

From Elizabeth Regina to Charles Rex

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A country's national flag and national anthem convey its identity to the rest of the world. In the Olympic games, celebrations for the winning athletes include hoisting their national flags and playing their national anthems. In the world cup football tournaments, we see players of the two teams line up before a match begins and their national anthems are played. Also, when foreign heads of state visit a country, their national anthems are played on their arrival and departure.

National anthems evoke patriotic feelings. They are generally adopted from popular songs praising a nation's land, people, history, traditions, or struggles. The composer of the words and music of the national anthem of Bangladesh is Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore. It begins with the words, as translated in English, 'My Bengal of gold, I love you.' Then it portrays and praises the beautiful land, the seasons, the language, and the feelings of love and affection they cast upon our minds. It's probably the best national anthem in the world.

Let's look into the national anthems of some renowned countries.

The words of the US national anthem 'The Star-Spangled Banner' were written by Francis Scott Key during the American war of independence against the British. He wrote it being inspired by seeing the American flag still flying on Fort MCHenry in Baltimore after a failed British attack in 1814. It mostly describes the battle and the gallantry of the defenders and symbolizes the waving of the flag for victory and freedom.

The French national anthem 'La Marseillaise' was composed in 1792. It urges citizens to take up arms and march to fight bloody battles against enemies. Its words like 'Let's march, let's march! Let an impure blood water our furrows!' as translated in English, are too violent and hateful.

The lyrics of the German national anthem 'Deutschlandlied' were composed in 1841 and officially adopted in 1922. It has three verses. The first two verses proclaim German superiority and the Nazis made good use of it during their rule. After the 2nd World War, both East and West Germany discarded 'Deutschlandlied' but West Germany adopted it again - only the third verse of it - in 1952 and it continues to be the national anthem of unified Germany.

The third verse of 'Deutschlandlied' which is free from hegemonic rhetoric, starts with the lines, translated in English, 'Unity and rights and freedom for the German fatherland. Let us strive for it together, brotherly with heart and hand.' But isn't it gender-biased? Indeed, according to DW news, in 2018, Kristin Rose-Möhrling, the equal opportunity commissioner for Germany's Family Ministry, suggested that 'fatherland' be replaced with 'homeland' and 'brotherly, with heart and hand' with 'courageously, with heart and hand.' Her suggested changes were not adopted.

The oath of office of the British MPs also changed after the Queen died and the MPs have taken the oath of office again in the new format. According to the UK parliament's public website, "MPs cannot take their seat, speak in debates, vote or receive a salary until taking the oath or affirmation. They could also be fined £500 and have their seat declared vacant 'as if they were dead' if they attempted to do so."



But the United Kingdom adopted changes to its national anthem after the death of Queen Elizabeth II. The Queen died on September 8, 2022, and her son Charles Philip Arthur George has become the King. After 70

years the Royal Cypher which appears on postboxes, uniforms, stamps, coins, medals, etc. all across the UK is being changed from ER (Elizabeth Regina) to CR (Charles Rex). But why the national anthem of a country needed

to be changed upon the death of its head of the state? Let's take a look at the lyrics of the British national anthem that was being played before the Queen died:

"God save our gracious Queen! Long live our noble Queen! God save The Queen! Send her victorious, Happy and glorious, Long to reign over us, God save the Queen! Thy choicest gifts in store On her be pleased to pour; Long may she reign. May she defend our laws, And ever give us cause, To sing with heart and voice, God save the Queen."

You may notice that the word Queen appears five times and the pronoun of Queen appears four times in the lyrics. Thus, it truly needed to be changed for gender corrections. It may be observed that in contrast with the national anthems we mentioned above, the British national anthem doesn't praise the land, people, history, traditions, or struggles of the nation rather it only prays for the monarch.

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The oath in the new format reads as follows:

"I swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty King Charles, his heirs and successors, according to law. So help me God."

Amazingly, the oath is for the allegiance to an individual, not to the country or constitution as is common with democratic nations. For example, the oath of office for the members of the US Congress is, "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same ..."

And, the oath of office for the MPs in Bangladesh is, "I, having been elected a member of Parliament do solemnly swear (or affirm) that ... I will bear true faith and allegiance to Bangladesh ..."

The British monarchs do not rule the country as their ancestors did in the remote past. They don't have any contribution to the success or failure of the nation in the world arena. They neither provide direction to the nation at times of crisis nor make policy decisions for economic progress or social reforms. But the British probably see them as the relics of their once mighty British Empire. The pomp, publicity, and branding of the royals are perhaps a fantasy for the lost glory. However, the question remains whether the brand value of the royals is worth the cost of maintaining them. The royals spent £102.4 million during the last financial year (April 2021 - March 2022), as reported by the Royal Household on June 29, 2022.

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