



SPUR

Society for Peace, Unity and Human Rights in Sri Lanka (SPUR) NSW Inc.

P.O. Box 56, Seven Hills, NSW 1730, Australia

www.spur.asn.au

spurnsw@tpg.com.au

Tel: 0419 436 707

A NSW Registered Charity, No: CFN14692. Association Incorporation Act, 1984, No: Y2245239

Media Release

6 February 2015

Sri Lanka National Anthem – Another Fraud on the Nation

Another version of a national anthem was sung at the most sacred Independence Day, the National Day of Sri Lanka, on 4 February 2016 in Colombo. This was done at the behest of the President Maithripala Sirisena and the Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe. In effect, an anthem alien to the vast majority of the citizens had also been sung on Sri Lanka's National Day.

The only version of the National Anthem of Sri Lanka is the one composed in Sinhala by Ananda Samarakone complete with lyrics, music, melody and harmony and had been in existence for 62 years. This version has been endorsed, approved, time and again by the government and the people. The anthem that was sung on the 2016 National Day to appease a few has not been through such scrutiny by the people nor their representatives.

Back in 1961, when the National Anthem had been in use for a mere seven years, an amendment to just three words of the Anthem was proposed by the government led to a major controversy. The subsequent change made, was a tragic personal blow to the composer. It led to his severe personal despair, mental depression, and finally the illustrious composer Ananda Samarakone took his own life in 1962 over the change made unilaterally.

The controversy raged on for many years. Ananda Samarakone had fought tooth and nail until his death opposing this change to just to the three words of the Anthem. Today, the whole National Anthem of Ananda Samarakone has been translated, rather than been transliterated, and sung without a mandate or consultation.

A national anthem is not just another piece of music that is translated to suit each of the languages spoken in a land. It is one to be sung at sacred official functions to specified standards. In selecting such an august and auspicious anthem a sovereign nation accepts the whole of what is approved by the composer- the lyrics, music, melody and harmony. It is not tinkered or translated thereafter to suit a few. These inviolable factors considered is seen when a version suitable is considered for adoption by any nation. Thereafter, it literally becomes set in concrete. The National Anthem and the National Flag are sacred as they are the closest to the heart of each citizen. The current action is a stab in the heart of the Nation.

Our closet neighbour India's National Anthem is not translated to be sung with different language lyrics to suit the different States of India. It will always remain the initial works of the illustrious Rabindranath Tagore – the language, lyrics, music, melody and harmony all composed and approved by Tagore himself. It is also not one to be sung in foreign lands with locally understood lyrics so that the people of the host nation understand the meanings in a National Anthem.

The Sinhala language is understood fully or partially by over 90% of the population in Sri Lanka, so a second version is totally uncalled for. The native Bengali speakers in India is less than 9% of its population but the National Anthem of India remains in Bengali, in the language lyrics as selected by the great composer Rabindranath Tagore.

So, there is no reason for Sri Lanka's National Anthem to be sung so that the listener understands the meaning of the words whether in Sri Lanka or overseas. It remains the sacrosanct responsibility of each citizen to learn, understand, and appreciate with joy the meanings of the words in their own National Anthem. But, if anyone has dreams of another nation within Sri Lanka in their own heart, then that task will become too difficult to achieve.

Looking back on the history of sixty two years, Sri Lanka's National Anthem was never translated and sung with English words even in the 1950/60s when there was still an affluent Burgher population in the island nation. Their own adopted mother tongue was English. Further, in those years a large population of the Sinhalese, Tamils and

Muslims were more fluent in English than in their own native tongue. English remained the official language of the land from 1948 to 1956, but the National Anthem was in Sinhala from the time it was adopted in 1954. Prior to that we all sang in one language in English to the King or the Queen of England.

Once the National Anthem was adopted in 1954, these English speakers were happy to sing the National Anthem in one voice as a single nation with no boundaries. They were never hesitant to sing with the high notes in their lusty throats, more the chorus part of it. We were never as two nations or multiple nations – always a single Nation other than through colonial invasions for periods of time. The single National Anthem personifies that aspect. The action of 2016 Independence Day created a division not a reconciliation of any sort.

A Tamil language translation has been now brought up in the current controversy. The Sinhala version of Sri Lanka's Constitution is supreme in every sense and the so called link language remains English. The English version of the Constitution has the transliteration and has the Sinhala sounds verbatim, and does not have words giving English meanings. It says 'Apa.....Sri Lanka' and not 'Our.....Sri Lanka'. This is an endorsement of the Sinhala version of the National Anthem.

This English version of the National Anthem using a transliteration of Sinhala words and sounds is a clear ratification of the Sinhala version of the Constitution. The English version of the Constitution is read and understood by most parliamentarians and legal experts. There was never a controversy on the English version to say that words with English meanings should be translated and substituted in a similar manner as had been done in a Tamil version. Such an artificial demand is yet to be created. A similar demand had not been made for over 50 years even by the Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe himself and the other Parliamentarians many of whom are well educated in English, and use the English versions of critically important documents as their first reading.

The only National Anthem of Sri Lanka is the one accepted in the Sinhala version of Sri Lanka's Constitution. This primary version of the Constitution has been ratified by the transliterated version in the link language, English. When sung, it merely assists in the common signing of the anthem composed in Sinhala by the Illustrious Ananda Samarakone complete with lyrics, music, melody and harmony. Two out of three versions of Sri Lanka's Constitution are very clear on the National Anthem in every aspect and both endorse only the use of language of the vast majority, Sinhala.

SPUR, NSW unequivocally condemns the ambush perpetrated on the citizens at the official Independence celebrations by the Government of Sri Lanka by allowing the singing of an anthem other than the National Anthem. It is the latest fraud on the people, and the newest futile attempt to appease the never ending greed of the racist separatist lobby of Tamil Eelam.

Now, the whole National Anthem has been tinkered with and the citizens ambushed. This rash and heartless action has wounded the Nation as never before.

Nimal Liyanage
Spokesperson/ Secretary

Dudley Upasiri
President