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Title: Need to declare Vellore Fort in Tamil Nadu as a symbol of communal harmony and national integration.

India for it has its own place in the history of India as it is associated with the history of Tipu Sultan. The first struggle for Indian independence took place in South India in Vellore Fort as early as in 1806 led by Tipu Sultan. Though raised by the representatives of Muslim rulers and transferred hands from one to another over the years it was embellished by worship places inside the Fort area. During Krishna Deva Raya's period, Lord Jalagantesvarar temple was built in that site. Before independence when the Fort fell into the hands of Britishers, they had closed the temple and for many long years no worship or offerings were taking place there. They had also closed the other worship place for the Islamic faith. But the Britishers had constructed a church within the precincts of the Fort.

Right from the days of Britishers the church there continues to remain a worship place. When India won its freedom the Archeological Survey of India under the Government of India stated that it would maintain the status quo. Based on which for many years the Jalagantesvarar temple remained closed along with the mosque for the Islamic faith. But in between the local Hindus organized themselves and forcefully entered the Fort and consecrated the temple in which the worship and offerings are going on till date. It has been amicably settled and the Hindus have their worship place there when Archeological Survey of India was impressed upon by the Court of Law that the worship place so opened shall remain open.

*English translation of the speech originally delivered in Tamil.

Naturally the Muslim population in and around Vellore are legitimately aggrieved about the interpretations of the Archeological Survey of India which is not initiating any steps to open the mosque for worship fulfilling their aspirations. It is a historical fact that Tipu Sultan remained a secular King by way of allowing

both Hindus and Muslims to have their worship place inside his Fort. So the spirit of communal harmony must be upheld by the Government of India and in order to preserve the Vellore Fort as a symbol of communal harmony and national integration, the mosque insider the Vellore Fort must be thrown open to the people of Islamic faith. This is necessary to promote the communal amity there rooting out any scope for dissensions. Now that both Chrisians and Hindus are amicably going about with their worship places there is no reason why people of Islamic faith should be denied their right to have their worship in the mosque situated inside Vellore Fort. I urge upon the Government of India to ensure that the mosque there is opened for worship upholding the secular commitment of our Constitution.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please be brief.