



FOOD NATIONALISM: THE CRISIS OF GIVING AUTHENTIC FOOD TO SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN SRI LANKA

*Anton Piyarathne**

Department of Social Studies, The Open University of Sri Lanka

The food producing and distributing mechanism in Sri Lanka has become more complex and connected with national and international companies, trade agreements and the global political economy. Food production and distribution has become an industry especially after the green revolution project was introduced for agriculture in Sri Lanka in the 1970s. Food production and supply is very vital for any community as it determines the existence, wellbeing and development of the members. This recognition has contributed to considering and giving high attention to agriculture in Sri Lankan society. This has meant that agriculture has been politically significant during the period of pre-colonial kings and the post-colonial modern majoritarian democratic system introduced by the colonial masters in Sri Lanka. The post-colonial politics and nation building projects have given much priority to agriculture in shaping a Sri Lankan identity which is greatly moulded by a harmonious lifestyle nourished by Buddhist philosophy introduced to the country during king Devanampiyatissa's era in the kingdom of Anuradhapura. Serena Tennekoon (1988) in her analysis of religious rituals explains how the post-colonial, Sri Lankan state-led development politics gave higher prominence to agriculture respecting Buddhist values. In performing this ritual, 30 silver pots of water (jala puja) collected from the kotmale reservoir were offered in the opening ceremony to five Buddhist religious places, namely, the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy, Jaya Sri Maha Bodhiya in Anuradhapura, Kiri Vehera in Kataragama, Kelani Viharaya in Colombo, and Mahiyangana Raja Maha Viharaya in Mahiyanganaya. Presently the country's food production is linked to imported seeds, manure, various chemicals, machines and other needed inputs. This has led to local agricultural methods having to negotiate with foreign technologies. In this context the country faced an invasive worm attack called "Sena Caterpillar". This destroyed many hectares of vegetable and grain cultivation in general and maize cultivation in particular during the latter part of 2018 and the first few months of 2019. Against this backdrop, a research was conducted using the content analysis methodology. Findings were elicited by primarily analyzing the parliamentary debate conducted on 22 January which continued on 23rd January 2019 and the analysis of the Divaina newspaper discussions during the period December 2018 and February 2019. Furthermore, 20 interviews were conducted with farmers from no 104 Mullegama Grama Niladhari division which falls under the Madulla divisional secretariat (ds) in Monaragala. The main objective of the research project is to discuss the link between the homegrown food production and nationalist sentiments. The research findings highlighted the existence of features of food nationalism which mainly emphasized the threat to local food production



and food varieties from local and international elements. It tinted the value of protecting authentic food varieties against the alien and invading food varieties from other external sources, which may (or may not) have connections to local forces (traitorous) that wished to capture state power, legally (or illegally). According to the arguments put forward by various parties in the parliamentary debate and the discussions and media briefings published in the Divaina newspaper, the country has to devise a well thought out mechanism to feed local sons and daughters good food to protect their health and nutrition. In this process, a lot of fears and anxieties regarding the future generation, the country's national security, internal and external conspiracies, the role of the parties with vested interests, the effect of multinational cooperation and their nation's interests which (may) operate against the national interests were emphasized.

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**Corresponding author: apiya@ou.ac.lk*