

**TAMIL PROBLEM IN SRI LANKA:**  
**ITS IMPACT ON INDO-SRI LANKA RELATION**  
**(1983-89)**

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**CERTIFICATE**

Certified that dissertation entitled, "**TAMIL PROBLEM IN SRI-LANKA: ITS IMPACT ON INDO-SRI LANKA RELATION (1983-89)**", submitted by **Amitabh Anand Swain** in Partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University and is his own work.

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Amitabh Anand Swain

## PREFACE

National question has been an important factor in the formation and re-formation of the state structure in the South Asian region which is evident from the fact that within less than half a century two nation states have been divided. The South Asian societies are basically multi-ethnic community asserts its status as a nationality and create social and political conflicts in the given system. The rigidness of ethnic feelings which in political terms leads to regionalism or sub-regionalism has been more pronounced in recent years, almost in every South Asian country.

The worst form of ethnic conflict is presently found in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka's ethnic problem is a melancholy tale of appalling shortsightedness, mistaken judgments and lost opportunities. The most important factor which played vital role in culmination of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka was not facts rather than myths that surrounded both the communities-Sinhalese and Tamils. After independence the rivalry between two communities came to forefront as each community tried to maintain their own identity. On the one hand, when Sinhalese accused Tamils as oppresor of Sinhala people, on the other hand, Tamils accused Sinhalese

governments for the deliberate discrimination against them in post-independence period.

So far as Indo-Sri Lankan relation is concerned, India's security perception and all important Tamil factor played vital role during last three decades.

In this work first chapter is dealt with the early history of Sri Lanka and the role of historical myths in Sri Lankan ethnic conflict.

Second chapter is dealt with the causes and consequences of Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka.

Third chapter is dealt with India's security perspective in South Asian region and the circumstances under which India got involved in Sri Lankan ethnic crisis.

In fourth chapter an indepth analysis is made about Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement and the role of IPKF in Sri Lanka. India's sincere diplomatic effort to bring legitimate concession for Tamils within united Sri Lanka is also discussed.

In concluding chapter an over all assessment is given about Indo-Sri Lanka relation and the way out for solution of this ethnic conflict.

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## CHAPTER - I

### NATIONAL ETHNIC DIVISION AND EARLY HISTORY

Sri Lanka, in a highly competitive and volatile political ethos, coupled with an increasingly bland affirmation of majoritarian principle in a multi-ethnic society and mal-developed economy, has brought in a deep ethnic divide. The Island's geographical proximity to India, its strategic location on the east-west sea-route and the mercantile and territorial encroachments of the European powers contribute to ethno-linguistic and religious make-up of the country.<sup>1</sup> The most important source of division and disruption in Ceylonese<sup>2</sup> politics and the greatest impediment to integrative trends has been the persistence of sentiments of identification and solidarity with broader primordial groups generally referred to as communities. Community is at times used in Ceylon as a euphemism for caste, but usually the term is employed to designate one of

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1. Urmila Phadnis, 'Ethnic Conflict in South Asian States' in Urmila Phadnis and others (eds.), 'Domestic Conflict in South Asia', (South Asian Publication, New Delhi, 1986), p.100.
  2. Sri Lanka is formerly known as Ceylon. It is renamed Sri Lanka in 1972. In this dissertation the Island will be referred to as SriLanka and Ceylon, interchangeably.

the ethnic groups into which the Island's population is divisible - the Sinhalese, Ceylon Tamils, Indian Tamils, Moors, Burgers and others.

The two major ethnic groups are the Sinhalese and the Tamils who constitute 74 per cent and 18.2 per cent of the Island's population respectively (see table 1.1). The other groups are Moors (7.1 per cent), Burghers (0.3 per cent), Malayas (0.3 per cent) and others (0.1 per cent).

Table 1.1

Ethnic composition of the population of Sri Lanka, 1981

	Number	Percentage
Sinhalese	10,985,666	74.0
Tamils		
Sri Lankan Tamils	1,871,535	12.6
Indian Tamils	825,233	5.6
Moors	1,056,972	7.1
Malayas	43,378	0.3
Burghers	38,236	0.3
Others	28,981	0.1

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, Sri Lanka, 1981; Preliminary Release No.1 (Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics, 1981).



In terms of religion, Buddhists constitute 69.3 per cent, Tamils 15.5 per cent, Muslims 7.6 per cent, Christians 7.5 per cent and others 0.1 per cent (See table 1.2).

**Table 1.2**  
**Religious Affiliations, 1971-81**

Religion	1971	1981
Buddhists	67.4	69.3
Hindus (Tamils)	17.6	15.5
Christians	7.7	7.5
Muslims	7.1	7.6
Others	0.1	0.1
<b>Total</b>		

**Source:** Department of Census and Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, Sri Lanka, 1981: Preliminary Release No.1 (Colombo: Department of Census and Statistics, 1981).

The Sinhalese speak Sinhala and are predominantly Buddhists while the Tamils speak Tamil and are predominantly Hindus (See Table 1.3).

**Table 1.3**  
**Religion of Ethnic Communities, 1946**  
**(as percent of ethnic communities)**

Ethnic Community	Buddhist	Hindu	Muslim	Christian
Sinhalese	98	-	-	2
SriLankan Tamils	3	81	-	16
Indian Tamils	2	89	-	9
Moors	1	-	99	-

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, Census of Ceylon, 1946 (Colombo, 1952), vol.4. Later censuses do not provide such a break up.

Virtually every permanent inhabitant of Ceylon identifies himself and is identified by others as belonging to one and only one community. Although language and religion have played a major role in the development of group self-consciousness and self-identification, even in few exceptional cases of language or religious ambiguity, identification with a particular community is sharp and clear. The communal rivalry and confrontation in politics appear within the first decade of independence from British colonial rule in 1948, as each community fights to preserve and foster the ethnic symbols by which it is identified. "The collective aspirations of the Sinhalese to retrieve their ethnic heritage and reassert their position as a

majority of the Island's people is collided with Tamil desires to protect their community from domination and possible assimilation by large Sinhalese majority."<sup>3</sup> The vulnerability of Sri Lankan Tamils as an ethnic minority is starkly evident when the communally divisive issues of language and religion are surfaced in the political arena. The communal conflict and violence appear after putting Sinhalese and Tamils against each other are surfaced in the political arena as each community fights to preserve and foster their own ethnic symbols and traditions.<sup>4</sup> The political rivalry seems to have both sharpened the sense of identity with one's own community and reduce empathy and fellow feeling between members of both the communities. Moreover, the continued exposure of Sri Lanka to Western values and concepts has stimulated the growth of cultural revivalist movements aimed at preserving indigenous traditions and values.

From the early centuries of its long history, Sri Lanka has been a diverse society, the components of diversity

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3. R. Chakrabarti, 'India: Friendly, Sensible Role', World Focus, July 1988, p.17.
  4. V. Suryanarayan, 'Ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka', in U. Phadnis and others (eds.), 'Domestic Conflict in South Asia', (New Delhi: South Asian Publication, 1986), p.124.

being ethnicity, language and religion. The outstanding fact of Sri Lanka's nationality structure is that, from ancient times and continuously over last two millennia, two major ethnic groups - the Sinhalese and the Tamils - have lived in and shared the country as co-settlers. The historical experience of Tamil-Sinhalese conflict has produced a pattern of mythical history which lies at the heart of the Sinhalese perception of their own destiny and also the role of Tamils in the Island. "The ancient chronicles - such as *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa* - are verse composition in Pali, the Buddhist scriptural language, written by Buddhist monks, not in the historical tradition but for the serene joy and emotion of the pious. These are written unabashedly from Sinhalese standpoint, lauding the victories of the Sinhalese kings over Tamil Kings, treating the former as protectors of Buddhism and saviour of the Sinhalese, while considering the later as invaders, vandals, marauders and heathens."<sup>5</sup> Yet, these chronicles and their stories have been relied upon by historians for the reconstruction of the early history of the Island and this mythological history has been retold in later Sinhalese historical and literary works, so that they

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5. Satchi Ponnambalam, 'Sri Lanka: The National Question and The Tamil Liberation Struggle', (London, Zed Books Ltd., 1983), p.12.

constitute the current beliefs of the Sinhalese. As Walter Schwarz, a perceptive writer on the national question of Sri Lanka, has observed "the most important effect of the early history on the minority problem of today is not in the facts but in the myths that surround them, particularly the Sinhalese."<sup>6</sup>

**Sinhalese Perception:-**

The Sinhalese are the majority community of Sri Lanka, constituting 74.0 per cent of the total population, who speak Aryan language called Sinhala. "According to the chronicle, Vijay, the grandson of a union between a petty Indian king and a lioness, on being banished for misconduct by his father Sinhabahu, came with 700 men by vessels and landed at a place called Tambapanni, in 543 B.C., on the day Buddha died. Later Vijay got married to the daughter of Tamil King Pandyan of Madurai. Vijay was said to have held his coronation and made himself the king of Sri Lanka and ruled for 38 years. As he and the Tamil Princess had no children and hence, on his death, his brother's son Pandu Vasudeva came from Bengal and became the king of Sri

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6. Ibid., p.23.

Lanka."<sup>7</sup> In 3rd century B.C., Buddhism was introduced into the Island by missionaries led by bhikkhu (Buddhist monk) Mahinda, son of Ashoka. After the decline of Buddhism in India, the Sinhalese adherence to Buddhism emphasized their distinctiveness from the non-Sinhala Hindus. Gradually, the Sinhalese subscribed to the view that Sri Lanka was Sinhaladwipa or land of the Sinhalese and Dhammadwipa or the land of Buddhism. Based on a prosperous agricultural economy the Sinhalese established their powerful kingdoms, patronized the Buddhist faith and erected impressive Buddhist monuments. The Sinhalese hegemony in Sri Lanka began to decline as a result of systematic invasions from South India, which led to the abandonment of their great centres of civilization like Anuradhapur and Pollanaruva.<sup>8</sup> In the beginning of sixteenth century, there were three independent kingdoms in the Island, Sinhalese kingdom of Kandy and Kotte and the Tamil kingdom in Jaffna peninsula. According to Sinhalese point of view, the invasions from South Indian Tamil kingdoms and the consequent Sinhalese - Tamils conflict had led to the development of two antagonistic identities - Sinhalese and Tamils. Allied to

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7. Gurbachan Singh, "Tamil Factor: How to Handle LTTE ?", World focus, July 1988, p. 10.

8. Ibid., p. 10.

this another dangerous doctrine which portrayed the Sinhalese as the defenders of the Sasana (Universal Buddhist Church) and the Tamils are the opposers of the Sasana.<sup>9</sup> Tamil kings who ruled over Sinhalese kingdoms often took upon themselves in the traditional role of the Sinhalese rulers as the upholders of the Buddhist faith; few Sinhalese kings pillaged temples and robbed monasteries of their wealth. These myths played important role in the time of national crisis as these become the rallying points of Sinhalese nationalism.

The religious and cultural efflorescence that took place in 19th century re-inforced these tendencies further. "The exponents of Buddhist revivalism resurrected the glories of Sinhala-Buddhist past, underscored the necessity to safeguard Buddhist religion, a duty believed to have been ordained by Lord-Buddha himself and safeguard the pristine purity of the Sinhala-Aryan race from the corrupting influences of un-Aryan elements."<sup>10</sup> Thus, emerged the concept of Sinhala - Buddhist hegemony, which should be protected at all costs from the inroads of Dravidian Tamil groups.

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9. V.Suryanarayan, no.4, p.124.

10. Satchi Ponnambalam, no.5, p.19.

The close identification between Sinhala race and Buddhist religion and the necessity to be united and vigilant against "anti-Buddhist barbarians", came out vividly in many Sinhalese publications also. There were slogans like "no Buddhism without Sinhalese and no Sinhalese without Buddhism. The literature of the Sinhalese is Buddhist literature and the history of Sinhalese is the history of Buddhism. The `era' of Sinhalese is the `Buddha era' and the culture of Sinhalese is the Buddhist culture".<sup>11</sup> Though the Sinhalese comprised nearly three-fourth of Sri Lankan population, they not only looked at the Tamils as minority groups but also as who had special links with India and no loyalty to the Island Republic. To any Sinhalese the prospect of their ethnic community being submerged under the weight of vast number of Hindus who speak Tamil & other Dravidian languages in South India, appear as a brooding threat to the existence of the community.

The existence of strong passion associated with language and religion in Sri Lanka appeared to reflect the need of many individuals to preserve and defend that part of personal identity that was derived from the social identity

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11. Ibid., p.21.



of the ethnic community. The Sinhalese had also nursed a sense of insecurity and deprivation vis-a-vis Tamils who were perceived as a cultural extension of a huge Tamil population in India.<sup>12</sup> This sense of insecurity had led the Sinhalese leadership in post-independent period to initiate moves and policies to the detriment of the Tamils. This did provide economic and political content to historically nursed ethnic antagonism, resulting in the worst explosion of ethnic violence.

**Tamil Perception:-**

The Sri Lankan Tamils, who distinguish themselves to Indian Tamils consist 12 per cent of total population of Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan Tamils resented and viciferously protested if one referred to them as immigrant community. They insisted that their historical tradition in Sri Lanka was as old as Sinhalese. According to Tamilian point of view, the fact was that the Tamil kings ruled from Anuradhapura before the rise of Sinhalese kings were borne out.<sup>13</sup> The history of Tamil people in Sri Lanka lost in obscurity for 1000 years when the Pali chronicles described

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12. V. Suryanarayan, no.4, p.125.

13. Ibid., p.127.

only the struggle of the Sinhalese kings with invading South Indian Tamil forces. Hence, there was no continuous history of the fortunes of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka until 1214, when an independent Tamil kingdom, with its capital in Jaffna came into existence.

The Sri Lankan Tamils were not a homogenous group. Broadly speaking Sri Lankan Tamils were divided into three groups:-

Firstly, Jaffna Tamils; largest and politically most volatile and they provided the leadership and dedicated following Tamil movements. Secondly, unlike Jaffna peninsula, Eastern province Tamils were educationally backward and a mixed population. As a result of which Eastern province Tamils were less militant on question of separate state. Thirdly, large section of Tamils had made Colombo their permanent home as professionals, civil servants, working with Sinhalese closely. They had vested interest by survival of Sri Lanka as a united country and had developed greater sense of tolerance than their Jaffna counterparts. Thus, the solid support for a separate Tamil Belam (state) came from mainly the Northern districts. But after 1983 riots sense of insecurity prevailed over almost all Tamils and the factor did provide a new sense of solidarity among them.

From Tamilian point of view, if the Sinhalese perceived Sri Lanka as '*Dhammadvipa*' and '*Sinhaladvipa*' and they had a greater historical and cultural claim to the country, equally it must be stated that the existence of powerful Tamil kingdoms in North and East, prior to the arrival of the Portuguese were significant motivating forces for Tamil nationalism.<sup>14</sup> So far as the cultural components of the Island is concerned, the Tamil ethnic identity remained a linguistic and cultural identity, unlike the all-inclusive ethno-religious identity of the Sinhalese-Buddhists. To the Tamils, it was the language-culture index that was dominant and did command loyalty, not any particular religious adherence. According to the protagonists of Tamil Eelam, Tamil Eelam did not mean partition or separation, it means the restoration and reconstitution of the ancient Tamil Kingdom whose death knell was struck by Portuguese in 1621. Thus, Sri Lankan Tamils, did claim the Northern and Eastern provinces as their traditional homeland. Moreover, the dynamics of economic development that had taken place during the British rule and in the post-independence period had led to migration of a number of Sri Lankan Tamils away from their homeland to Sinhalese inhabited areas. Traditionally

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14. Satchi Ponnambalam, no.5, p.19.

the Tamils lived by agriculture in the 'dry' or 'arid' zones, less favourably endowed by nature than the 'wet' zones occupied by Sinhalese. As a result, Tamilians took the advantage of colonial government's decision to open the administrative service to local proficient in English language. At independence, Tamils occupied about 30 per cent of the government services as well as an equal percentage of places in universities. But after independence, due to discriminatory policies, deprivation of language rights and the indignity of living as aliens in their own homeland and the blatant pro-Sinhalese recruitment policies of successive governments a large number of Tamil doctors, academicians, scientists and skilled personnel migrated to Western countries. Smarting under an acute sense of deprivation in their own motherland, their educated elites were the greatest protagonists of Tamil Eelam.<sup>15</sup> Since independence of Sri Lanka various Sinhalese dominated governments also systematically pursued policies to discriminate Tamils in the area of land, language, religion and economic opportunities.

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15. V. Suryanarayan, no.4, p.128.

### **Indian Tamils:-**

The so called Indian Tamils were in the main the descendents of the workers imported from South India by British planters as cheap labourer for large scale coffee and tea plantation. Though the Indian Tamils shared common bonds of ethnicity and language with Sri Lankan Tamils, the problems that they faced and the aspirations that they entertained, were in many ways different from their kinsfolk in the Northern and Eastern part of the Island.<sup>16</sup> In Sri Lanka, they had no contact with outside world and lived wholly alienated from the surrounding Sinhalese villages, separated from them in ethnicity, language, culture and religion. Their collectivized working life and their presence in alien surroundings made them hold to their Indian roots. To the Sinhalese, they were slaving Tamil community. Thus, as the plantation workers were surrounded by Sinhalese villages and were located at the heartland of the Sinhalese people, the Tamil Eelam would not lead to the political salvation of Indian Tamils. The plantation workers were the worst sufferer of imperialist exploitation and after independence of the ultra-nationalist politicians of

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16. Robert N.Kearney, "Ethnic Conflict and The Tamil Separatist Movement In Sri Lanka", Asian Survey, vol.XXV, Sept. 1985, p.899.

Sri Lanka. The communal carnage that took place in 1977, 1981, 1983 clearly demonstrated the vulnerability of the people living in the plantation area and their utter helplessness against lumpen sections of Sinhalese. Thus, it brought a psychological climate of fear and insecurity. Furthermore, it was the tragedy of Tamil politics in Sri Lanka that the educated elites, who provided leadership to Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils had not found it possible to take a common stand on many crucial issues. On the other hand, the demand for Tamil Eelam and violent activities of Tamil militants made the position of the plantation workers extremely vulnerable. The plight of the plantation workers more aggravated when just after independence Ceylon Citizenship Act, 1948, made Indian Tamils non-citizens. In the next year, by the Ceylon Amendment Act they were disfranchised. In this way they became not only voteless but also stateless. However, the most important fallout of the 1983 riots was the fact that the Indian Tamils and the Sri Lanka Tamils came closer, feeling threatened by common sense of insecurity.<sup>17</sup>

**Sri Lankan Muslim Perception:-**

The Sri Lankan Muslims who represent 7.1 per cent of

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17. V. Suryanarayan, no.4, p.135.

the Island's population were scattered in all parts of the country. The Sri Lankan Muslims, also called Moors, were most business like community in Sri Lanka.<sup>18</sup> The Muslims identified their ethnicity in forms of religion and culture and not language. Their strategy was to join hands with Sri Lankan governments and try to win concessions from whichever party in power. This policy had paid high dividends and two major Sinhalese parties tried to champion the cause of the Muslims. The Muslims had bargained and wrested concessions in two spheres affecting their cultural identity, first in the area of consolidation and recognition of Muslim personal laws and second, in the field of education.

As far as Sinhalese-Tamil conflict is concerned, the claim of Tamils about 'traditional homeland' was discredited by Muslims. They were against the very idea of Tamil Belam because they feared of being a 'mini-minority' within a minority.<sup>19</sup> But the Sri Lankan government and Muslim honeymoon had received a severe jolt by Colombo's decision to establish links with Israel and induct Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency, to assist in counter-insurgency operations.

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18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., p.136.

### **Malayas And Burghers:-**

The Malayas who constituted 0.3 per cent and the Burghers 0.3 per cent were extremely insignificant. Despite their small size, they played significant role in state administration due to their command on the language of the government. These two miniscule minorities had a vested interest in harmonious relations with the Sinhalese population and did not welcome the idea of vivisection of the country.

### **SINHALESE-BUDDHIST ETHNOCENTRISM**

"The transfer of power from the departing British to the local ruling class, 'a tiny educated minority of English speaking Islanders' is marked by 'extreme gentility'. Starting as equals with the Sinhalese in subordination to the British, the Tamils for a time become 'junior partners', and by the 1960s, has been reduced a subject people under the rule of Sinhalese masters."<sup>20</sup> The Sri Lankan people, in general, could not develop a political consciousness and the capacity to unite at the wider national level.

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20. Satchi Ponnambalam, no.5, p.71.



### **National Flag Issue:-**

The first expression of Sinhalese - Buddhist ethnocentrism was revealed in the designing of the national flag of Sri Lanka on the eve of independence. The flag of the new nation should have been a symbol that would evoke the spontaneous loyalty of all the people of Sri Lanka. But the question of national flag became a matter of great controversy and according to Tamils it was essentially the Sinhalese 'lion flag'.

### **Post-colonial Government Structure:-**

The Britishers bequeath to Sri Lanka at independence a typical westminster model of parliamentary government. But D.S. Senanayake's government was a miniature collection of representatives of the highest economic class who had benefited from colonial rule and from plantation and commercial capitalism. Once independence was granted the government abandoned the goal of overthrow of the dominant exploitative forces that control post colonial state. It was soon taken up by Bandaranaike, in a vague manner, when he did quit United Nationalist Party in 1951 and later degenerating into the fanaticism of the 'Sinhala-only' activists in late 1950s. Again, by Ceylon Citizenship Act No.18 of 1948, all Indian Tamils, even those born or

domiciled in Sri Lanka were denied Sri Lankan citizenship. The Citizenship Act led down the law governing citizenship of Sri Lanka and prescribed qualifications necessary for a person born before or after 15 Nov. 1948 to become a citizen of Sri Lanka. The qualifications deliberately aimed at excluding the Indian Tamils from Sri Lankan citizenship. So, because of fear of "inevitable extinction" in 1940s and of 'inexorable shrinkage' in 1950s, the Indian Tamils were denied citizenship and the Sri Lankan Tamils were denied the use of Tamil as their official language.<sup>21</sup> For Tamils the real motive on each occasion was economic, i.e. to prevent the Tamils from earning money and to eliminate them from employment and business. Again by the Ceylon (Parliamentary Elections) Amendment Act, No. 48 of 1949, Senanayake tied the franchise to citizenship and deprived the Indian Tamils of their vote.

**'Sinhala only' Policy:-**

The language probably was the most single important attribute delimiting each community. It had been both a source of emotional identification within each community and a communication barrier between communities. The language difference had formed an obvious obstacle to integrate by

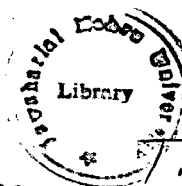
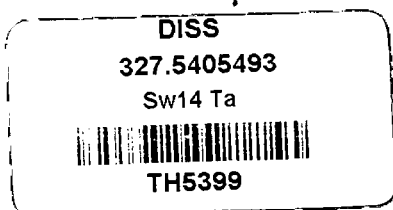
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21. *ibid.*, p.76.

hindering communities and tending to compartmentalize the two communities. After independence, the acceptance of Sinhalese and Tamils as the official language, continued till 1953. "In 1954 a commission was appointed which present the evidence that "proportion of Tamils in educational institutions was considerably greater than their proportion in population". The commission also recommended that in the interests of equal opportunity provision for higher education should be to at least six Sinhalese students for every one Tamil Student. The commission accordingly questioned the need for two official languages.<sup>22</sup> The policy of 'Sinhala only' as adopted by Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and later by the United National Party (UNP), constituted the high-water mark of the Sinhalese politics of manipulation. The first important legislative act of the SLFP government concern the 'Sinhala only' promise on which it got elected. The bill to make Sinhalese language only official language of Sri Lanka was passed in the teeth of opposition by all the Tamil MPs. The imposition of 'Sinhala only' was a negation of the independence of the Tamils and represented the subjugation of the Tamils by Sinhalese imperialism. In this context, Tamils became an easy target

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22. Ibid., pp.79-80.



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for they hold many jobs, and were seemingly prosperous. After the `Sinhala only' Act, there emerged the straight forward Sinhalese-Tamils antithesis. It was important to remember that the constant feature of nationalist movements had been the passionate commitment to one's language, which often assumes mystic significance.<sup>23</sup>

On 5th June 1956, the date the `Sinhala only' bill was introduced by Bandaranaike government and as an act of protest Chelvanayakam, leader of Tamils with 300 volunteers staged a `sit-down' satyagraha. On the same day, the Eksath Bhikkhu Peramuna also organised a march to get the "reasonable use of Tamil" clause in the bill to be removed. By the way, the Tamil satyagrahis were beaten in front of police. This incident later did spread like a wildfire and it led to the first communal riot against Tamils in Sri Lanka. The rioting and violence were instigated by all most all Sinhalese organisations and Bhikkhus to frighten the Tamils into accepting `Sinhala only' Act. The 1956 riot was the first of series of riots to which the Tamils were subjected because of the `Sinhala only' policy and the 1956

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23. Robert N. Kearney, 'Communalism & Language in the Politics of Ceylon', (Duke University Press, USA, 1986), p. 16.

language Act which divided the people on national ethnic lines.

In 1957, 'Bandaranaike - Chelvanayakam Pact' popularly known as 'B-C Pact'<sup>24</sup> was signed which envisaged the regional council was to be established in Tamil areas and the Northern province was to be constituted. one regional council and Eastern province was to be divided into two or more councils. The B-C Pact constituted the miniature devolution of autonomy to the Tamils within the existing framework of the unitary state. But after five months of signing this pact Bandaranaike government did not take any botheration to impliment it. In 1957 a bill was passed in parliament to put the Sinhalese letters 'SRI' in place of the English letters that had hitherto been used on motor vehicle number plates. At this stage, when Tamils, as a matter of equality, pleaded for Tamil equivalent of the Sinhalese letters 'SRI' be authorized for vehicles registered in Tamil areas, was rejected by the government.

Thereafter, the Tamils defied the law prescribing Sinhala letters 'SRI' and used the Tamil equivalent on their motor vehicles. It led to sporadic violence all over Colombo against Tamils in which high number of Tamils were murdered.

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24. For more details see, Satchi Ponnambalam, no.5, p.110.

## **TRENDS**

The ethnocentrism resulted in widening the gap between the two communities - Sinhalese and Tamils. Tamils continued to be the victims of deprivation in education, language, employment, land colonization & political participation and Sinhalese became the only politically relevant group in the Island.

### **Insecurity Faced by Tamils:-**

The most important qualitative change that took place in Sri-Lanka during the 1960s and 1970s was the increasing insecurity of life and property as for the Tamils in non-Tamil areas. From the Sinhalese dominated areas it was from Sinhala hoodlooms and in Northern and Eastern provinces, it was the security forces committing heinous crimes against Tamil civilians.

### **Land colonization:-**

Inter-related to the issue of insecurity, was the problem of 'Sinhalese colonization' in the Eastern province which the Tamils considered as an integral part of their 'traditional homeland'. Successive Sinhalese-dominated governments did not accept the concept of 'traditional homeland', on the other hand, they subscribed to and uphold

the right of any community to move and settle in any part of the Island. The Tamils maintained that colonization in traditional Tamil areas should be exclusively reserved for Tamils and no attempt should be made to change the demographic landscape of the Eastern province. Of course, the state-sponsored land colonization schemes had definitely altered the racial composition of Eastern province. The Tamils also alleged that Sinhala fishermen were inducted into Tamil fishermen fishing areas and thus threatening the way of life and source of living of Tamil fishermen. Another irksome development had been the use to Buddhist religious symbols - *the Stupa and the Bo tree* - to give legitimacy to Sinhalese settlements. The sudden discovery of Buddha statue in Vavuniya was an example to inject religious justification for state-sponsored migration of Sinhalese to sparsely populated areas of North-Eastern part. Equally pathetic had been the plight of Indian Tamils that caught between 'Sinhalese Lions' and 'Tamil Tigers', they became defenceless victims of communal poison, vendetta and violence.<sup>25</sup>

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25. V.Suryanarayan, no.4, p.140.

### **Economic Neglect:-**

Another aspect was the continuing neglect of Tamil dominated areas in terms of economic development. The government had hardly exploited the economic resources of North on the other hand, the introduction of free market economy and liberal import policy made the situation worse. Thus, North-Eastern part was being meted out a step-motherly treatment by Colombo. The government's decision to stop all developmental works in Tamil-dominated areas and to channel funds for defence created hatred among Tamils. Furthermore, by shutting down the avenues of higher education, the respective Sinhala governments slowly deprived the employment opportunities of Tamils. Simultaneously, discrimination against Tamils in the field of employment continued unabated and it was evident from the fact that 85 per cent jobs in public sector were captured by Sinhalese and only 11 per cent by Tamils.

Put in such a precarious predicament, the Tamils faced frequent and frenzied attacks from Sinhalese and the chasm between two communities increased day by day which led to emergence of Tamil militancy.

That the people of Sri Lanka have been divided into separate and exclusive communities differentiated by language, culture, religion and myth of origin for at least



a thousand years, is evident from the above analysis. The considerable social and economic changes of the last 150 years have created integrative institutions in which Sinhalese and Tamils interact and develop common interests and outlooks, produce new occupations and classes which cut across communal lines and diffuse values and ideologies to which communal sentiments are repugnant or irrelevant.

Modern communalism in Sri Lanka has been pre-eminently a political phenomenon. The lingering popular sense of communal identification and solidarity become of increasing political significance as the franchise is extended and power begin to shift from colonial administrators to elected Ceylonese representatives.

After independence, the official language question becomes the central issue of communal rivalry, producing a serious rupture of communal relations and posing a threat to the unity of Sri Lanka. The official language issue turns into a communally divisive controversy because there is not one single language or identity which include all the Ceylonese people. The search for a wider identity has stopped at the boundaries of the community. For the both communities, the language issue comes to symbolize the basic competition between communities. To the Sinhalese, the issue involves their aspirations to retrieve their communal

heritage and reassert their position as the majority of the Island's people. To the Tamils, the language dispute demonstrate the inherent dangers of Sinhalese domination and the helplessness of their community before the Sinhalese majority. With political power in their hands, Sinhalese elites grab the economy of the country and thus creating a huge gulf between two communities.

Being deprived of political as well as economic status, the Tamils, on the other hand, demand a measure of autonomy to govern themselves. With little chance of acquiring a share in the political power, within the existing political framework, the Tamils go up from autonomy to secession. With Tamil moderates have been virtually eliminated in the polarization of forces and more people, particularly youths, who have seen or heard of the macabre of the riots, take charge of secessionist demand. This kind of transformation which leads to civil war in Sri Lanka is analysed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER - II

### EMERGENCE OF TAMIL INSURGENCY AND 1983 RIOTS

Armed struggle between the ruling and non-ruling groups within a country has existed since early times. In fact, in many countries of Third World, groups have shown an increasing tendency to resort to military to alter the status-quo. Insurgency has been one of the major manifestations of such armed violence. Insurgency is a struggle between ruling and non-ruling groups, in which the later use protracted irregular warfare and political techniques (organisation, propaganda etc.) to obtain political goals. The definition excludes coups and short outbrousts of violence since these are not "protracted" struggles. However, it should be kept in mind that there is no fine line dividing conflicts which are protracted and those which are not.

The role of the regime and the nature of state in fostering insurgency, has been critical in the case of all insurgent movements. Centralization of administration especially where the centralization threatens regional and cultural autonomy can intensify the discontent of an ethnic group and deepen the conflict. The growing political

awareness and participation increases the aspirations of a certain class or ethnic group, for a share in political and economic power in the event of refusal or failure of regime to satisfy these aspirations, discontent spread among the members of the group, who blame the regime or the system for their grievances. This resentment when felt collectively and then mobilized, becomes politically relevant discontent. If the people, resort to armed struggle to alter the status-quo the movement turns insurgent.

While domestic support to the insurgents is vital at all stages of the insurgency, external support plays a crucial role, especially in the initial and intermediate stages. Insurgents also seek support from expatriates, other insurgent groups and sympathetic governments. From expatriates they receive moral and material help, while other insurgent groups provide training and arms. Propaganda literature brought out by expatriates, reports of human rights groups and broadcasts serve to internationalize their causes.

The frequency and intensity of Tamil insurgency has brought worst form of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. The demand for separation and its extreme manifestation among Tamil militant groups has to be seen in the light of civil violence and insurgency. It has been the result of the

repeated failure of political negotiations concerning the place of the Tamil language and the notion of Tamil homeland. On the other hand, with the increasing Sinhualisation of the state apparatus, the discontent among Tamils grow intense. The political and economic policies of the successive Sri Lankan governments and their neglect of Tamil grievances leads to an escalation of Tamil demands from greater autonomy to secession, based on their right to self-determination.

The origin and development of extremism among Tamil youths can be traced, on the one hand, to the effects of discrimination in language, education and employment which get compounded by state violence and on the other hand, to grow disenchantment with TULF (Tamil United Liberation Front) leadership and their forms of parliamentary struggle.<sup>1</sup> While an uneasy co-existence prevails between the moderates and militants in the 1970s, the 1980s watch the insurgents emerge as the dominant force, sidelining the moderates.

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1. V. Suryanarayan, 'Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka', in U. Phadnis and others (eds.), 'Domestic Conflict in South Asia', (New Delhi: South Asia Publication., 1986), p.143.

### **Evolution of Tamil Nationalism:-**

The roots of Tamil nationalism did go back to the Hindu revivalist movement of the 19th century. Like Buddhist revivalist movements in South, Tamil revivalism was directed primarily against the Christian Missionary Act. Tamil nationalism started getting momentum with the formation of the Tamil Congress (TC) in 1944 and G.G. Ponnambalam's demand for "50-50 balanced representation". But from a policy of opposition to Sinhalese dominated government, in 1948, the T.C. did not make a shift to 'responsive cooperation' with the government and even voted in favour of the disenfranchisement and citizenship legislation of 1947-49. This acquiescence proved to be a turning point in the history of Tamil nationalism. Some members of the TC, protesting against the betrayal of Indian Tamils by the TC, did break away from the party and formed the Federal Party (FP). With the emergence of the FP in 1949, Tamil nationalism lacked coherence and cohesion despite all their talk of a linguistic, religious and cultural separateness.<sup>2</sup> As the grievances of the Tamils increased, the FP emerged as the unchallenged spokesman of the Tamils of the North and East.

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2. K.M. de Silva, 'A History Of Sri Lanka', (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), p.513.

After the controversial 'Sinhala only' Act of 1956, the Sri Lankan Tamils increasingly maintained that their place in post-independent Sri Lanka was rapidly being declined in a culturally and politically unacceptable manner by the Sinhalese majority. Perhaps for the first-time they began to ask questions directly about their relationship to Sri Lanka, to search for their indigenous roots, and to ponder on the contribution their language and civilization have made to the Island's impressive heritage.

The promulgation of 'Sinhala only' and the 1956 elections catapulted the FP into the leadership of the Tamils. In opposition, the FP adopted "peaceful political dialogue and non-violent agitation". When the Bandaranaike - Chelvanayakam Pact was abrogated, at Vavuniya, the FP called for launching of direct action by non-violent satyagraha.<sup>3</sup>

When the FP entered into a coalition with the ruling party in 1965, the United National Party (UNP) promised reasonable use of Tamil language, establishment of District Councils (DC), and M.Tiruchelvam of the FP party was given the portfolio of local government. In 1968, however, under the pressure from its youth league and with an eye on the

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3. Robert N.Kearney, 'Communalism and Language in the Politics of Ceylon', (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), p.110.

forthcoming elections, the FP withdrew its support to the government and came back to opposition benches. But the support for secession was weak till the 1970s. This was evident from the fact that O. Suntheralingam who had advocated Eelam in 1958, contesting on a separatist platform was defeated in the 1960 election.

#### **Increasing Militancy of 1970s:-**

Most of the Tamil militants were radicalized fraternities and rejected Western type of democracy as a model for their Eelam they aspired to carve out of the blank of Sri Lanka's Northern and Eastern provinces. The Sri Lankan Tamil leaders argued that if they had been given reasonable autonomy, they must have achieved their own economic infrastructure and also have come to grip with some of the more pressing socio-political problems. The central government's failure to deliver anything but 'Development Council devoid of efficacious content, did seem, inevitably to lead to a disenchantment in the North so profound and entrenched that violence could hardly be unexpected.

Two significant features to these militant movements must be taken into consideration. Firstly, "unlike the Dravidian Movements in South India, which received sustenance from a golden age of the Tamils in the past, none



of these militant groups were enamoured of past glories. The emphasis in all their publications were on discriminatory policies of Sinhalese dominated governments and the right of self-determination for Tamil nationality. Secondly, all these groups were Marxist oriented and subscribed to the path of armed struggle."<sup>4</sup>

The sweeping victory of the United Front (UF) in the 1970 elections, deprived regional parties like FP, of their balancing role in parliamentary politics. Further, the liberation struggle in Bangladesh and the Janata Vimukti Paramuna (JVP), (a Sinhala militant group active in Southern part of Sri Lanka), insurgency in 1971 left an indelible impression on the Tamils. Although few Tamils were involved in the JVP insurrection, some Tamil youths came in contact with JVP insurrectionists in prison and were influenced by JVP's revolutionary ideology and tactics. The "standardisation" of university admission hit the Tamil middle class youths badly. Besides, the new constitution of 1972, did accord Buddhism the foremost place, retained a unitary constitution and hardly conceded the demands of Tamils. The parting of ways came with the Tamil parties

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4. V. Suryarnarayan, no.1, p.143.

walking out of the Constituent Assembly and formed the Tamil United Front (TUF), in May 1972.

The Tamil extremism moved on rapidly thereafter. About 100 Tamil youths were arrested in 1973, for staging a black flag demonstration when a UF minister was on visit to Jaffna. Another 200 were arbitrarily arrested, the same year, for alleged involvement in extremist activities. These youths emerged as a political force and pressurized the TUF to resolve upon separation.

After 1977, however, the Tamil militants began increasingly to take to the gun as a political means. "But, if, political measures can not secure an appropriate place for Tamil culture and language in modern Sri Lanka, that do not diminish a remarkable upsurge of enthusiasm at all levels of Tamil society for their distinctive inheritance."<sup>5</sup> This was eagerly demonstrated in January 1974 at the World Tamil Conference in Jaffna. On the last day, when people spill-over from a hall on to the esplanade, the police judging it to be an 'unwarranted public meeting' attacked them with catastrophic results, leading nine deaths and dozens of injuries. It especially humiliated several of the

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5. Bruce Matthews, 'Radical Conflict and the Rationalization of Violence un Sri Lanka', Pacific Affairs, vol. 59, Spring 1986, p.30.

youth groups of Tamil political parties and for these young men, the incident was more than a clumsy insult to Tamil culture; it was "a direct challenge to their manhood".

Added to this, repercussions of a major revolt carried out by an element of discontent Sinhalese youths in 1971 - a situation which convinced young Tamils the role of government military forces in this conflict. Besides these developments there was also emergence of an under ground militant movement among the Tamil youths.

The period of 1972-75 was marked by sporadic violence. The period of 1976-79 witnessed a shift to a demand for separation. On may 1976, after some sporadic violent incidents in early 1970s, militant youths came together in 1979 under Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) with the objective of attaining independence through armed struggle. As for the insurgents, at this stage, all of them were called 'Tigers' due to lack of sufficient information of the underground movements. They tried to acquire strength through a series of minor tactical offensives. Their targets were informers, the police and the Tamil politicians collaborating with Sinhalese parties. Their opposition to the new constitution was expressed through blowing up of an Air Ceylon AVRO on the day the constitution was promulgated. Money from bank robberies was used to build fire power.

The 1979-83 years were not easy going for the insurgents. When the Tigers ambushed a police raiding party, killing three police personnel, the Tigers were proscribed. Instead of isolating these extremists and trying to find a political solution with the co-operation of the moderate leadership, the government responded the solution of massive deployment of security forces in Jaffna peninsula and emergency was declared in Jaffna and president Jayawardene ordered army to "wipe out the terrorists" in the North. On 19th July that year, "the Prevention of Terrorism Act No.48 (PTA) was passed. The Act permits suspects to be held incommunicado for upto 18 months without trial, thus, giving unlimited scope for torture."<sup>6</sup>

By this time Tamil militants were mainly divided into five groups: "(1) Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) under Pravakaran, (2) People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Belam (PLOTB) under Uma Maheswaran, (3) Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) under Padmanabha (4) Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS) under Balakumar and (5) Tamil Belam Liberation Organisation (TELO) under Sri

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6. For an in-depth analysis of provision of the PTA of 1979, See S.J. Tambiah, 'Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy', (London: I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd., 1986), p.43.

Sabaratnam."<sup>7</sup>

By 1981, despite much skepticism about District Development Councils by Tamil parliamentarians, there was hope, perhaps, the councils would satisfy some major Sri Lankan Tamil concerns. But the council fell in two years due to mainly two reasons - firstly, these were not appropriately financed. Secondly, they were not given enough time to be seriously regarded as a second tier of government by most Sinhalese parliamentarians. By the end of the year all TULF members of parliament obliged to resign leaving Sri Lankan Tamils of the North leaderless, thus offering the initiative for political control to the militant group, particularly LTTE.

#### The Riots of 1983:-

In Sri Lankan history seven occurrences of mass violence have been unleashed by segments of the Sinhalese population against the Tamils. The most destructive of them took place in the years 1958, 1977, 1981 and 1983. (The only other example of ethnic riots in this century fueled by religious irritations and commercial competition is the Sinhalese-Muslim riots of 1915). Thus, it is a fair

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7. V. Suryanarayan, no.1, p.143.

inference that chain of violent outbursts against the Tamils are very much a phenomenon of the second half of the twentieth century, the worst occurrences exploding in rapid succession after 1977.

If we look at the catalogue of violent Sinhalese eruptions against the Tamils, the Sinhalese youth insurrection of April 1971, under the political label of Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) came first. This insurrection had been characterized as the "first large scale violence against the government by youths in Sri Lanka" and the JVP was described as an 'ultra-left organisation dominated by educated youths unemployed or dis-advantageously employed'.<sup>8</sup> This abortive insurrection has some instructive lessons - firstly, JVP rebellion did show the emergence of a well-type organisation formed for violent action. Secondly, JVP insurrection resulted in the calling out by the government of the army and police, which in fact tested in this scale for the first time. Their success in dealing with rebels gave them added prestige and new muscle. Thirdly, the insurrection invited a most disproportional response from

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8. S.J. Tambiah, 'Sri Lanka - Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy', (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1986), p.14.

the government of Mrs. Bandaranaike; emergency was proclaimed.

Although the riots of 1983 was the last in a series extending from 1956, but they distinctly different from the others in certain respect. The most proximate cause or trigger was the ambush of an army truck and the killing and mutilation of thirteen soldiers at Tinneveli, a place in the Jaffna district in the heart of the Sri Lankan Tamil territory. This ambush was made by a group of Sri Lankan Tamils who called themselves the 'Liberation Tigers' of Tamil Eelam and whom the government referred to as terrorists. "On July 23, after the ambush and killing of the thirteen soldiers, certain outraged army elements brought the corpses in their mangled to the capital city of Colombo and publicly displayed them in Colombo central cemetery of Kanatte. On that night began the systematic destruction of looting and destruction of Tamil life and property in Colombo which spreaded rapidly to other cities in Sinhalese areas."<sup>9</sup> This outburst paralyzed Colombo for seventy-two hours. One of the remarkable incidents, whatever the 'beginnings' of the riots, foreshadowed the breakdown of law and order among even those charged with keeping them, was

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9. Ibid., p. 16.

the murder of some fifty-three Tamil "terrorists" in Colombo's major prison.

More than any other previous ethnic riots, the 1983 eruption did show organized mob violence at work. "The mob with voters' list and detail addresses of every Tamil - owned shop, house or factory and their attacks were very "precize". Apart from those killed - the government admitted death toll of 350, but the suspected numbers were about 2000."<sup>10</sup> The largest immediate tragedy was the number of refugees who had abandoned their homes and jobs were crowded in terrified disarray into some fifteen refugee camps in Colombo. Secondly, apart from Tamil homes, there was systematic destruction of shops and commercial industrial establishments, many of which employed Sinhalese labour and which were an essential arm of the government's policy of economic development. The most dangerous misconception among the Sinhalese was that "every Indian is a Tamil, and for them Indira Gandhi and Mahatma Gandhi are also Tamils."<sup>11</sup> This anti-India interpretations and speculating the adjacent subcontinent's intervention led to uncontrollable spread of riots and the cumulative expansion of aggressive emotions.

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10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., pp.15-16.



Thirdly, the most disconcerting feature of the 1983 riots was the complete breakdown of law and order, a breakdown that was caused as much by the active participation or passive encouragement of the ultimate guardians of law and order - the police and the army. Of course the most proximate cause of the army's degeneration was the sporadic proximate puncturing of their sense of honour and martial invincibility by the ambushes of Tamil guerrillas. This indeed was the first massive breakdown of law and order among those entrusted with its preservation to occur during Sri Lanka's history as an independent nation state.<sup>12</sup>

Since thousands of Tamils had been affected by the riots, it helped making the movement more mass based. The feeling was that they are safest in Tamil areas strengthen support for the cause of the 'homeland' and in the process for the Tamil militants. Large scale recruitment to the insurgent groups took place. This not only led to an expansion of existing groups but also to their proliferation. The proliferation of groups in the after-math of riots, resulted in about 35 groups operating, by end of 1984. "Despite these factionalism, the Tamil militants had brought to the battle field proven motivation and

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12. Ibid., p.18.

professionalism that for the moment exceed those of the state's security forces."<sup>13</sup> "In addition to attacks on police and convoys, raids were made on Army and Naval camps. With the massive procurement of arms and training, the insurgents `became better equipped and trained in the use of surface-to-air missiles and rocket propelled grenades', in placing land mines to blow up military vehicles, in the use of remote devices to blow up buildings, and in confronting government forces in the open."<sup>14</sup>

Although the government of Sri Lanka attempted negotiations, but it broke down as both sides adopted on intransigent attitudes. Despite these attempts for a political solution, it became obvious that the government did seek a military solution to the crisis. After having driven out thousands of Tamils from the East through `search and destroy' operations, government launched an all out offensive called `operation short shift', in the North. This was well retaliated by LTTE cadres by exploding Central Telegraph Office, the bus terminal and soft drink bottling plant in Colombo. These aimed at the political and economic

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13. Bruce Matthews, no.5, p.36.

14. Chelvadurai Manogaran, `Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Sri Lanka', (Honolulu: University of Hawai Press, 1987), p.129.

weakening of the regime. "A noteworthy development of this period was the `liberation of certain zones' and the establishment of parallel administration in `liberated areas'. Since 1983, Colombo slowly lost its control over Jaffna and there was total collapse of government administration."<sup>15</sup>

By late 1986, it was the LTTE writ that goes in the whole of Jaffna peninsula and in parts of Vavuniya and North-West Manner. It collected 10 per cent of sales tax from whole sellers on `luxuries' like cigarettes and alcoholic beverages. Gradually it assumed control over branches of administration. When it declared its intention to register vehicles and police traffics and set 1st January 1987 as the date for the unilateral declaration of independence, the government clamped down on Jaffna and it became the focal point of civil war.

#### **Impact of Insurgency on Political System:-**

The insurgency threatened the very existence of a united Sri Lanka, since it had sought to divide the country and establish an independent Eelam. Thus, it was a major challenge to the territorial integrity of the Island.

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15. S.H. Venkatramani, `Jaffna: Bearing the Blockade', India Today, 15th February 1987, p.81.

Further the armed warfare in Tamil areas and the military response of the regime militarized the society. The inability of the regime to control the extremism reduced its support among the people. Its refusal to hold elections as scheduled, the imposition of emergency measures in Tamil areas and subsequently to the rest of the Island, press censorship, were major assaults on democratic processes. In the context of a weakened political system and a politicized and strengthened military, the threat from the military of the regime and the system increased tremendously. Lastly, the extremism led to the reemergence of the JVP in a more vibrant and chauvinistic form. Thus, the government had been confronted with two contending extremism, that of the systematic Tamil extremism and on the other hand JVP.

Hence, it is clear that the extremism arises in response to the discriminatory policies of successive governments in Sri Lanka. Government's lip service towards the grievances of Tamils and the failure of the moderate Tamils to secure even minimum demands for them while the discontent has been building up since late 1950s, it is evident in 1970s which triggered off extremism and terrorism in every nook and corner of Sri Lankan society. The 'standardization' in education and the Sinhala Janatha Vimukti Peramuna insurrection prove to be the spark the

lighted flame of the insurgency. For a society that has for decades depended on education which is oriented towards public service opportunity, "standardization" is a disaster, alienating young Tamils.

Initially the Tamil movements are moderate in demand and tactics. But when the Tamil leadership fails to secure any concessions from the government, the Tamil moderates are virtually eliminated and the youths take their position. In 70s although the tactics continues to be moderate but there is a clear division of methods between moderates and extremists. However, from 1979 the extremists take full control of the Tamil demand and the moderates are alienated to the oblivion.

In the 1980s, with an increase in support and fire power strengthen the extremist movements, and fratricidal warfare. From '85 on-ward, the extremism assumes the dimension of a civil war largely under the leadership of the LTTE. As for the nature of the violent methods that has been practiced during the insurgency, terrorism dominates in the 1970s while guerrilla warfares become popular in the 1980s.

The predominance of extremism shows that there is a considerable support for the use of armed struggle to establish Eelam. The Sri Lankan society gradually becomes one in which inequality, injustice, violence, repression torture, are pivotal instruments.

## CHAPTER - III

### INDIA'S CONCERN IN SRI LANKA

The ethnic factor is one of the many impulses of social conflicts in South Asian region, is a fact, nobody can deny. Ethnicity has been a critical variable in the formation and reformation of the state structures in the region as is evident by two partitions of legitimized state in less than half-a-century. Further more, an interrupted continuity of conflicts has marked the old inter-ethnic group tensions, with new groups being added to it and a relatively wider segment of the various communities getting increasingly involved there in. A noteworthy trend in South Asian region has been an increasing constellation or separatist movements since the 1970s many of which are mainly autonomist. Though varying in intensity and strength, such movements symbolize a revolt against the state and its power structure at various levels. Insurgency and counter-insurgency, violence of the terrorists and violence of the state apparatus thus underline the phenomenon of a protected internal war between a segment of the civic society.

In South Asian region the pressures and pulls of some of these movements have now been not only confined to the

territorial boundaries of the state but also have had transitional dimensions too. In particular a spill-over effect of some of them in India's relations with its neighbours has its own implication. "This is due to the 'Indo-centric' character of the region under which criss-crossing trans-border affinities of certain ethnic groups have befuddled the content and context of the 'neighbourhood' and 'nationhood'. Thus, whether in terms of magnitude, scope, scale or patterns, the ethnic relations, turmoils and conflicts in South Asian region appear to be increasingly variegated and also, having thereby critical implications for India's bilateral relations with the neighbours in general and for the systematic contours of South Asian states in particular."<sup>1</sup>

"A regional state system comprises of four kinds of actors: the hegemons, bargainers, peripheral dependents and external challengers. Regional hegemons are states which possess power to dominate that system. A bargainer may not be in a position to substitute the hegemon but can certainly act as competitor or partner in the order of the region. The peripheral dependents play a legitimising role through the

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1. Urmila Phadnis, 'Ethnic Conflicts in South Asian States', in Urmila Phadnis and others (eds.), 'Domestic Conflict in South Asia', (New Delhi, South Asia Publication, 1986), p.101.

support they may give to the dominant power or to be a 'nuisance value' through active or pasive support, either with or without external help."<sup>2</sup> The South Asian regional system revolves around India as a dominant (hegemon) power. "India's predominance in terms of size, power and resources, especially in context of shared historical, cultural and linguistic heritage, underscoring an ethnic communality, has given rise to the problem of national identity among smaller neighbours who tend to perceive India's role in terms of its own historical, political, cultural extension to the region."<sup>3</sup> India's relative political stability and resilience - underscored by its secular federal democratic polity - is an exception in the region. This is itself perceived as a source of threat by the regimes in the neighbouring countries, facing as they do problems of political legitimacy and internal dissension in one form or the other. India's role in these neighbouring states with regard to political stability remains essentially limited in view of the fact that their basic instability seems from their own economic, social and political crisis and not

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2. Srikant Paranjpe, "India and Sri Lanka: In Retrospect", Mainstream, vol.27, December 1988, p.15.
  3. Nancy Jetly, "Sri Lanka: A Security Concern", World Focus, Nov-Dec 1986, p.75.



Indian machinations. But the bogey of Indian interferences remain a convenient tool to divert attention from their distressing internal situations to the degree of suppression of democratic urges within these countries.<sup>4</sup>

"India's past record highlights more its restraint than high handedness in dealing with intra-regional conflicts and there is no evidence of the neighbouring countries having had to tailor their policies to India's preferences."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, continued instability and domestic turmoil in these countries can have repercussions on India itself through a spill-over process or through a possible change in the pattern of their external behaviour which can upset the status-quo of the region. Besides, India's own mounting problems of domestic instability - can have disastrous implications for the national unity of the neighbouring countries, fundamentally altering the present structure of relative stability in South Asian region. Thus, although these are hard realities these things can not be ignored.

The geo-political configuration of the South Asian state system and the integrated nature of the region, certain nexus between India and the domestic political

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4. Ibid., pp.75-76.

5. Ibid., p.75.

developments in the neighbouring countries have necessarily to be accepted as a fact of civic life. For instance, linkage between Pakistan and Kashmir or Sri Lanka in Tamil Nadu. "Besides, another important factor that needs to be taken into consideration in managing the intra-regional interaction, is the imperative to retain the political integrity of the region instead of allowing it to drift to a situation where it will be ultimately the Super Powers that will cast the mould for intra-regional situations rather than the concerned countries."<sup>6</sup>

It is in this context the Indian attitude towards Sri Lankan ethnic conflict and the Sri Lankan responses to the compulsions underlying the Indian approach has to be evaluated.

The geo-strategic environment in which Indo-Sri Lanka relations have taken place has undergone certain changes in certain respects due to a number of factors, among which the most important being changes in the terrain of global politics, changes in the strategic scenario in South Asia itself, the new security relationship between India and Sri Lanka which is brought about by the escalation of Sri

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6. Urmila Phadnis, "Indian Position: Sincere, Helpful", World Focus, Sept. 1984, p.23.

Lanka's ethnic crisis after 1983 July. "But the basic parameter of the relationship, the geo-strategic connection between two countries, remains unaltered over time. This might be called the 'local determinism' of Indo-Sri Lanka relation."<sup>7</sup>

Sri Lanka always holds unique features which has had close security linkages with India ever since the colonial days. Being an Island state, it enjoys considerable advantages over India's other smaller neighbours in being more accessible by their air and sea. By the same token Sri Lanka's geo-strategic location in the Indian ocean areas has always remained a significant parameter relevant not only to the problems of India's own security but also to the general question of power rivalry in the whole Indian Ocean zone.

From geo-political point of view, two influences in the Indo-Sri Lanka relations stand out as important; the location factor and the disparity in size, population and power between two countries.<sup>8</sup> Sri Lanka's location at the Southern tip of the Indian peninsula separated from India by

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7. Shelton U. Kodikora, 'Introduction', in S.U. Kodikora and others (eds.), 'South Asian Strategic Issues: Sri Lankan Perspective', (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1990), p.13.

8. Shelton U. Kodikora, 'Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka: A Third World Perspective', (New Delhi: Chanakya Publication, 1982), p.22.

a narrow stretch of water, which is twenty miles only. Also important from the locational point of view is the existence of a strategic harbour of Trincomalee, facing the Bay of Bengal on the Island's East Coast. During British period a concept of strategic unity of India and Sri Lanka had emerged and possession of Sri Lanka came to be regarded as a prerequisite to the defence and security of India when Japanese bombs hit Colombo, Trincomalee and Madras during second world war.

It can not be said that Indo-Sri Lankan relations have been entirely free from irritants in the post-status of stateless Tamils of Indian origin, Kachativu issue, unfavourable balance of trade, in 1963 when Sri Lanka entered into Maritime Agreement with China giving most favoured nation status to the contracting parties in respect of commercial vessels engaged in cargo and passengers services to and from the two countries or from a third country, when it was believed that Pakistani troops disguised as civilians were being transported through Colombo on PIA flights to Dhaka during 1971 crisis. But all these problems were sought to be resolved in a framework of trust and friendship resulting in negotiated settlement.

"Indo-Sri Lankan relations, however, seem to have entered a qualitatively different phase, marked by mutual

distrust and suspicion, since July 1983, when the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka assumed an unprecedented salience in its domestic polity, having far-reaching implications for India."<sup>9</sup> India's policy and attitude towards Sri Lanka after 1983 July communal riot has been influenced by two factors- firstly, presence of Western military powers in Indian Ocean which is seen as a threat to India's supremacy in South Asian region and secondly, all important Tamil Nadu factor - the role of Tamil Nadu government in Sri Lankan ethnic crisis as well as the pressure which they have been bringing to bear on Central Government at New Delhi in respect of this conflict. But the Indian responsibility rests on two important principles - interference in domestic affairs with adequate respect to national sovereignty and opposition to extra-regional intervention in the South Asian state system.<sup>10</sup>

#### **India's Security Concern**

India's perception, of the manner in which Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict impinged on the international situation, particularly on the regional security of South Asia,

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9. Nancy Jetly, no.3, p.76.

10. Srikant Paranjpe, no.2, p.15.

appeared to have been most important factor which projected India's policy towards Sri Lanka. The strategic concerns of India became more important in Indo-Sri Lanka relationship as the ethnic crisis in the Island escalated after July 1983. Thus, prior to 1983 India's involvement in Sri Lanka was the concern for persons of Indian origin and India's guarded response to the gradually swelling sympathy in Tamil Nadu for Sri Lankan Tamils. The 1983 riots in Sri Lanka put India in a delicate situation as the victims of the communal holocaust, included not only the Sri Lankan Tamils but also Tamils of Indian origin. This ethnic crisis did go beyond affecting Indian nationals and it exposed the Southern part of India and its regional security concern in South Asian region.

The Sri Lankan government approached various friendly countries - USA, UK, China, Pakistan, Israel, South Africa - for military and political support. "India was deliberately excluded, perhaps because of its obvious sympathy for the Tamils. Interestingly no attempt was made to seek support from the then Soviet Union, which Sri Lankan commentator subsequently described as tactically unwise; that violence had been precipitated through the then Soviet Union to JVP, to overthrow the government. These rumours were intended to facilitate the exclusion of India, a close Soviet friend and

to promote the mobilization of western powers and their allies for security support."<sup>11</sup> As viewed from India, Jayewardhene, the then president of Sri Lanka, was out to seek military solution to ethnic crisis. Furthermore, he also wanted to isolate India in the region by facilitating the strategic presence of the forces inimical to India's perceived security interests.

The Jayewardhene government utilized both normal diplomatic channels as well as special missions to secure military and political support. These missions emphasized the threat to Sri Lanka's unity and integrity posed by Tamil terrorism working with the support and encouragement of government and people in India. Also projected scenarios as were of a direct military invasion by India for the creation of an independent sovereign Tamil state. The achievements of these missions were many Sri Lankan government secured the assistance of the world famous Israeli intelligence agencies 'Mossad' and 'Shin Bet' to strengthen its own intelligence set-up and military training facilities.<sup>12</sup> Pakistan also promptly joined in helping Sri Lanka to deal with its ethnic

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11. S.D. Muni, 'Panges in Proximity: India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis', (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1993), p.52.

12. Ibid., p.53.

conflict. Though initial reports of Sri Lankan request for arms to Pakistan were denied, Pakistan contributed some amount to money towards relief assistance.

Sri Lanka also received sizeable and cheap military supplies from China and later from South Africa, USA, UK, through private arms dealers.

Three significant arrangements came to light with USA - firstly, visit of the U.S. naval ships for refuelling and crew-rest. Secondly, to renovate and expand refuelling facilities at the strategic harbour of Trincomalee, international contracts were invited and was awarded to a Singapore-based private consortium with suspected U.S. links. Thirdly, the most important and strategic deal between USA and Sri Lanka was concluded in Dec. 1983 when Voice of America (VOA) transmission facility was established with Sri Lankan government's permission. It was a kind of service which could serve as a high-tech outfit to monitor naval and land communications and movements in the region, including India. This facility could also able to beam high frequency messages to U.S. sub-marines deployed in the Indian Ocean region. Further, frequent visits by high level U.S. dignitaries, including the Defence Secretary and the Secretary of State, against the back ground of U.S. quest for bases in the strategic Indian Ocean areas, were seen as



going against India's security perceptions in the region.

Notable Sri Lanka's strategic relations with West was the defence pact with Britain. The training facilities were stepped up by British commandos to Sri Lankan army in order to combat terrorism in the Island.

But neither USA nor UK were coming forward in helping Sri Lankan government openly and directly with military assistance. One major cause of this might be White House became the chief advocate for building a positive cooperative relationship between the USA and India during early the 1980s. By 1983, the U.S. emerged as India's principal trading partner, outstripping the then Soviet Union. Thus, however, the USA had no desire to risk offending India's regional susceptibilities in Sri Lanka at the juncture when it faced a humiliating defeat in Vietnam war. "The direct U.S. intervention would have provoked India in taking more aggressive stand on ethnic situation which USA in fact wanted to avoid. Furthermore, USA also did find Sri Lankan fears of Indian military invasion on ethnic issue highly exaggerated and unrealistic."<sup>13</sup> Yet another hurdle to direct U.S. military assistance to Sri Lanka was the influence of the Tamil diaspora in USA, which was an

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13. Ibid., p.57.

influential group. In building up pressures on the Sri Lankan government the Tamil diaspora played an active role not only in the USA but throughout the world, particularly in the countries, giving aid to Sri Lanka. It mobilized human rights groups and created lobbies against Sri Lankan government.

Although there was a clear hesitation on the part of the USA to act directly militarily in Sri Lanka still India was agitated about its regional security concerns arising out of the Western strategic involvement in Sri Lanka. Because the possibility that this could form a part of the process of Sri Lanka's integration into the Western strategic structure of the Indian Ocean. India perceived it as an U.S. effort to evolve a strategic consensus in South Asia in the wake of the then Soviet Union intervention in Afganistan. India kept out of this consensus but Sri Lanka was an active participant.

The establishment of Central Command (CENTCOM) and proposals for setting up the Rapid Development Task Force, attached to this, newly raised command structure with Key base in Diego-Garcia created an impression that Sri Lanka was also being co-opted into of new Western strategic

structure of the region.<sup>14</sup>

India's concerns arising out of a involvement of Pakistan and China in Sri Lanka stood on a different footing. There was the perception of permanent adversarial relationship with these neighbours. The intensity of this adversarial relationship was heightened during the mid 1980s because of the suspected Pakistani involvement in Punjab and Kashmir. Again during mid 1986 the border issue assumed importance as a result of skirmishes in India's North-East sector, in the Sumdrongchu valley region. The growing Chinese desire to secure a naval reach to the Indian Ocean was also becoming a matter of deep concern to India. All this was sufficient to arouse India's concern.

#### **Ideological Challenge**

The ethnic violence in Sri Lanka posed a two-faced challenge to the ideological co-ordinates of the Indian state. On the one hand, the complete breakdown of ethnic harmony in Sri Lanka which threatened to spill-over and disrupt Indian social and ideological balance, particularly in Tamil Nadu. On the other hand, was the antithesis of this Sinhala hegemonic state, the demand for establishment of

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14. Ibid., p.58.

another sectarian and equally hegemonic state, the Tamil state, which was equally disruptive of the Indian state's ideological balance.

Consequent to the ideological challenge, the way out for India lay in firstly, folding back the adverse spill-over on India and restoring the democratic and secular attributes of the Sri Lankan state. Secondly, in diffusing the potential of a separate Tamil state by preserving the independence, unity and integrity of Sri Lanka. Thus, Indian policy responded to the developments of Sri Lanka within these two parameters. Lack of any immediate response by external powers to Sri Lanka's plea for help obviously left Sri Lanka hardly any options in dealing with its ethnic conflict without Indian involvement.

Indian's abiding interest in domestic developments in Sri Lanka is underlined by the presence of sizable number of stateless Tamils there. There was a spill-over of Sri Lankan violence in India. The violence had seriously affected both Indian nationals and estate Tamil workers of the Indian origin. India was concerned about the safety of the persons of Indian origin included those had been granted Indian citizenship but not yet repatriated due to various administrative and rehabilitation hurdles. Further the massive flow of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka into India put

great strain on the economic resources and administrative capabilities of Tamil Nadu government. Even the law and order situation in the state was adversely affected as Tamil Nadu became playground of drug traffickers, underworld dons. Thus, politics in Tamil Nadu was greatly affected due to Tamil Nadu's cultural linkages with Tamils of Sri Lanka.

#### **Tamil Nadu Factor**

Political response to the Sri Lankan ethnic crisis became inevitable with the competing groups of militants affiliating themselves with rival political parties in Tamil Nadu. Thus, the Sri Lankan issue necessarily became an important item on the political agenda of this sensitive Indian state. "While TELO had become an ally to the DMK led by M.Karunanidhi, the LTTE had chosen the then AIADMK and the Cheif Minister M.G. Ramachandran for patronage."<sup>15</sup> While the party in power played a cautious approach in projecting support for the Sri Lankan Tamils, the opposition took a more hawkish and militant posture. The AIADMK favoured a political and negotiated approach, avoiding any commitment to the demands for a separate Tamil state. It confined its support for Indian intervention to a diplomatic intervention.

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15. Times of India, New Delhi, 23 July, 1983.

The internationalisation of the Sri Lankan ethnic crisis in Tamil Nadu politics had a direct impact on the policy which Indian government was to adopt. With a background to Tamil separatism in Tamil Nadu, it could not be pushed to the background by setting up regional identities against national goals and priorities. Besides, the compulsions of power for the ruling party at the centre also dictated a careful nursing of its allies in Tamil Nadu, as the state accounted for 39 parliamentary seats. While Central Government tried to accommodate its ally in Tamil Nadu on the specificities of the regional issues, the ruling party in the state also avoided embarrassing the centre in the conduct of its foreign policy. It had even cooperated with centre in pursuing its foreign policy goals through the projection of regional issues.

Taking Tamil Nadu politics on the Indian approach towards the Sri Lankan ethnic issue, the Pan-Tamil connections emerged as a factor, which was not in control of either the state government or the Central Government in New Delhi. The DMK government conducted a signature campaign and collected ten million signatures to send to the UN requesting it to call upon the government of Sri Lanka to grant right of self-determination to Tamils. It also formed an association with the help of pro-Belam political parties

in the state to help Tamils in Sri Lanka. The DMK leader Karunanidhi presided over a six-kilometer walk against the deportation order of the official spokesman of TELO from Sri Lanka.

Further, outside countries also provided both financial and material support to the Tamil militant groups. As a result of which the rebel groups strengthened their bases in Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu. Thus, the most critical spill-over from Sri Lanka in India was the presence of Tamil militant groups in India. In this connection Sri Lanka maintained that India provided training and sanctuary to the Tamil militants of Sri Lanka in Tamil Nadu.<sup>16</sup> Thus the over all impact of this could be seen in the deteriorating law and order situation in Tamil Nadu and the intensification of party rivalries there.

#### India's Approach Under Mrs. Indira Gandhi:-

India's approach under Mrs. Gandhi could be traced under following heads: firstly, to reverse Sri Lanka's policy of cultivating extra-regional powers in Indian Ocean

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16. A.Sivarajah, 'Indo-Sri Lanka Relations and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis: The Tamil Nadu Factor,' in S.U.Kodikora and others (eds.), 'South Asian Strategic Issues: Sri Lankan Perspective,' (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1990), p.146.

zone which was perceived as a threat to India's immediate and long term security interests. Secondly, to persuade the Sri Lankan government to seek a negotiated political solution of the ethnic crisis within the framework of unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka but upon justice and equality for the Tamil minority. Thirdly, India had no support for the creation of a separate Tamil sovereign state. In pursuing these policies, there was no scope in Indian policy for a military intervention in Sri Lanka.

Mrs. Gandhi's policy operated at three levels. Firstly, it was the 'bilateral level', that of diplomatic relations between India and Sri Lanka. India offered its good offices for initiating direct talks between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil leadership within the framework of a 'united Sri Lanka'. G.Parthasarathy was sent to create a conducive atmosphere for the settlement of disputes. Mrs. Gandhi also succeeded in bringing both parties i.e. the Sri Lankan government and the TULF leaders to talk each other without any precondition and to consider any other reasonable alternative to Eelam offered by Sri Lankan side for a solution to the Tamil problem within the framework of unity and territorial integrity of the Island. As a result of G.Parthasarathy's effort and Jayewardhene's visit to New Delhi on the occasion of Commonwealth Summit devolution of



power was proposed through 'District Development Council'. They also incorporated provisions for the recognition of Tamil as a national language, proportional representation of ethnic minorities in the armed forces and police forces and asked for a national policy on land settlement which would not seek to alter the 'demographic balance' in ethnic terms. They further reiterated the objective of preserving Sri Lanka's 'unity and integrity'.

The second level concerned dealing with Tamil militancy in Tamil Nadu. This had two components; of expressing India's sympathies and support for the suffering of the Sri Lankan Tamils and containing and making use of the Tamil militant groups both in securing a reasonable political solution of the problems and preserving India's perceived interests. The ruling party in India actively joined the Tamil Nadu government's call for a general strike organised to protest against Sri Lankan ethnic crisis. Mrs. Gandhi also set up a Sri Lankan Relief Committee under her own guidance and with a contribution of one crore rupees for humanitarian relief. The second component i.e. to contain Tamil militants, was the most complicated and sensitive. In order to make Tamil movement seek a political and negotiated solution of their issues within the framework of unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, the militancy had to be

contained. An equally powerful reason for containing the Tamil militancy was the links of some militant groups with international organisations - in Libya, PLO, etc.. Such links were seen as direct sources of danger to India because the militant groups operating from Indian territory as a conduit of foreign arms, money and influence. Further, links with third parties weakened India's influence on militant groups and could reduce its manoeuvrability in facilitating a solution of Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis.<sup>17</sup> While Parthasarathy engaged in pursuing militant groups for finding an acceptable solution with Sri Lankan government; RAW, (Research and Analysis Wing) dealing with external intelligence, was asked to erode these groups external linkages and bring them under Indian influence. But actually the purpose behind the RAW's involvement was to gather information about movement of Western ships in port of Trincomalee with the help of Tamil militants.

The third level of Indian policy concerned international diplomacy. India drew attention of host governments towards the atrocities being perpetrated by the Sri Lankan armed forces on the Tamils. It also pleaded with

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17. Moral Singer, 'Ethnic Crisis: Delhi's Changing Role', Lanka Guardian, 15 November, 1985.

the aid donors of Sri Lanka to exercise influence on Colombo for a political settlement of ethnic issues. Again the mutual distrust and disenchantment between regimes of Jayewardhene and Mrs. Gandhi led to unhappy outcome of this negotiation. Parthasarathy was also not trusted as he himself a Tamil and was considered as partial to Tamils and a tough negotiator.

#### All Party Conference

On 18th May 1984 All Party Conference (APC) in which all the recognized political parties participated, including TULF and several Sinhala-Buddhist religious and non-political organisations called through Indian good office. The substantive issue before APC was devolution of power and the 'Parthasarathy formula'. However, the proposed Regional Council which would replace District Development Council and enjoy a fair degree of autonomy was opposed by Sinhala-Buddhists who were in no mood to concede anything beyond DDC. The Buddhists saw the very concept of regional council as India - inspired and the handi-work of Parthasarathy, himself a Tamil.<sup>18</sup> In the absence of President's support,

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18. P.Venkateswar Rao, "Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: India's Role and Perception", Asian Survey, vol. XXVIII. April 1988, p.423,

'Parthasarathy formula' came to a dead letter. As ethnic violence intensified on the Island, Sri Lankan government dissolved APC in December 1984.

One possible factor behind 'lack of will' on the part of the Sri Lankan government was the deep division within the cabinet on the nature of APC.

Indo-Sri Lankan relation deteriorated further as Sinhalese leaders exhibited growing impatience with India. They charged India with harbouring Tamil 'terrorists' in Tamil Nadu and a statement by Sri Lankan Prime Minister Premadasa in June 1984 that Tamil 'terrorists' could not have attacked Sri Lanka without New Delhi's complicity caused an uproar in India. The Sri Lankan media speculated that India was planning to intervene militarily. An Indira - Jayewardhene summit in June in New Delhi ended with both leaders sharply differed over the question of devolution of power. The Sinhalese believed that Mrs. Gandhi was acting under pressure from the Indian Tamils in Tamil Nadu.

It was true that policy makers in New Delhi were considerably influenced by political dynamics of Tamil Nadu in dealing with Sri Lankan ethnic problems. The inflow of thousands of refugees into India and the atrocities by Sri Lankan army against them aroused the passions of the Indian Tamils. AIADMK government in Tamil Nadu sufficiently

politicized the issue to make political mileage out of it and pressureise the central government to deal more firmly with Sri Lanka. As the Indian parliament was approaching for next election in 1985 and Congress party was in electoral alliance with AIADMK it could not give a lopsided view to this matter. The government, however, rejected the 'separate Eelam' and also the demand for military action against Sri Lanka. "Although there were reports that Tamil Nadu government provided material as well as financial support to Tamil Tigers and Tamil Nadu became a sanctuary for the Tigers, Mrs. Gandhi's strategy appeared to use the militants to harass Colombo only to extent of forcing it to reach an agreement acceptable to New Delhi."<sup>19</sup>

"It is, however, wrong to assume that Sri Lankan policy during this period was solely guided by Tamil Nadu politics. Though New Delhi sympathized with plight of the Sri Lankan Tamils and offered relief to refugees from the Island, a distinction was made between 'Indian perception' and 'Tamil perception'.<sup>20</sup> The Indian perception was more about the geo-political fallout of the ethnic crisis and need to prevent foreign involvements; security consideration weighed very

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19. K.Manoharan, "Sri Lankan Turmoil", Seminar, no.324, August 1986, p.35.

20. P. Venkateswar Rao, no.18, p.424.

heavily in it. But the Tamil perception was more direct involvement by India in Sri Lanka. This distinction made the situation worsened. However, Mrs. Gandhi's overall roll was positive but when it was getting momentum she was gunned down.

#### **Rajiv Gandhi Phase:**

The basic objectives of Indian policy towards the Sri Lankan issue as formulated under Mrs. Gandhi after July 1983 violence remained almost same for Rajiv Gandhi. There were, however, some tactical shifts that made significant thrust on the manner of pursuing these objectives.

After coming to power, Mr. Gandhi conveyed the Sri Lankan government about India's commitment to 'genuine and lasting friendship between two countries' indicating his shift in policy different from his mother. In terms of substance of his policy, he softened in the attitude towards Sri Lankan government and a consequent hardening of approach towards Tamil militants. This change was reflected in greater air and naval surveillance of the Polk Strait in co-operation with Sri Lankan navy, to curbe the militant traffic in arms and men and on the other hand, Sri Lankan

government agreed to keep its army under control.<sup>21</sup> Indian customs became more strict in confiscating arms cargo of Tamil militants, some cadres of militants were evacuated from their bases in Thanjavur. Above all, India conceded the priorities of the Sri Lankan government that any discussion of political issues should follow, rather than precede, to bring an end to the violence. According to Colombo circles, this did show a 'change of heart in New Delhi'.<sup>22</sup> New Delhi created a better climate by clamping down on militants bringing immense pressure on them to give up violence and negotiate. New Delhi also made it abundantly clear that it was opposed to an independent Tamil state and that a political solution should be sought within the frame work of a united Sri Lanka and also impressed upon the Sri Lankan government the need to grant greater regional autonomy to the Tamils. But India underlined that there was no way in which India could endorse the demand that any proposed Tamil units be given more powers than those enjoyed by a state in the Indian federation.<sup>23</sup>

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21. Ibid., p.426.

22. Mervyn de Silva and S.H. Venkatramani, "Sri Lanka : Hope on the Horizon", India Today, June 30, 1985.

23. Times of India, New Delhi, July 16, 1985.

### **The Thimpu Talks**

After Jayawardhene-Rajiv summit in New Delhi in June 1985, it paved the way for talks between two sides in a third country under India's good office. "The talk began in utmost secrecy, on July 8 in Thimpu, Bhutan. However, the Indian delegation was present but did not participate in the talk."<sup>24</sup> The Tamils demanded the creation of a single linguistic unit by merging the Tamil speaking areas of Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka, with a greater devolution of power, on the other hand, the Sri Lankan delegation rejected the four cardinal principles - Tamil nation, Tamil homeland, Tamil self-determination and fundamental rights to all Tamils in Sri Lanka. Thus, "this talk came to an abrupt end on 18th after Tamils walked out alleging that the government security forces killed 400 Tamil civilians."<sup>25</sup> Each side wanted to demonstrate that it was the other party which did not mean business; each sought legitimacy for its respective reliance on military method. After the talks were adjourned President Jayawardhene stated "Tamil problem was more a military problem and any military problem is to be

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24. P. Venkateshwar Rao, no.18, p.427.

25. Ibid., pp.427-428.



tackled militarily."<sup>26</sup> Worried about worsening situation, India made another bid to find a political solution.

#### **The Chidambaram Mission**

The Indian diplomatic shuttle led by the minister P.Chidambaram succeeded in committing the Sri Lankan government to the principle of a provincial council as the basic unit of devolution. At the 'Political Party Conference' (PPC) called in 1986 Jayawardhene announced that a provincial council with legislative and executive powers, would be created in the existing nine provinces and the President would appoint a Governor to head each province who would appoint a Chief Minister from the elected provincial council.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, agreement was reached on issues of law and order, judiciary and the devolution of powers to the provinces. But no consensus was reached on other 'key issues' such as land settlement and control over fishing harbours in Tamil areas. Sri Lankan government remained as firmly opposed as ever to the single linguistic unit.

The agreements collapsed when presented to Tamils as

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26. Mervyn de Silva and S.H. Venkatramani, "Sri Lanka : Tough Talk", India Today, 15 September, 1985.
  27. Jayawardhene in an Interview with Mervyn de Silva and S.H. Venkatramani, India Today, 15 December 1985.

'inadequate'. They also assured that no final settlement would be reached without consulting them. The LTTE insisted that "for any meaningful political settlement, the acceptance of an indivisible single region as the homeland of the Tamils as basic."<sup>28</sup>

The outright rejection of the Colombo proposals very much annoyed the Indian government, which felt that Tamil militants were approaching the matter of political solution with wholly negative attitude and with no concrete counter proposal of their own. There after government of India hardened its stand on LTTE. The immediate cause for the government's action against the militants was to create a better climate for forthcoming Rajiv-Jayawardhene meeting at SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit at Bangalore. "The Sri Lankan President offered to trifurcation the existing Eastern province into a Tamil majority Baticola province, a Sinhala - majority Trincomalee province and a Muslim majority Amaparai province. At Bangalore Sri Lankan side even offered Pravakaran, leader of LTTE, the Chief Ministership of Jaffna. The Indian response to the trifurcation plan was favourable but Tamils outrightly rejected it as 'seriously inadequate' and

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28. Frontline, 18 November 1988.

reiterated the indivisibility of the Tamil majority provinces."<sup>29</sup>

After the SAARC summit India took a middle path between Tamil insistence on the merger of the Northern and Eastern province and Sinhalese opposition to it. This was achieved in consensus that emerged between Sri Lanka and India on the 'December 19th proposals', in which Sri Lanka agreed to excise the Sinhala speaking electorate of Amparai from the Eastern province.

However, by the dawn of 1987, the ethnic conflict had deteriorated into a dangerous situation. Even before the Indian government had put the 'December 19th proposals' before Tamils, rumours were afloat that the Sri Lankan government was not very serious about the latest offer.<sup>30</sup> "In January 1, 1987 LTTE started carrying out its plan to take over the civil administration in North which was already under its military control. Its plan to recognise motor-vehicles, organize traffic police and open a secretariat was seen by Colombo as a 'unilateral declaration of independence.'<sup>31</sup> The Sri Lankan authorities imposed on

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29. P. Venkateswar Rao, no.18, p.429.

30. Indian Express, New Delhi, 15 January 1987.

31. The Hindu, Madras, 3,10, 11, February 1987.

ban on fuel and other essential commodities and also stepped up military action in North.

The worsening situation compelled India to express its concern and even issued a warning note to Sri Lanka to lift economic embargo of Jaffna and affirm its commitment to December 19th proposal. Sri Lanka's refusal to stop the military campaign against the Tamils and lift the economic blockade of Jaffna left India in dilemma. This resulting frustration led Mr. Gandhi to suspend India's mediation efforts in early Feb 1987. Indian intervention directly in June 1987, in the name of dropping relief supplies to beleaguered Jaffna; first, through relief boats under Indian Red Cross Flag (*operation poomalai*), then through air force planes (*'Operation Eagle'*) was the most decisive factor in putting a halt to the intense fighting. This led to the creation of a conclusive atmosphere that enabled the conclusion of July 1987 *'Indo-Sri Lanka Accord'* between India and Sri Lanka, for resolving the Island's ethnic crisis.

Ethnic conflict in any part of South Asia have always been viewed with concern by India. Almost all countries were once integral part of a single socio-cultural system of which India was the centre. Religion, language, ethnicity and common colonial experience are major forces that

transcend the territorial boundaries of South Asian nations and strongly influence intra-regional relations. As an Indo-centric region, serious ethnic upheavals in any country of South Asia are bound to have a spill-over effect in India. Historically and culturally the Tamils of India and Sri Lanka have felt close to each other and the Tamils of India become agitated over any event in Sri Lanka that affects the interests of their cousins across the Polk Strait.

The geopolitical location of Sri Lanka is also another important factor that compels India's anxiety over any destabilizing development in the Island. Ensuring peace and stability within the Indian Ocean region has been a major objective of India's foreign policy. The geo-political and socio-cultural composition of the region, therefore, compel India to conceive of itself as the "security manager of South Asia". India's role in Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis needs to be understood in this perspective.

Before discussing Indo-Sri Lankan agreement it may be pertinent to underline that the apparent success achieved by the Indian intervention is possibly in the context of favourable international atmosphere at the time.

## CHAPTER - IV

### INDO-SRI LANKA ACCORD AND ROLE OF THE IPKF

The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord was seen as opening at one stroke a new chapter in Sri Lanka's tortuous ethnic history. The Accord resting as it was on the basic premise of a commitment to Sri Lankan unity and integrity and also the legitimate Tamil aspirations was widely projected as a practical and honorable way of reviving confidence among the two major communities in the Island.

The politico-military strength of India and the refusal of any major foreign powers to come to Sri Lanka's rescue left the Island country with no option but to negate a political settlement to the Tamil problem on the basis of the December 19th proposals. Further, the growing military network of Sri Lankan army as well as Tamil militants in the Island could have implications for India's internal security in view of raging insurgency in Indian states like Punjab, Kashmir and North-Eastern states. Moreover, any open Indian military involvement on the side of the Tamil groups would have given greater legitimacy to Sri Lankan efforts to mobilize international support. So the direct intervention by India in the name of humanitarian assistance did appear more viable and less politically expensive.

India's relief-supplies intervention in Jaffna had four critical implications and these implications were led to developments towards the conclusion of the July 1987 agreement. Firstly, it decisively put the military solution as a non-option for both Tamil militants and the Sri Lankan government. Indian intervention was clearly intended to put a halt to Sri Lanka's military approach to resolve the ethnic crisis. Secondly, it exposed the limits of external support to Sri Lanka, particularly in the event of a determined Indian action. Endorsing Indian action USA called for understanding between India and Sri Lanka to channel humanitarian assistance to the Jaffna Tamils and also it felt Indian invasion of Sri Lanka on ethnic issue is an exaggeration. Rejecting the Sri Lankan claim violation of sovereignty by India, the U.S. statement said that sending refugees to India was also a violation of sovereignty.

However, the most encouraging support for Colombo in the wake of Indian intervention came from Pakistan. Pakistan offered all possible help in defence of Sri Lankan sovereignty and condemned the Indian action in strongest possible terms. Sri Lanka's efforts to get a SAARC resolution censuring India for intervention were blocked by India with reference to the SAARC charter which does not allow bilateral disputes to be raised in the regional

forum.<sup>1</sup> Thus, although Sri Lanka's South Asian neighbour stood by the Island Republic on the question of Indian intervention, being isolated in the international scene on the ethnic issue, Sri Lanka could not carry on the military campaign to resolve the Tamil problem.

The third implication was that of the Indian intervention in terms of Sri Lanka's internal politics and the resulting pressures on the Jayewardhene regime. The internal weaknesses and contradictions of the regime were intensified as a consequence of the blow given to the regime's legitimacy by the act of intervention. Again, it aroused Sinhalese national sensitivities by bringing their fear of an India-Tamil coalition nearer to reality.

The fourth implication of the intervention concerned India itself. The Indian action created compulsions for India to become a direct party in the Sri Lankan conflict.

Thus, the implications of Indian intervention were such that it created compulsions for both the Indians and the Sri Lankan government not only to bring ethnic conflict to an end through bilateral agreement but also compromise so as to accommodate each other's concerns and sensitivities. The

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1. S.D. Muni, 'Panges of Proximity: India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis', (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1993), p.99.



intervention also created compulsions for the Tamil militants to see their interests protected within the parameters of the compromise entered between New Delhi and Colombo. However, the agreement had been put across not only to the cabinet colleagues of Jayewardhene and those dealing with the relevant branches of administration, but also to the parliamentary wing of the ruling party. Therefore, it was an agreement between the Indian and Sri Lankan government but not between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayewardhene.

India's principal concern in Sri Lanka was to ensure the protection and promotion of legitimate Tamil interest within a united Sri Lanka. Accord was signed with this kind of attitude.

#### MAJOR POLITICAL EXCHANGES IN THE ACCORD

The agreement conceded 'the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka', acknowledging it as a "multi-ethnic and a multi-lingual plural society and each ethnic group has a distinct cultural and linguistic identity which has to be carefully nurtured."<sup>2</sup>

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2. Premdas and Samarasinghe, "Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict: The Indo-Lanka Peace Accord", Asian Survey, June 1988, p.678.

The agreement also conceded the idea of Tamil homeland i.e. the Northern and Eastern provinces are provisionally unified for approximately a year at the end of which a referendum in the Eastern province would determine whether it would remain in the merged unit.<sup>3</sup> It also recognized that as the Northern and Eastern Sri Lankan Tamil speaking people have been living together with other ethnic groups, the Sinhalese have also right to live there. It not only justified the land settlement and colonization policies pursued by Sri Lankan government in settling the Sinhalese in these areas but also gave legitimacy to such policies in future.

#### **Military Aspects of the Accord**

The Accord conceded the cessation of hostilities, bring the promise of peace to a war-weary population. It was stipulated that both sides would desist from military activities within 48 hours of the signing of the Accord. India also undertook to prevent the continued use of its territory as a base from which to launch military operations into Sri Lanka and it agreed to patrol the Polk Strait

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3. Ibid., p.679.

jointly with the Sri Lankan navy to intercept the flow of weapons from South India to Jaffna by Tamil militants.

#### **Diplomatic Aspects of the Accord**

The Accord also embodied exchanges with respect to the external relations and diplomatic requirements of both Sri Lanka and India. The Trincomalee or any other port in Sri Lanka would not be made available for military use for any country in a manner prejudicial to India's interest. The work of restoring and operating the Trincomalee oil tank farm would be undertaken as a joint venture between India and Sri Lanka. In addition, Indian personnel would participate in the anticipated project to restore the Trincomalee oil tank. Secondly, to review and monitor the implementation of the Accord a joint consultative body composed of Sri Lankan and Indian staff would be established.

The Indo-Sri Lanka joint economic committee was also revived after a five-year gap and India had promised Sri Lanka US \$ 40 million in loans and grants to finance imports from India.

### **Domestic Politics of the Accord**

The Tamil language was recognized as one of the official languages of Sri Lanka. The accord said 'the official language of Sri Lanka shall be Sinhala. Tamil and English will also be official languages.<sup>4</sup>' So far as Sri Lankan economy was concerned it was expected after the Accord that, a war free economy would again benefit from tourism and continued assistance from Sri Lanka's consortium of aid donors. Accord was expected to set the stage for a return to economic and political normalcy, an environment in which the ruling party felt it could maximize its electoral aspects.

### **India's Security Concern in the Accord**

The other accommodation made in the Accord was the India's security concern. An agreement was reached by both governments that the presence of foreign military and intelligence personnel would not prejudice Indo-Sri Lanka relations. Sri Lankan government also undertook to review its agreement with foreign broadcasting organisations to ensure India that they were to be used solely as public broadcasting facilities and not for any military or

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4. 'Indo-Sri Lanka Accord', Strategic Digest, September, 1987, pp.1756-57.

intelligence purposes. The Sri Lankan government itself accepted that the major bone of contention between Sri Lanka and India was offer of Trincomalee oil tanks to an American, Singapore firm, the VOA, the presence of Israel intelligence agency and the training of soldiers in Pakistan. Thus, Sri Lanka's accommodation of India's security concerns was not the direct result of the Indian pressure that came with 'air drop' intervention.<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, in the spirit of which Sri Lanka accommodated India's concerns, India agreed to deport all Sri Lankan citizens who were found to be engaging in terrorist activities or advocating separatism or secessionism. India's obligation to curb the activities of the Sri Lankan Tamils were not confined to Indian territory but extended even to Sri Lankan territory with regard to implementation of the agreement.

The following conditions were also accommodated in the agreement. "Firstly, India would take all necessary steps to ensure that Indian territory is not used for activities prejudicial to unity and sovereignty of Sri Lanka. Secondly, Indian coast guard would help Sri Lankan navy to prevent Tamil militant activities from affecting Sri Lanka. Thirdly,

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5. S.D. Muni, no.1, p.101.

if Sri Lankan government seeks Indian military assistance to implement these proposals, it will cooperate. Fourthly, the government of India will cooperate in repatriation from Sri Lanka of Indian citizens to India, with the repatriation of Sri Lankan refugees from Tamil Nadu. Fifthly, India will cooperate Sri Lankan government in ensuring safety and security of all communities inhabiting the Northern and Eastern provinces. Lastly, India also agreed to provide military training facilities for Sri Lankan security forces and in turn Sri Lankan government agreed to lift emergency regulations, grant amnesty to the militants and help in their rehabilitation."<sup>6</sup>

All these obligations made direct Indian participation in the agreement for resolving the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka. LTTE, on the other hand, obtained assurance from Indian Prime Minister that the security of the Tamils was to be entrusted to the Indian Peace Keeping Force. Sri Lanka on its part was equally keen to give India charge of security situation in the North-East so that Sri Lankan forces could be employed in Southern parts of Island to meet the challenges posed by the JVP insurgency.

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6. Premdas and Samarasinghe, "Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict: the Indo-Sri Lanka 'Accord'", Asian Survey, vol.xxvii, June 1988.

However, the Tamils had serious doubts on the 'homeland' aspect as it was unsatisfactory to them because of all the toning-down done by the Sri Lankan government.<sup>7</sup> There was of course, no acceptance of the right to self-determination, in conformity with the recognition of Sri Lanka's unity and integrity. "It was ironic, however, that neither the Tamil Tigers nor any other Tamil political organisations were party to the agreement. The agreement was signed without consulting the Tamils whose problem they were solving."<sup>8</sup> Tamils had serious doubts whether the merger of North-Eastern provinces would be done as President had declared that this merger was a temporary measure.

There was also an additional agreement signed between Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewardhene on 7th Nov. 1987, promising that the devaluation package would be further improved upon by Sri Lankan government in consultation with government of India.

#### **Implementation of the Accord**

The agreement did attempt to address all the relevant aspects of the ethnic problems of Sri Lanka and tried to

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7. S.D. Muni, no. 1, p.110.

8. S.K. Hennayake, "Peace Accord and Tamils in Sri Lanka", Asian Survey, vol.29, April 1989, p.407.

find answers. It sought to restore the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-racial character of Sri Lankan society and reiterate its unity and territorial integrity. It tried to meet the demands of Tamil aspirations and also accommodated the security interests and susceptibilities of the Sri Lankan government. As for India, it secured accommodation of its perceived security concerns and opened up the prospects of Tamil refugees returning to Sri Lanka. Above all, the agreement was compatible with India's ideological coordinates in the region. It served to reinforce India's credentials as an involved and indispensable actor striving to promote peace and security in South Asia.<sup>9</sup> The agreement also received widespread endorsement internationally. Some of India's neighbours expressed reservations on the provision of placing Indian troops in Sri Lanka, but this was accepted in view of the fact that this was done in response to the request of the Sri Lankan government.

But, there was no consensus in Sri Lanka on the provisions of the agreement or even on how to deal with the Tamil issues. Thus, the agreement did invite opposition and protest from various political parties as well as from sections of military and bureaucracy. The opposition from

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9. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 5th September 1987.



the military was evident in the attack on the Indian Prime Minister, when he was receiving guard of honour. To the JVP, it was troublesome, since the Sri Lankan forces were to be released from North and East to confront them in South. The political climate created by this opposition also made some members of the Jayewardhene cabinet adopt tactical postures to distance themselves from the agreement.<sup>10</sup>

#### **Role of IPKF**

The provision for placing Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka, as intended in the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement, made the task more complex and difficult for it in a civil strife area. Further, the way India started approaching implementation of the agreement by making compromise outside the scope of the agreement made the situation more complicated. The deal struck between Rajiv Gandhi and LTTE leader Pravakaran in New Delhi, when Pravakaran was not only promised money and political dominance but also retention of substantial quantities of arms for personal security of the LTTE cadres. Further, the

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10. Shelton U.Kodikora, 'The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987 : Retrospect', in Shelton U. Kodikora and others (eds.), 'South Asian Strategic Issues: Sri Lankan Perspectives', (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1990), p.167.

government of India promised LTTE to surrender their arms only to India not to the Sri Lankan authorities. It was perhaps due to this tacit understanding that India committed itself to the surrender of arms within 72 hours of the cessation of hostilities. The question of arms surrender was so sensitive and fragile that its implementation almost unavoidably ran into difficulties.

#### **The Confusion**

The IPKF mission in Sri Lanka was inherently complex and unusual. Added to this, India's complete in-experience as peace keeper in a civil strife neighbouring country made the situation more complex. True, India had considerable experience in peace-keeping role as in Indo-China, Korea, and Congo crisis but in all these cases Indian contingent was a part of a multinational force and derived its legitimacy from UN resolutions. In the case of Sri Lanka, however, India's peace keeping role emerged essentially from a bilateral agreement. Further, on the question of command structure of the forces created confusion which was not defined in the agreement. This confusion resulted essentially from the lack of planning behind provisions of

IPKF.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the confusion about the command structure, the very provision of the IPKF in the agreement to be neutral and impartial for the smooth functioning and success was biased against the Tamil militants as it was meant to help the Sri Lankan government in disarming the militants. However, the IPKF initially tried to play its role as carefully and impartially as possible. This became possible because India had secured assurances from the LTTE for cooperation in the process of the surrender of arms. But the real problem was of precise knowledge about the location and quantity of arms and ammunitions of LTTE.

#### **The Changing Role of IPKF**

The situation changed abruptly in October 1987 when extensive fighting was resumed between LTTE and Sri Lankan forces. The LTTE leadership blamed India for these clashes and threatened to launch agitation against the IPKF. As a reaction to the LTTE's changing stance and non-cooperation with the IPKF, the Indian Navy put a blockade around the North and the East of the Island, but it failed to restrict LTTE's movements. Strong order was given to IPKF for destruction of the LTTE's communication network and raids to

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11. Karim and Bhaduri, 'The Sri Lankan Crisis', (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1990), p.9.

be conducted on LTTE strongholds to recover arms and ammunitions. Further, the 'fast unto death' by the LTTE leader Thileepan in Eastern province and the fast ended in death created a highly volatile situation in Jaffna. However, the understanding between Indian High Commissioner and Pravakaran after the death of a LTTE leader had led down composition of interim Administrative Council. But the differences between LTTE and the Indian High Commissioner came to the forefront on the question of the appointment of the Chief Administrator for this Council. The things were brought to a boil when Sri Lankan Navy arrested 17 LTTE men coming from Tamil Nadu coast in a boat full of arms. When security forces insisted to take them to Colombo, it was strongly opposed by LTTE. As the matter became tense, Indian government tried to intervene in the matter and tried to persuade the Sri Lankan President to leave the militants. But due to heavy pressure from cabinet, Jayewardhene avoided India's suggestion and this led to the suicide of 12 out of 17 LTTE cadres. This proved to be a crucial point for change in the course of the Agreement's implementation. The suicide of LTTE cadres resulted in the LTTE restarting armed hostilities. The ethnic violence between the Tamils and Sinhalese did spread rapidly in Eastern province where Sri Lankan and Indian forces were sent. As IPKF was in charge of

maintaining peace and security in Sri Lanka, pressure mounted on the IPKF to put an end to the violence in Eastern provinces. At this time Sri Lankan President also declared that either IPKF should act swiftly or should quit Sri Lanka. As India could not have decided to pull back to IPKF, the new role began for the IPKF; to confront the LTTE. The IPKF was sent to Sri Lanka with considerable goodwill and sympathy for LTTE but LTTE on its own was looking forward for a showdown and direct clash with IPKF.

The Indian forces were sent to Sri Lanka for the implementation of the Agreement. "Its presence and operation in Sri Lanka was a part of the Indian pressure on the Sri Lankan government to censure safety, security and legitimate aspirations of the Sri Lankan Tamils. But neither of the two contending parties - LTTE or the government - ever accepted or appreciated the varied dimensions of the IPKF role."<sup>12</sup> While LTTE grumbled about the cessation of hostilities and disarming them, the Sri Lankan government disapproved of the IPKF's relevance and India's say on matters related to security of Tamils and devolution of power to them. Thus, the common opposition to IPKF with LTTE as well as Sri

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12. S.D. Muni, no.1, p.133.

Lankan government eventually brought them closer to sabotage IPKF operation.<sup>13</sup>

True, IPKF was placed in Sri Lanka on the invitation of the President of Sri Lanka. But having invited the IPKF, the President would ask it to withdraw even before completing the purpose, was not envisaged by anybody. Thus, these developments led to the transformation of the role of IPKF from Peace-keepers to a fighting force.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Immediate Problems of Implementation of the Accord**

The troops were given red-carpet welcome with high expectations on the part of the Tamils for a return to the happy days of the pre-77 era. The city of Jaffna quickly became the hub of activities. But it was ironic that all the parties had competing and contrasting interests, hopes and expectations. It was, therefore, impossible for the agreement to be implemented in such a way to satisfy all parties and bring about a fragile peace. Secondly, the sudden massive shift of allegiance of the Tamil mass population in the North towards Indian army irritated the Tigers. They felt that all the sacrifices they had made up

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13. Ibid., p.135.

14. Ibid., p.136.

until were of no value. It was a public humiliation for them to surrender arms and accept the territorial integrity of the Island, for which they were fighting for. In order to win back the loyalty of the ordinary Tamil people and to discredit the Indian troops, the 'Tigers' initiated several fights with Indian troops. As a strategy adopted by 'Tigers', they sacrificed their lives to convince the Tamil people as Indian troops were anti-Tamils.

So far as IPKF was concerned, it failed to disarm LTTE within 72 hours of signing the Accord. Rather than the violence continued unabated between the two communities. The failure to restore peace quickly had put the Accord at risk. The pro-Sri Lankan Tamil lobby in New Delhi and especially in Tamil Nadu did not want Indian troops to defeat LTTE. Further, the rising casualty figures among Indian troops was also drawing increasing criticism as were escalating economic costs of the military engagement.

### **IPKF Operations**

The out break of ethnic violence transformed the role of the IPKF as fighting force which was to ensure cessation of hostilities and to force the Tamil militants to surrender arms. Once IPKF decided to force LTTE to surrender arms open conflict between them became inevitable. In this conflict,

there was no scope for the IPKF to be neutral between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE, nor could it remain only a restraining force and avoid fighting.<sup>15</sup>

The IPKF fight against LTTE was carried out in three major operations, code-named 'Operation Pawan', 'Operation Checkmate' and 'Operation Toofan'. Between 'Operation Pawan' and 'Checkmate', two other smaller but tactically significant operations, 'Vajra' and 'Virat-Trishul', were also taken. All these were aimed at neutralizing the LTTE in the Northern province. For the same purpose in the East, operation 'Tulip Bloom' and 'Sword Edge' were carried out.

#### **Operation Pawan**

It was first assaulted to dislodge the LTTE from Jaffna. This was the most important and costly campaign in terms of time taken and casualties suffered by IPKF. In order to minimize the civilian Tamil casualties IPKF was not able to use air power.

'Operation Vajra' was aimed at combing the areas to get LTTE leader Pravakaran dead or alive. Although this operation succeeded in destroying important LTTE

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15. Ibid., p.142.



headquarters and camps, but Pravakaran succeeded in dodging the IPKF.

'Operation Trisul' which was launched in March 1987 to neutralize any remaining hideouts of the LTTE and push them from urban areas to the jungle.

#### **Operation Checkmate**

It was the culmination of 'Operation Vajra' and 'Trisul' that led to the launching of the 'Operation Checkmate'. Its aim was to push the militants and their leadership away from the populated areas, as a result of 'Checkmate' and to create necessary condition for holding elections, for the Provincial Assembly as well as for Presidency.

#### **Operation Toofan**

The last major operation IPKF undertook was Toofan. It started around June 1989, against the backdrop of the demands of new Sri Lankan President Premadasa for withdrawal of IPKF by the end of July 1989 and opening of the negotiation between Sri Lankan government and LTTE. It aimed at storming remaining strongholds of the LTTE, so as to weaken it as much as possible. New battalions or jungle-trained commandos were called in from India for this

operation. As the operation advanced, political pressure from Colombo to stop it also increased. The LTTE and Sri Lankan government then declared a formal cessation of hostilities, which removed the rationale of IPKF operations provided in the agreement.

#### **Constraints of IPKF Operations**

The military operations of the IPKF were conducted under various constraints. Firstly, lack of clear cut politico-military aim led to ad-hocism, dithering and pure confusion. The sudden transformation of the peace keeping role of IPKF to a fighting force was responsible for creating considerable confusion and ambiguity about its real mission in the minds of IPKF rank and file. Confusion became further confounded, as various diverse statements were made by political and military superiors on how to deal with LTTE.

The second constraint was terrain and logistics. The IPKF was not familiar with all the terrain, particularly the long stretches of dense forests and the strategic lagoons. Intimate knowledge of the topography of the region gave a clear advantage to LTTE.<sup>16</sup> The landmines which proved most

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16. Ibid., p.143.

effective and devastating weapon in the militant's armory, inflicting a large scale casualties on the IPKF. The problem of logistic became harder in the absence of adequate and reliable advance intelligence.<sup>17</sup> The performance of RAW came under severe criticism. "RAW's estimate concerning LTTE's arms and strength was an important factor behind calculation of 72-hour time for surrender of arms by LTTE. These estimates proved totally unrealistic. These incorrect estimates forced the IPKF advances during 'operation pawan' to be very slow, costly in terms of casualties."<sup>18</sup>

The third and most important constraint on IPKF operation involved human factor; the tremendous social support enjoyed by LTTE in North particularly. This gave the LTTE militants 'fish in water' advantage and made IPKF task correspondingly more difficult. The extensive popular support for the LTTE in the area also gave it a significant propaganda, enabling LTTE to exaggerated allegation and spread them fast and far regarding the so-called excesses of the IPKF. Further, the inability of the IPKF soldiers to distinguish Tamil civilians and militants, their

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17. The Hindu, Madras, May 27, 1988.

18. Karim and Bhaduri, 'The Sri Lankan Crisis', (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1990), p.141.

inexperience with the Sri Lankan landscape and urban guerrilla warfare and also language barrier increased the difficulties faced by the Indian forces. The IPKF's search and seizure operations further alienated the local population and brought them under public criticism.

The IPKF also did some welfare activities but all this was too late to regain the confidence of the local people.

### **Achievements**

The performances of IPKF should not be assessed within the framework of a peace keeping assignment but as a force that was assigned the task of helping in implementing the agreement. In that sense, the IPKF did prove to be a decisive factor in bring about a cessation of hostilities between LTTE and Sri Lankan government. It was, however, public knowledge that since beginning of the secret talks between the LTTE and a section of the Sri Lankan security establishment in Feb. 1988, there had existed effective linkage and liaison between two.<sup>19</sup> There was allegations by EPRLF, that in order to sabotage IPKF operations, the Sri Lankan armed forces themselves supplied large quantities of arms to the LTTE. Thus, it was clear that the IPKF could not

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19. The Hindu, Madras, 17 Feb. 1989.

disarm the LTTE from the very beginning. However, a controversy developed during the final phase of IPKF operations regarding rearming of non-LTTE groups and raising a new force to be called Tamil National Army. The IPKF and the Indian official denied it.

One of the notable achievements of IPKF operation was the creation of conditions in Sri Lanka enabling the Tamil refugees within Sri Lanka as well as in India's Tamil Nadu state to start returning to their homes. The slow pace of the return of Tamil refugees from India to Sri Lanka was due to LTTE insurgency and lack of adequate facilities for the security and rehabilitation of these refugees in Sri Lanka. There refugees were also helped by the IPKF in their rehabilitation and resettlement.<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, restoration of law and order in the North-Eastern province led to reactivization of democratic political process throughout the Island. The high mark in reactivizing the democratic process came with the successful holding of three elections, beginning with Provincial Council for North-East region in 1988 November, Presidential and Parliamentary election in December 1988 and March 1989 respectively.

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20. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 31 May 1989.

Thirdly, IPKF protection that helped the Presidential and Parliamentary candidates to canvass and mobilize support for themselves. Free and fair elections under IPKF supervision was endorsed world wide. This underlined the significance of the IPKF presence in Sri Lanka as a source of support for reactivizing its democratic process. It also exposed the opportunistic and unethical approach taken by the Premadasa administration on the question of IPKF withdrawal. As a most effective demonstration of the positive role of the IPKF in Sri Lanka - about 10 weeks after its complete withdrawal the Tamil areas were once again plunged into conflict, chaos and complete disorder.

Thus, the IPKF back-up for Sri Lanka's internal security by means of containing the Tamil militants challenge and providing support for the Sri Lankan armed forces under the provisions of the Agreement proved crucial for Sri Lanka. This indirectly gave an important cushion to Sri Lanka's military power and its war-torn economy. It, of course, preserved unity and territorial integrity of the Island by fighting the separatist challenges, in the terms stipulated by the Agreement.

#### **Costs of IPKF**

IPKF had to pay heavy price during its operation in Sri Lanka. It alone suffered about 1200 dead and around 2500

injured. Such a high causality figure did cast a demoralizing spell on the force and was considered unacceptable. The financial costs of IPKF operations were officially estimated at more than 299.12 crores in addition to salaries and allowances of these soldiers. Other estimates taking everything into account, compute a figure more than ten times higher to this.

It remained in record that IPKF did not manage to get the LTTE to agree to surrender of arms and acceptance of July agreement. But whatever success achieved by IPKF in this respect was marred by the compulsions of political dynamics in Sri Lanka. However, IPKF played positive role in Sri Lanka. It in-fact contributed to bringing various sources of violence to an end.

#### Withdrawal of IPKF

IPKF in fact began its withdrawal process as early as June 1988 when the then Indian Defence Minister K.C. Pant was in Sri Lanka. That was however a token withdrawal. But in June 1989, President Premadasa demanded the withdrawal of IPKF. It ended in which Indian High Commissioner Mr. Laxman Lal Malhotra and Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary B. Tilakaratne signed a communique setting out a framework under which

Indian force would leave the Island by December 31st 1989.<sup>21</sup> On September 20, the IPKF suspended its two years old operations against LTTE.

### **An Appraisal**

Looking at the totality of the Indian involvement in Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis since 1983, the peace-keeping role should be seen as a continuation and logical culmination of India's peacemaking role i.e. one of the third-party mediation. There had been a clear shift from mediation to peace-keeping, the later being an inevitable part of the obligation to enforce the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987, arrived at following a long-drawn and difficult mediation process.

While undertaking the role of mediation in Sri Lanka, India was not an uninterested or unaffected party. All third-party mediators have their specific motives and seek specific material or rewards. "India's objectives and interests underlying its mediatory role in Sri Lanka ranged from sublime to the obtuse, involving the narrow objectives of the ruling Congress party to consolidate its alliance with the regional AIADMK to perpetuate its influence in

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21. Indian Express, New Delhi, 1st June, 1989.



Tamil Nadu ; the stalling of Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka and its undesirable consequences in India; as well as keeping western powers influence away from Sri Lanka and the Indian subcontinent as a whole."<sup>22</sup> No less important for India was the objective of ensuring and strengthening peace and stability in its neighbourhood because the conflicts like the one in Sri Lanka, had serious spill-over effect for India itself.

The driving force behind third-party mediation in Sri Lanka was the 'leverage' that India's capabilities, its geo-strategic location and its ethnic (Tamil) identity gave it in relation to the nature and area of conflict.<sup>23</sup> With regard to India's peace making role in Sri Lanka, the potential of Indian leverage vis-a-vis the Tamil militant groups lay in the fact that they were based in India and enjoyed political and material support for their struggle there. To translate this potential leverage into an active instrument of policy, the government of India established linkages and channels of interaction with Tamil militant groups at various level. India's moves through its political, bureaucratic and intelligence agencies to

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22. S.D. Muni, no.1, p.166.

23. Ibid., p.167.

multiply the numbers of the militant groups and create and exploit their mutual internecine contradictions were also aimed at enhancing and activating the leverage.<sup>24</sup> India's geographical proximity to the scene of conflict, its tremendous military and other capabilities, its political influences on opposition parties in Sri Lanka and its willingness to exercise its influence on the outcome of the ethnic conflict added to the Indian government's leverage in relation to Colombo.

All these attempts led to the facilitation of the mediation process begun by India's senior diplomat G. Parthasarathy. In order to enhance their leverage with the Sri Lankan government, Indian leaders at all levels repeatedly asserted that they had no support for the separatist Eelam objective of the Tamil militants. India's leverage and peace-making effort subsequently enhanced by two other developments. Firstly, it was the removal of Mrs. Gandhi from the scene in 1984 and the shift of USA position on the Sri Lankan question i.e. USA endorsed India's effort and persuade Sri Lanka to co-operate with these efforts to find a viable and mutually acceptable solution. Secondly, an important aspect of India's leverage mediation was that no

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24. Ibid., p.169.

real attempt was made to bring the combatant face to face with each other and make them resolve the issues involved in their conflict. The reluctance of the two parties to face each other also frustrated India's effort to get them face to face. This reluctance contributed to India's decision to become a party to the July 1987 Agreement.

After 1987 Agreement India's peace-making role was transformed to a peace-keeping role. India intervened in 1987 under pretext of dropping relief supplies to Jaffna, which came under Sri Lankan forces attack. This mediation was only for political solution of the conflict. IPKF intervened in Sri Lanka only because it was a part of an Agreement. But the lacunas of Agreement was that there was neither a clear definition nor any detailed guidelines for the use of force by India in Sri Lanka.

The Tamils realized that there was a significant difference between what they expected from India and what they obtained. Indian troops were seen as aliens and enemies in Sri Lanka. There were several unintended consequences of Indian action. Firstly, for the first time Tamils in co-operation with Sri Lankan army fought against IPKF. Secondly, the Tamils in Sri Lanka came to realize that the bond between them and Tamils in Tamil Nadu was not as strong as they had previously assumed, although they continued to

sympathize with Tamils of Sri Lanka. Tamil Nadu became increasingly skeptical of the programmes of the Tamil separatist guerrillas. Because the separatist guerrillas had taken the upper hand in Tamil politics in Sri Lanka, having virtually liquidated the democratic political parties, Tamil Nadu exercised caution in dealing with separatists.

So far as Indo-Sri Lanka Accord is concerned, it is signed due to some practical and symbolic issues that pushed Sri Lanka into ethnic violence like, representation, language, religion, land settlement, standardization of education. Apart from representation, these issues emerged in the post independence period. In the Accord, the representation stands as the most significant area of Sri Lankan concession. But the system of provincial government can be dismantled relatively easily by the national legislature, so far as the vagaries of Sri Lankan politics is concerned. Again while provincial-level representation has been addressed, national level representation remains problematic. This is clearly an important lacuna of the Accord. In the area of language, the Accord explicitly does state that there would be three national languages - Sinhala, Tamil and English. In some ways this is too much and too late. Land settlement has been a burning issue in ethnic conflict. Under the Accord's nurturing outlook, land

policy should have been terminated. Discrimination in job, admission has been a major grievance of Tamils. The Accord, by virtue of decentralizing the policy, virtually turn over many employment opportunities to provincial council, and that is a major reason why the Tamils want two provinces under their control. The combined province would provide land, job, and other opportunities to Tamils. At national level, the Accord does not provide for any guarantee of Tamil proportional representation especially with regard to public service and universities etc. Last but not least, the Accord does not offer a formula for a solution.

India's effort to find out a political solution to Sri-Lanka's ethnic crisis, no doubt, a sincere effort. The accord can be viewed as a measure that served at least temporarily, to arrest the hemorrhage of resources and loss of life from the war. It should be viewed as a first step in general direction forward a more durable peace. It has attended certain short-term issues, leaving on the agenda many of the underlying longterm problems. The terms of the accord project both solution and problems. In this sense, it has to be seen as a dynamic instrument, clearing away some issues and creating others, a living document always available for amendment and adjustment and not a final static writ unrealistically addressing a fluid situation.

## CHAPTER-V

### CONCLUSION

Ethnic conflicts within countries in South Asia generate internal pressures and pulls which affect inter-state relations within the region. Moreover, "ethnic turbulence in multi-ethnic countries of South Asia, such as Sri Lanka, tend to lead to an Indo-centric ethnic contiguity owing to an Indian diaspora; and domestic ethnic conflicts in South Asia, in Sri Lanka, India or Bangladesh, consequently have a fall-out effect across state boundaries."<sup>1</sup> The Tamils in Sri Lanka has tended to attract support from contiguous ethnic group in Tamil Nadu and thereby this domestic ethnic conflict develops a cross border dimension. Presence of Indian expatriates in Sri Lanka additionally complicates the tans-border character of ethnic conflict. The Sri Lankan internal ethnic conflict invites attention of extra-regional and intra-regional powers, either in a noticeable or latent conflictual state with India.

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1. Bertram E.S. Bastiampilli, 'Ethnic Conflict in South Asia and Inter-State Relations Especially in Relation to Sri Lanka', in S.U. Kodikora and others (eds.), 'South Asian Strategic Issues: Sri Lankan Perspective', (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1990), p.82.

Ethnic distinctiveness into 'two-nations' partly explains partition of India, emergence of Bangladesh and the Sri Lankan separatist movement too becomes intelligible on an ethnic basis. These illustrate that in almost every South Asian country there has been ethnic difference and strife.

The specter of internal colonialism alone can not explain ethnic violence either in Sri Lanka or in the other states. Further, no single universally valid explanation for eruption of such ethnic conflicts in South Asia can be advanced. Moreover, virtually, all ethnic conflicts have not necessarily provoked inter-state interaction.

Sri Lankan ethnic crisis has attracted concern partly because of the socio-cultural interaction between Tamils of Sri Lanka and Tamils across the Palk Strait. This has enhanced creating the singularly complex situation by developing a minority psyche which aggravate the Sri Lankan ethnic strife. The divergent racial-religious-linguistic congruence of the two communities of Sinhalese and Tamils is further accentuated by a territorial factor.

Conflict over land is a regular feature of separatist struggles. Population growth and resulting pressure on the land in Sri Lanka provide the impetus for the movement of settlers into the dry zone - a consequence of which has been considerable ethnic change in the North and East. The Sri

Lankan Tamils' relationship to territory distinguishes the circumstances of that community from those of the other ethnic minorities - who do not possess a territory of clear numerical predominance and long standing historical habitation. Sri Lankan Tamil political leaders have viewed the changes in the ethnic composition of the North and East as threatening the integrity of the community's traditional homeland and thus, endangering the existence of the Sri Lankan Tamils as a distinct national community within the Island. Presentation of the Tamil homeland has become the central and highly emotional dimension of the frequently violent political contest being waged of champions of the community in the Island republic.

Inevitably, along with such domestic factors that has influenced the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, external forces have played a critical role in aggravating the conflict. Sri Lanka is skillful enough to receive assistance from Israel in spite of an anti-Israel Muslim minority with and Sri Lanka's pro-PLO and pro-Arab stand on Israel-Arab conflict. Interestingly Sri Lanka has flattered with Pakistan and Israel at the same time in receiving aid for suppressing Tamil militants; a phenomenon which is unusual in international politics.



Another element that has exacerbated unsavoury inter-state relations emerging out of the ethnic conflicts and their cross-border implications has been South Asian expatriates living in West. These expatriates have internationalized ethnic conflicts by accusing ruling governments of denying human rights to affected ethnic minorities and have advantageously exploited inter-state conflicts in South Asia.

The conflict of ethnic minorities with ruling establishments in South Asia have not only accounted for conflict between the militant ethnic minority and the centre within a country, but the conflicts spill-over national boundaries and provoke inter-state problems often acrimonious in nature. The ethnic conflicts within South Asian countries are serious problems facing those countries to which these conflicts have posed insoluble internal problems, halted economic advances and rent the social fabric. To worsen the position, ethnic conflict within a state often endanger inter-state relation.

Prevalence of extra-regional linkages owing to migration, shared ideas and ideologies, religions and India's pivotal role in the dispersion of civilization among South Asian countries, have accounted for the rise of interstate relations springing from ethnic conflicts which

would otherwise have remained internal to a state.<sup>2</sup> The ancestry of major ethnic groups in South Asian countries, their religions and languages have been India-derived. Moreover, migration during the colonial period into Sri Lanka has augmented an Indian element whenever ethnic conflicts erupt.

The ethnic problem in Sri Lanka has an essentially Indian dimension in the contact of close emotional bonds in Tamil Nadu. Again the strategic location of Sri Lanka influences the India's security in South Asian region. Thus, except Tamil Nadu factor, the location factor of Sri Lanka also influences Indo-Sri Lanka relation in the region as Sri Lanka is hardly 20 miles away from the Southern tip of the Indian peninsula.

From the days of Jawaharlal Nehru, all most all the Prime Ministers, have assured Sri Lanka that India has no intention to harm the sovereignty and integrity of Sri Lanka and try to keep the Sri Lankan regimes away from fear psychosis of danger from the big neighbour.

India and Sri Lanka have been members of Commonwealth and also been members of the non-aligned movement. Both of them take common view on many international issues, i.e.,

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2. Ibid., p.85.

question of Indonesian independence, Suez crisis, etc. They have also shared common view on national liberation of colonies, disarmament and resistance to regional military pact. Both are members of the Colombo Powers, which, in 1954 consider Indo-Chinese problem and also sponsor the Bandung Conference, where the policy of five principles (Panchasil) is adopted. India and Sri Lanka share common outlook on various issues like non-alignment and declaration of Indian Ocean as zone of peace. Both countries realize the Great Powers' activity as a threat to the peace and integrity of littoral, hinterland and Island state in the area.

But it does not mean that there are no differences on various issues between two countries. On the question of possession to the Island of Kachcha Thivu in Palk Strait created a lot of problem between the two countries. The government of Madras did claim the Island as it belonged to Ramanathpurang Samasthan which was taken over by Madras government under the Zamindari Abolition Act. But Sri Lankan government did claim it as it fall under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church of Jaffna and it was used as naval bombardment range under Ceylon defence regulation during second world war. Apart from this dispute, India's and Sri Lanka's extension of their territorial waters and contiguous

zones are over-laping in Palk Strait and Palk Bay.<sup>3</sup> In order to resolve these outstanding issues, India and Sri Lanka signed an agreement demarcating their boundaries in Palk Strait in July 1974. Another maritime boundary agreement was signed affecting the boundary in the Gulf of Manner and the Bay of Bengal in 1976. Under this agreement each party respects rights of navigation through its territorial sea and exclusive economic zone in accordance with the laws and regulations and rules of international law.<sup>4</sup> This delimitation of the international boundary was considered as a landmark in Indo-Sri Lankan relation and culmination of many years of negotiation between two countries.

Indo-Sri Lanka relation got strained during Sino-Indian war in 1962. Sri Lanka, instead of criticizing China's aggressive nature, it tried to prevent hostilities between two Asian giants and Colombo Proposal was signed. Further, following this Sri Lanka also entered into a maritime agreement with China. Sri Lanka gave China the most favoured nation status and provided facility to Chinese warships, knowing fully that it was against the India's interest. So

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3. The statesman, Calcutta, November 23, 1987, .

4. Ravi K. Dubey, 'Indo-Sri Lanka Relations', (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publication, 1993), p.81.

this agreement with China, when Indo-China relation was at low ebb, became a subject of grave concern to India.

Indo-Sri Lanka relation suffered a set back during Bangladesh war. During Indo-Pakistan war Sri Lanka provided air facilities to Pakistan through Colombo. But all these problems were solved through negotiation between two countries.

But, every thing takes a hair-pin turn as the question of Tamil demand for Eelam comes up and gradually it has created a big gulf in the cordial relationship between two countries. Since July 1983 riots, Sri Lankan foreign policy has been taking shape which can not be called friendly towards India. No doubt, that the Eelam demand itself becomes a discrete factor bearing on future Tamil-Sinhalese relations and on Indo-Sri Lanka relations themselves. Again Sri Lanka's deliberate efforts to seek security - political and economic - through alliance with other Super Powers turn the Island into a springboard for a security threat to India, particularly in the context of growing destabilization in the Indian Ocean region.

Though Sri Lanka professes to follow the policy of non-alignment, but its policy during 1980s clearly indicates a tilt towards western powers by inviting western military to quell Tamil insurgency in the Island. On the other had, the

problem of regional peace and stability and those of India's security remain the central concern for India's foreign policy. For both India and Sri Lanka, a major problem of their foreign policy is in the sphere of one conducting its relations with the other.

Tamil Eelam question exercises a considerable weight on Indo-Sri Lanka relation. Attitude of the government of India and government of Tamil Nadu to Tamil questions of Sri Lanka especially the demand of Eelam has become a matter of fundamental concern for Sri Lanka.

Formation of separate Tamil state within united Sri Lanka has exercised considerable weight on Indo-Sri Lanka relations and also stands in the way to friendly relations between the two countries. But in the long run, the separatists have not succeeded in their military objectives. Because, it can be summarized under this aims-firstly, the guerrilla forces hope to be able to defeat the Sri Lankan army in one or more major battles and force Colombo to sue for peace. Secondly, their actions would lead loss of public faith in government which may lead to a coup as well as another demoralizing Sinhalese backlash against Tamils that may be condemned internationally. Such a development may detonate extensive inter-ethnic massacre. However, the guerrillas can not accomplish their aim.

Sri Lanka provides a stark and tragic contemporary instance of conflict between ethnic communities inhabiting a single state - a feature which has fired many separatist movements in the modern world. Contention over territory constitutes the major element in this seemingly intractable struggle between Sinhalese majority and the Sri Lankan Tamil minority. The existence of a traditional homeland in Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka is vital to the Tamil claim of nationhood, which in turn is the basis for assertion of a right to national self-determination. The demand for separate Tamil political independence or autonomy however, clashes with the Sinhalese aspiration to preserve the uncompromised political unity of the entire Island.

So far as Sri Lankan ethnic crisis is concerned, the Sinhala power elites have missed every opportunity since independence to solve this problem by not exhibiting enough will through political solutions. They are correct when they argue that no modern Asian states would tolerate open separatism such as the militants propose. But by relying principally on military means, whatever either side might eventually obtain, would be a hollow one. If militarization and the ideology of violence remain the only way for the two sides, in the long run it would surprise no one if India intervenes directly. The military would not bring Eelam to

Sri Lankans Tamils and also it would serve to undermine Sinhalese loyalty and confidence in their own political and military institutions; thus increasing the prospect of a restless and uncertain future.

In terms of India's larger political interests a peaceful, united and stable Sri Lanka is essential for good bilateral relations and effective regional cooperation. Without letting any new problems minor or major differences to create ill-will, the two neighbours should focus on regional problems and similarities. The potential for stepping up trade between two countries has to be considered. India and Sri Lanka can become models of behaviour for our neighbour to follow. The two nations can achieve the fruits of bilateral co-operation and bring our people closer together. As it has been told civilization is characterized by a progressive passage from force to persuasion, so in human affairs the application of reason and considerations of sheer political prudence may bring about compromise and continued dialogue.



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