousing TV channel nakedly anti-President Ranil Wickremesinghe because he did not give a National List slot to its founder that he did not see a constitutional solution to the present political question thereby implying that he is for an extra-legal course which if successful would be legal and if not criminal.

All this talk also not only by university students, trade unionists but also by those of the myriad of political parties, some of which feign to be revolutionary, is manifestly utter nonsense because a revolution is not generally talked about but rather something one would get up with in the morning and as we are all aware of attempts beginning with the abortive Catholic *coup d'état* of 1962 attempting to bring back the colonial era after 1505, the 1971 Insurrection and the 1988-89 Subversion ended in a fiasco as the actors were only rebels masquerading as revolutionaries.

Today's pseudo-revolutionaries are only bringing shame upon our Sinhala kings of yore among whom there were real revolutionaries too, one in the person of Kutakanatissa (41-19 BCE) who put the infamous queen Anula to death by setting fire to the palace in which she led a dissolute life, ascended the throne himself and restored order and good governance once more although such acts can never be condoned in the present context.

Some of our politicians, too, who have proliferated as pavement hawkers forming three-wheeler or even push bicycle parties, trying to show that politics is a rocket science which only the fat-bellied can comprehend bring disgrace upon the Sinhala kings



President **Ranil Wickremesinghe**

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of yore. Just describing the work of two of our insignificant kings Sena I (833-853) and Sena II (853-887) or their comparatively long reigns would suffice to prove the point.

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monarch entered into a treaty to pay indemnity thereby saving Sri Lanka from foreign domination. It is amazing that the king largely accomplished the task of rebuilding the capital Anuradhapura, founded a large monastery on Ritigala or the Pansakulika (ascetic) Bhikkhus and constructed several other religious buildings: his queen, the princes and the ministers followed the king's example.

His nephew and successor Sena II to avenge the defeat his predecessor had suffered jumping at the opportunity of invading the Pandya kingdom on invitation by the aspirant to its throne emerged victorious and recovered the royal treasure of the Sinhala kings as well as the gold and the jewels of the monasteries which the Pandyas had carried away twenty years earlier. In University of Ceylon: A Con-

cise History of Ceylon C.W. Nicholas says: "The victory over Pandya did not make the Sinhalese king complacent about the security of Ceylon. He feared some retaliation because he strengthened the coast guard service and the other defensive measures on the coast and 'made the island hard to subdue by the foe'.

The remaining twenty-six years of the reign of Sena II were a period of peace and affluence. The king endowed the monasteries, built new shrines and gave alms liberally. In irrigation he extended the Minipe scheme on the Mahaweli Ganga and constructed a feeder canal to augment the supply of Mahakanadarawa tank near Mihintale."

It would have been well for politicians who worked within the dispensation of Parliamentary democracy post-Independence, to have taken a leaf from the book of the majority of the Sinhala kings of yore who answered the description of European benevolent despots such as long reigning Empress Catherine the Great (1762-1796) and Emperor Peter the Great (1682-1725) of Russia and Emperor Frederick the Great (1740-1786) of Prussia.

It is fervently hoped that President Ranil Wickremesinghe who for all intents and purposes is well and truly representative of the entire populace through Parliament elected by the people and so well-read as not to lose anything by the wanton incineration by ruffians of his cherished possession, his library will emulate his royal forefathers for the rebuilding of Sri Lanka.