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Daily News

It has been 45 years since I. M. R. A. Iriyagolla, author, translator, orator editor, and a Sinhala scholar, honest politician, former Education and Cultural Affairs Minister from 1965-1970, passed away.

Iriyagolla was born in the Iriyagolla village in Dandagamuwa, Kuliyaipitiya, on January 3, 1907. His full name is Imiya Mudiyansele Rapiel Abayawansa Iriyagolla.

He was an old boy of the then Ananda College at Colombo. He created a new political era of delivering truth openly to the masses and also to Buddhist monks. He was highly associated with E. W. Adikaram L. H. Meththananda, Prof. Senarath Paranawithana, Prof. G. P. Malalasekara, Dr. Ananda Guruge, and P. de S. Kularatne etc. Iriyagolla was married to Rani Gunasekara, who was born in Matale.

After completing his formal education, he joined the Sri Lanka Police Department and became a Police inspector, but due to his talents, he gave up the Police service and became the editor of a Sinhala newspaper. He later became the editor of the Sinhala Baudhdhaya newspaper under Maha Bodhi Society of Sri Lanka.

Iriyagolla's life was enlightened due to his courage and association with late Anagarika Dharmapala. During this period, Iriyagolla himself became a life member of the Mahabodhi Society, Paramawinnantha Buddhist Association, and All Ceylon Buddhist Congress.

During his younger days, he was able to publish his book named Manuthapaya. Later, he wrote another book named Devathapaya. Iriyagolla then became a politician after the independence of Sri Lanka. Iriyagolla first contested in the Dandagamuwa Electorate in Kuliyaipitiya. He became the Member of Parliament for Dandagamuwa in 1952 as an independent candidate due to his popularity among the masses.

In 1953, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, the then Home Affairs Minister in the UNP government headed by the late D. S. Senanayake Cabinet, left from the United National Party and formed the

Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP). Iriyagolla was close to Bandaranaike during this period and contested in the Dandagamuwa Electorate under the MEP. He won with a high majority. After the election results were announced in 1956, Bandaranaike became the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka and Iriyagolla was sworn in as the Deputy Minister of Industries.

He later left the MEP in 1959 and formed his own political party: Sama-

This article is specially written for the 110th birth anniversary of late I. M. R. A. Iriyagolla which fell on January 3, 2018.

the country, but only he was able to win the 1960 March elections; all his other candidates lost the elections. As he was the only MP representing the Mahajana Samajawadhi Peramuna in Parliament in March 1960, Iriyagolla joined hands with the UNP.

UNP headquarters.

Senanayake requested Iriyagolla to contest under the UNP in the 1965 elections for the Kuliyaipitiya Electorate. Iriyagolla won with a good majority in 1965, and Senanayake selected Iriyagolla as the Education and Cultural Affairs Minister of his Cabinet.

I. M. R. A. Iriyagolla He was courageous



As the Education and Cultural Affairs Minister, Iriyagolla rendered a yeoman service to the nation between 1965-1970. Iriyagolla set up universities in the country and provided training to youths to engage in employment, setup the Buddhist Pali University in Anuradhapura for Buddhist monks to obtain higher studies in the Dhamma and Pali. He also managed to restore the Sigiriya frescoes after it was damaged by an unknown character.

He composed songs to promote patriotism among schoolchildren and made arrangements to play those songs prior to the opening time of schools. Hundreds of Siyawasa school libraries were also opened, the shortage of teachers was quelled, and teacher assistants were recruited to provide teachers with the proper training. His name remains unforgettable even today, as he was the pioneer behind the establishment of the D. S. Senanayake and Mahanama Colleges in Colombo.

His two sons, namely Gamini Iriyagolla (civil servant) and Dr. Deva Iriyagolla both have passed away, but his three daughters, namely Pushphamala, Sama, and Sagarika, are living happily; all of them well-educated in different fields to render services to country in order to fulfill what Iriyagolla taught. His daughter-in-law Indrani Iriyagolla is engaged in social work, performing a eminent service for the welfare of women in Sri Lanka.

I. M. R. A. Iriyagolla's name would not be forgotten, even decades into the future. We should pay our gratitude to his great service rendered to our country to maintain high discipline in our universities and schools as a father to all students.

He was thus named because of his honesty, integrity, sincerity, and enthusiasm towards the people and the nation. I. M. R. A. Iriyagolla should be treated as the most outstanding straightforward political leader produced by the sathkoralya of Sri Lanka since Independence.

May you attain the Supreme Bliss of Nibbana.

