

Lessons to be learnt and reconciliation – X

In India there is a specific reason as to why the national anthem is sung in Bengali. As we have mentioned it was the role played by the Bengalis in the national independence struggle, and though Mahatma Gandhi and Shri Nehru came to the forefront as individuals, more than any other ethnic group the Bengalis gave collectively the leadership to the Indians. Also the intellectual leadership came from Tagore though the spiritual leadership came from Mahatma Gandhi. Even before independence the Bengalis had composed and sung *jana gana mana* at their rallies. This was the major reason that Bengali and not Hindi became the language of the Indian national Anthem. In contrast the Tamil elite (neither the Sinhala elite who under the leadership of the Tamil elite who had the patronage of the English governors and other officials were busy in sending petitions to Whitehall) did not play that kind of role and the independence struggle was carried out by the Sinhala Buddhists from Keppitipola to Anagarika Dharmapala through Puran Appu and Gongalegoda Banda.

The Tamil racists, the NGO boys and girls, the leadership of some religions, and the liberal open minded Sinhalas, the Marxists and others would compare the situation in India and Sri Lanka and complain that in India the National Anthem is not sung in the official language (Hindi is the ONLY official language in India as we mentioned last week) but in a language of the “minorities”. (remember that Hindi is NOT spoken by the majority of Indians). The argument goes like this. In India the National Anthem is sung in a language of the minorities so why not the Sri Lankan National Anthem is sung in Tamil, a language spoken by a minority. This is a case of false analogy. These people do not ask as to why Bengali of all the Indian languages was chosen as the language of the National Anthem. Why don't they sing the National Anthem in Gujarati the language of Mahatma Gandhi or Tamil or Telugu or any other language for that matter? Bengali is not just a language of a minority but the language, I would say, of Indian freedom struggle, with all those *Brahma Samaj* and other activities in Bengal. Thus though the National Anthem is sung in Bengali in India, there is no necessity to sing the National Anthem of Sri Lanka in Tamil. If they insist on the language of a minority for no reason, but simply because the Indian National Anthem is sung in Bengali, without considering the reasons that have been outlined above, then we might as well suggest the National Anthem in Sri Lanka should be sung in the language of Veddas or in Telugu the language of the *ahiguntikas* (a pundit may call them gypsies). One has to realise that in India the National Anthem is sung in Bengali due to historical reasons and not for the sake of singing it in a language of a minority.

Then the Tamil leaders and the other “enlightened” people mentioned above want us to follow New Zealand, South Africa or Canada in respect of the National Anthem. Interestingly they would not want us to follow England, USA or any European Union country or Australia. Perhaps they are strong anti imperialists and do not want us follow England and other European nations and USA. Whether they are anti imperialists, anti colonialists or some kind of socialists we do not bother. Following New Zealand and South Africa they should have first asked Australia to sing the National Anthem in English and one or two of the so called aboriginal languages and of course USA to sing

the National Anthem in English, Spanish and the language of Seattle who had been a better human being than George Washington.

It is easy to understand why South Africa and New Zealand sing their National Anthems in English and some languages of the natives. New Zealand, before it was colonized by the English was the land of Maoris and others. The English nearly massacred whom they called the aborigines and the correct thing that the new rulers of New Zealand should have done was to sing the National Anthem in the language of the Maoris. Similarly USA should have sung their National Anthem in the language of Seattle. However it was very unlikely that things could have happened that way and we have the case of either USA where the National Anthem is sung only in English or of New Zealand where the National Anthem is sung in English and the language of the Maoris.

In South Africa the situation is somewhat reversed. The Europeans with all their malice and wickedness could not massacre the natives and as the natives constituted the majority the apartheid state of South Africa had to be created. If almost all the natives had been massacred in what came to be known as South Africa then there would not have been apartheid and the situation would have been similar to USA, Australia and New Zealand. It is ironical that while condemning the apartheid state in South Africa the world forgot that worst things had happened in USA and Australia starting with poisoning of wells.

What do the Tamils want to achieve by stating that New Zealand have a National Anthem sung in the language of Maoris as well. Do the Tamils consider themselves to be aborigines of the country? It would not be possible to do so as there had been no aborigines in the country. The Tamils in the Northern Province are mainly descendents of Tamils who were bought to Jaffna by the Dutch for their tobacco cultivation and by no stretch of imagination could the Tamils be considered as aborigines of the country? The aborigines if one may call them are the Sinhala and the Veddas. The Sinhala are the descendants of almost all the tribes who had lived in the country before the Ardha Vedic people (so called Aryans) came from Bharath and of the Ardha Vedic people, and after a few centuries all these tribes including the Ardha Vedic tribes, except the Vedda community closed ranks to establish the Sinhala nation. The Sinhala nation was built by those people who united under the king Parakramabahu. They inhabited the island from Nagadeepa (Jaffna peninsula) to Devundara, and built a unique culture that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. They are the people who fought against all the South Indian invasions (nothing to do with the present Tamil population in the country), the Europeans and protected the country for more than two thousand three hundred years. Even today they fight against the English and other western colonial powers while the English speaking variety of the Tamils who are mainly descendents of the Vellalas brought by the Dutch for their tobacco cultivation are being used by the westerners against the Sinhala and the country. The Tamils are not aborigines of the country and the Sinhala are not invaders like English who invaded and massacred the aborigines in New Zealand. There is no parallel even in this case and I am appalled at the logic of the “enlightened” people in the country.

Finally we come to Canada, which was looted by the English as well as the French, again after massacring the natives in that part of the world. The English and the French were at loggerheads to get control of the country and Canada is in essence a federation of two countries colonised separately by the English and the French. If they sing their National Anthem in English, French or a mixture of them depending on the situation they are only celebrating jointly their so called triumphs against the innocent natives of the country. Here again I fail to see the parallel and let the Tamils who were brought to this country after 1650 sing the National Anthem in Sinhala similar to the way they sing the National Anthems of countries such as England and its colonies in what is known as UK, Australia, USA, Canada, which have been adopted by some sections of the Tamils. We may consider singing the National Anthem in Tamil also if England and USA decide to sing their National Anthems in English and Tamil as there would be some parallel in the situations. (To be continued).