**How Sri Lanka fell**

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In this day and age, people are less or more resistant towards injustice. A recent example of the Sri Lankan chaos can be referred to in this case. There are many reasons due to which Sri Lanka is suffering today. In 2018, Sri Lanka was one of the world’s top destinations for tourism. 12-13 percent of Sri Lankan economy was derived from tourism. In April 2019, the Easter bombings happened, resulting in tensions against Muslims. Other reasons were the Covid pandemic and unplanned VAT concessions at the wrong time and without understanding the situation and a sudden shift to organic farming without proper planning, reduced major crops of rice and tea production as well. The protests are getting violent, enraged at the Rajapaksa dynasty. Sri Lanka is facing the worst economic crisis of its history. Conditions are worsening day by day. There is a shortage of food, medicines, and fuel. Extreme inflation is being observed. It has the lowest foreign currency reserves. The Sri Lankan economy relies on imported goods even for basic products like sugar, cereals and pharmaceuticals.

In November 2019, Gotabaya Rajapaksa was elected as president of Sri Lanka and he changed the constitution exploiting the Covid situation, with the excuse that there was too much conflict in the previous government’s rule as president and prime minister were both from different parties and the government was unable to do its job. Therefore, there was a need for an amendment so that the government could function properly. Thus, Gotabaya Rajapaksa became successful in passing the Twentieth Amendment in the Sri Lankan constitution in October 2021. This time President Gotabaya came back with more power. He had the power to appoint and fire ministers, election authority, public service, police, human rights, corruption investigation commission officers and even the power to dissolve the parliament after 2.5 years of election, whereas before the amendment he did not have the power to dissolve the parliament. Now, he also has the power to be a minister along with being the president. The President of Sri Lanka is the most powerful person in the country as a result.

His constitutional amendment was criticised all across the world. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) also issued a statement on October 27, 2020 saying that it was a blow to the rule of law and the president encroached on the powers of the parliament and the courts. The blame is not only about corruption, inflation, economic crisis or nepotism but it is also said that the Rajapaksa family also exploited communal tensions. Recently, conflict was seen between the Buddhist majority and the Muslim minority. The Rajapaksa family is blamed to be looking to appease Sinhalese Buddhists and it is reportedly one of the many reasons behind the economic crisis. Furthermore, it is said that the Rajapaksa family and its supporters created the environment of communal riots to increase the chances to win the election and for majority appeasement.

But now all ethnic groups including Sinhalese Buddhists, Tamils, Muslims and even Christians are demanding a resignation from President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. But there is a serious problem, because there is no provision of mid-term elections in the Sri Lankan Constitution. Political crisis and constitutional impasse has landed Sri Lanka in a sea of problems. There is the energy crisis and the shortage of essential commodities. The government also does not have the money to conduct an election at this point in time. The only option is to impeach the President but this is also a very difficult and long process according to Article 38 of presidential impeachment of the Sri Lankan Constitution. The other option available is to form a unity government under all political parties but things are yet to be back to normal.

In a nutshell, things can be set right if political leaders think for posterity and selfish aims are abandoned. Lessons can be learnt from the Sri Lankan downfall, if analysis and improvement is the motive.

The writer is an analyst and a political commentator.

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