Chapter 5

Political Role of Tamil Diaspora in the Eelam Movement
Chapter 5

Political Role of Tamil Diaspora in the Eelam Movement

The political activities of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora are remarkably complicated and well manipulated. They internationalized the conflict by their political campaigning and lobbying. The high levels of their political activity have made the former Sri Lankan President, J.R. Jayewardene, refer to the expatriate Tamils living in the Western countries as "the world's most powerful minority" (Wayland, 2004). For almost two decades, they could even challenge the Sri Lankan government's counter campaigning and strongly defy their propaganda. Since the beginning of 2009, the Tamil diaspora's political role has become more significant with the LTTE's losses in the battlefield.

The diaspora's nationalistic feelings are strengthened through several of its publications. They have also been engaged in effective political lobbying to muster the support of international community. Tamils are gathered through rallies and marches, or by organizing conferences and annual festivals to create awareness not only among the Tamil diaspora but also among the international community. Tamil language newspapers, radio and internet and also the temples serve as the political means for propagation of Tamil cause. The expansion in the cultural activities which is a 'conscious effort' by the diaspora to preserve Tamil culture and identity is attributed by many to the large economic base and infrastructure, which is also helping in consolidating political sensitivities. They could successfully portray the LTTE as a genuine national liberation movement despite of its involvement in many militant and criminal activities.

The active participation of the international community in the Sri Lankan peace process that evolved after the Cease-Fire Agreement of 2002 was attributed by many, to the presence of politically active Tamil diaspora in the West. But, in this decade, mostly after the change of international environment after 9/11 attacks and the consequent emphasis on suppressing global terrorism, the open political support to
militant groups like the LTTE received a setback. The Sri Lankan government stepped ahead to take advantage out of this global sensitivities to terrorism in order to eliminate the Tamil Tigers. At least, until Karuna’s split in 2004, the LTTE was a “monolithic” organization among the diaspora (Rajanayagam, Interview, UK, 30 April 2008).

Politically, the Tamil diaspora is very active and has divergent views. Almost all the political and militant groups in Sri Lanka have their representatives in important Western capitals. Whenever the political clouds change in Sri Lanka, it is immediately and clearly reflected in their relations too in the diaspora dominated countries (Velamati 2008). Quite a lot of those diaspora even went back to Sri Lanka to take active political role (Manoharan, Interview, London, 15 April 2008).

Evolution of Political role of the Diaspora

The diaspora political organizations were first established in the UK. Until the early 1970s, when a large number of university students and professionals started pouring into the UK, none of them showed an interest in political activism. Sri Lankan Tamils, who even migrated earlier also didn’t speak of Tamil nationalism. Though there were some Sri Lankan Tamil expatriates active in the UK politics in the 1960s and 70s, they haven’t spent time for Federal party or TULF politics in Sri Lanka. The professional expatriates in the UK, came together politically in the mid- 1970s, as they realized that there was more necessity to concentrate on politics in their own country than in the UK (Kuhanendran, Interview, UK, 17 April 2008). During that time, there was no fast and easy communication like internet which would have helped in more organization of Tamils. The 1981-83 was an initial period of mobilization of active sections and after the 1983 riots, the politicization of diaspora intensified (Rajanayagam, Interview). Importantly, five political groups were operating in London: EROS, TELO, LTTE, EPRLF and the PLOTE. All the five groups had representatives in the UK. The Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students, which was originally called as the Eelam Revolutionary Organisers was the first armed political group among the diaspora. This was originated in 1975 in
Initially, the LTTE and the TELO were not that strong (Manoharan, Interview, London, 15 April 2008). All the Tamil groups in some way or the other felt that separate state was the solution for the conflict. But the LTTE was the die-hard Tamil nationalist.

Before 1983, fourteen or fifteen diaspora organisations were functioning independently, but, were working together (LTTE spokesperson, Interview, UK, 26 April 2008). At that time, political leadership in Sri Lanka, the present TULF was supporting these organizations. If the Tamils had a problem in Sri Lanka, the TULF leaders used to take help and support from these diaspora organizations and primarily all organizations even from 1983 were really hoping for an independent state of Tamil Eelam. The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora activities before 1983 were motivated by the issues of language policy; denial of employment to Tamil areas; standardization and attack on Tamil culture- all these together, the level of oppression carried on by the Sinhalese government that was the only motivating factor for the Tamil diaspora to get together, says the Tamil expatriate (LTTE spokesperson, Interview, London, 26 April 2008). During any crisis situation in Sri Lanka, the leadership there immediately contacts the Tamil expatriate leaders. The Tamil diaspora leaders speak on Western TV, radio and also address meetings to mobilize support.

In the beginning, the diaspora organized meetings and raised funds. Even some of the diaspora activists went and joined the Tamil guerillas in Sri Lanka. The EROS and the other groups that emerged later were engaged in regular collection of information about the Sri Lankan affairs to create awareness among the common people through diaspora writings, weekly meetings and by sending letters to various political and humanitarian organisations. Time to time, every group had taken up political education of the diaspora by organizing cultural performances and showing political films on Vietnam, Palestine struggles to the students (Manoharan, UK, interview, 15 April 2008).

The EROS was formed mostly by the Tamil students who went from Sri Lanka to the UK for their higher education. The founder of the EROS, Ratna Sabapathy was doing his Masters in Economics in Birmingham University (Manoharan, Interview, London, Dated: 15 April 2008; Kuhanendran, Interview, London, Dated: 17 April 2008).

127
Though Balasingham, was strongly supportive of the LTTE, members from other armed Tamil groups visited his house. Many young students from various Tamil organizations in London took political classes from him. Even he invited the representatives of global liberation organizations to London to address these classes. Eritreans, East Timorese representatives, African National Congress and the Chilean underground representatives spoke of their struggles to the Tamil students. Not only through speeches, also through documentary films on their activities, other propaganda documents and posters, they made Tamils understand about the functioning of militant movements (Balasingham 2003: 35).

While the LTTE was totally dedicated to militant struggle, the Tamil diaspora provided the intellectual base for movement. For the Tamil diaspora who were not supporting the LTTE’s separate state, the 1983 riots favoured a climate in Western Europe, Canada and other places. Even the liberal democratic Tamils politically accepted the LTTE, as they felt that the Tamils were unfairly treated and discriminated. The 1985 Thimpu talks between the Tamil groups and the Sri Lankan government were successively used to raise human rights arguments to popularize the cause of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. Many Tamil leaders from the diaspora participated in the talks (Kuhanendran, Interview, UK).

Among the diaspora in the West, politically, one can see the LTTE’s domination since the late 1980s, which continued at least till the 2002 CFA. The subsequent weakening of the LTTE gave strength to the politically rival Tamil diaspora groups to emerge with their activism. Also, since the 1990s, especially after the terrorist attack on the US on 11th September 2001, the active role of the Sri Lankan government, especially through its embassies in the West, and also the activism of Sinhala diaspora, became visible. Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora were milling up political influence especially in the Western societies of Canada, the UK and Australia.

**Domination of the Pro-LTTE Diaspora Groups**

As the LTTE started attacking other Tamil militant groups on the ground, their representative groups also got marginalized among the diaspora especially since 1986. From then on, the political expressions of the Tamil diaspora were, in fact, the voices
of the LTTE. The domination of pro-LTTE groups among the Tamil diaspora made the diaspora a unified force. Even though some Tamils opposed the LTTE’s ideology and its violent campaigns, they remained silent due to fear of “ostracism” and “intimidation” by the pro-LTTE groups (Wijesinha, http://members.fortunecity.com/shanthi/reconciliation_between_the_sinha.htm).

Earlier, though many diaspora political groups were working individually, the Tamil population that time was behind them as the focus was on opposing the Sri Lankan government and they were all united. If a common protest march was organised by all the Tamil militant groups, thousands of Tamil diaspora participated in it. With the domination of the LTTE among the diaspora, the nature of activism turned all the more nationalist (Manoharan, Interview).

Especially by the 1990s, a large number of non-LTTE Tamil groups gave up due to intimidation by the LTTE. Some of the important cadres of the TELO and EPRLF left the country. The EPRLF took refuge in India and during the Indian intervention in Sri Lanka (1987-90) went back to Sri Lanka with renewed support from India. Even the TELO went back to Sri Lanka with a new leadership as these pro-India groups had much support from Tamil diaspora especially in Europe. However, with the withdrawal of the IPKF in 1990, the LTTE became all the more powerful and took complete control of northern and eastern Sri Lanka. Having witnessed the plight of the TELO, EPRLF and the PLOTE, which were curbed by the LTTE, the EROS decided to dismantle itself. While most of the EROS members were already out of the country that time, rest of them went back to the UK after 1990. Even Members of Parliament belonging to the EROS took asylum outside Sri Lanka. 89

How the LTTE silenced any opposition to it or criticism of its ways is demonstrated by the attacks LTTE cadres carried out on D.B.S. Jeyaraj, a well-known Tamil journalist. In the mid-1990s, Jeyaraj published an independent Tamil weekly called Muncharie, in Toronto. It carried news and features pertaining to events in Sri Lanka and the Tamil community in the West. As the Sri Lankan army began to make

89 Balakumaran, who was an EROS member in India, was sent to Sri Lanka by Shankar Rajee and others of EROS to have talks with the LTTE but the talks failed. Balakumaran who was also from Prabhakaran’s village joined the LTTE along with some other members (Manoharan, UK, Interview, 15 April 2008).
advances against the LTTE in Sri Lanka, the paper reported the LTTE’s defeats, while other Tamil newspapers portrayed LTTE operations in a more favorable light. Because of his coverage, Jeyaraj started receiving threatening phone calls regularly on a daily basis and in February 1993, the LTTE assailants broke his legs. Jeyaraj nevertheless continued with his publication. In November 1995, he received thirty-seven abusive calls in a single day. When he continued to publish critical accounts of LTTE losses, pro-LTTE operatives also began to target Jeyaraj’s advertisers and the Tamil shops that carried his paper. In one instance, pro-LTTE operatives visited ten to fifteen shops that carried the paper, seized copies of the paper, and dumped them. Losing circulation and advertising revenue, Jeyaraj was forced to stop publishing the paper in 1995 (Human Rights Watch, 2006: 16).

*The Tamil Times*, a newspaper for which Rajanayagam was the editor, was published from the UK since October 1981. The paper made criticisms of the LTTE, which thereby attracted threats from the Tamil Tigers. It was forced to stop from functioning by December 2005 (Rajanayagam, London, Interview, 30 April 2008).

Thus, the LTTE has monopolized the opinions in the Tamil diasporic society. Those who disagree with the LTTE’s ideology were considered as traitors to the Tamil cause.

**Pro-LTTE Diaspora activism**

The structure of Tamil diaspora political organisations and also the cultural and charitable organisations, media units and other sympathetic pressure groups was headed by Anton Balasingham and Sivagnam Gopalarathinam. Their chief function was to design the LTTE’s publicity and propaganda activities. Thus, they were

---

90 In February 1993, in an incident that is widely known in the Tamil community, four individuals attacked Jeyaraj in a car parking lot after he attended a movie with his wife. The assailants beat Jeyaraj with baseball bats, and broke both of his legs. In spite of him reporting the incident to the police, and even after providing the information about the identity of his assailants, no one was ever arrested for the crime (Human Rights Watch 2006:16-17). When he continued to publish critical accounts of LTTE losses, pro-LTTE operatives began to target Jeyaraj’s advertisers and the Tamil shops that carried his paper. In one instance, pro-LTTE operatives visited ten to fifteen shops that carried the paper, seized copies of the paper, and dumped them. Losing circulation and advertising revenue, Jeyaraj was forced to stop publishing the paper in 1995 (Human Rights Watch 2006:16).
supervising the Tamil diaspora’s political activities abroad (Hoffmann and Chalk, www.rand.org: 43). The main objective of this political activity is to stimulate international community’s support for the LTTE’s struggle in Sri Lanka and to defame the Sri Lankan government, which is considered as an oppressor of the Tamils in their land.

As early as in 1988, the diaspora brought their issues to the attention of British Parliament. The continuation of hostilities in Sri Lanka made Pat Wall to put down a motion in the House of Commons on 22nd April, along with six British MPs in the House of Commons. By reporting the violations of human rights in Sri Lanka, they called the British government not to make forcible deportation of the Tamil asylum-seekers then living in the UK. They also demanded an end to British military aid to Sri Lanka (The Sri Lanka Monitor May 1988).

There are several methods and approaches employed by the Tamil Tiger sympathizers among the diaspora for political mobilization. Not only through lobbying with the Western governments, they also use intellectual platforms like conferences and seminars to get their message heard. Their rallies, hunger strikes and demonstrations abroad helped in keeping the issue alive among the Tamil diaspora and also made the West to understand the seriousness of the conflict. The Tamil diaspora media network also acted as an effective diaspora political device.

POLITICAL LOBBYING

The Tamil diaspora mobilises the support of the governments in the countries of their settlement. Exercising the liberty of putting forth their political concerns, diaspora has internationalised the conflict by influencing the opinions of governments and its agencies in many parts of the world. Many Tamil diaspora organisations are formed with such objective to create awareness on the humanitarian situation of Tamils in Sri Lanka and disseminate information to the international community mostly to the government bodies on the social, political and economic discrimination faced by the Tamils in Sri Lanka, and in liaison with the Western governments, endeavor towards recognising the socio-political aspirations of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. This can be
understandable from the organisational structure of British Tamils Forum which enunciates its aims as follows:

To harness the skills and the knowledge of the members of the forum, well-wishers and significant others including the mainstream decision makers in the UK to alleviate the sufferings of the Tamils in the Island of Sri Lanka and to further their right to self determination with in the democratic frame work under pinned by the international law, covenants and conventions (www.tamilsforum.com).

The diaspora organizations have been involved in various activities in drawing international support to the conflict. Whenever the Sri Lankan government has taken firm action against militancy or adopted any policy affecting the ethnic Tamils, the diaspora groups have applied pressure on Colombo through the host governments. When the UK proscribed the LTTE under the anti-terrorism act, the Federation of Tamil Associations in Britain, Federation of Tamil Associations in New Zealand and the International Tamil Foundation sent letters to Prime Minister Tony Blair requesting him to withdraw the ban. Also, the diaspora, through their various programmes, projects the plight of minority Tamils and the causes of militancy in Sri Lanka from their perspective.

TECAN in Netherlands criticised the stricter refugee policy of the Dutch regarding Sri Lankan Tamils and claimed that the Netherlands’ economic interests and “good business relationship” with the Sri Lankan government was a responsible factor and urged that this politically motivated Dutch refugee policy should be changed seeing the obvious human rights situation in Sri Lanka which was the worst in Asia (http://members.tripod.com/~tamilned/tecan). Many among the Tamil diaspora condemned the USA’s military assistance to the government of Sri Lanka91, ignoring its human rights record.

The LTTE also falsified news to gain international legitimacy. In 1995, when the Tamil Tigers got cornered by the advancement of the Sri Lankan Army into Jaffna, the LTTE forcibly evacuated the civilians in Valikamam on 30th October and projected this mass exodus as “people marched out en masse in demonstration of their unwillingness to live under the alien Sri Lankan government” (Hoole www.uthr.org). The UTHR (Jaffna) published a comprehensive report with first hand experiences,

---

91 “Green Berets”, the anti-guerilla unit of American Army was training the Sri Lankan Forces. (TECAN, http://members.tripod.com/~tamilned/tecan).
countering the LTTE’s propaganda on this issue of exodus. But, the LTTE, knowing its tactics, had dismissed their report and did counter propaganda. Rajan Hoole, active in UTHR (J) writes,

“This created a stir, and it became essential to discredit us. Two similar statements in English and Tamil angrily dismissing our account and calling us names, signed by more than twenty academics from the University of Jaffna, then displaced to Killinochi, were circulated to the press in Colombo and abroad.”

The political propaganda of the LTTE in various countries made it successful in developing links also with the foreign governments especially South Africa where African National Congress has natural sympathy to violent movements. Rohan Gunaratana in his article (1999) has brought out the LTTE’s successful political lobbying in South Africa. Some of the South African leaders even were made to believe that the LTTE’s fight against the Sri Lankan government is similar to the former struggle between Blacks and Whites in South Africa. As the apartheid governments’ were involved in criticism and dishonoring of the ANC worldwide, the LTTE claim that the Sri Lankan governments are also on similar mission. The parallel between the LTTE and the ANC was drawn by the Tamil Tigers as follows as part of its propaganda:

Just as the ANC and many other liberation movements in Africa were labelled as terrorist organisation by some western powers with interest in South Africa, the LTTE has been labelled as a terrorist movement by USA which has significant military and economic interests in Sri Lanka. These interests include the Voice of America repeaters for the South Asian region and potential naval bases (Quoted in Gunaratna, sinhaya.com).

Sri Lanka, they said was the "only South Asian country that maintained economic ties with the (old) South Africa during the dark days of apartheid" while the rest of the Suth Asian countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh felt it "morally wrong to deal with the criminal regime" (ibid.). By claiming that Sri Lanka had no concern for the erstwhile oppressed populace of South Africa, the LTTE had drawn similar enmity towards the Sri Lankan government. This kind of propaganda in South Africa helped the LTTE to increase its influence there and which even could make South Africa to ban the sale of weapons to Sri Lanka. Though many attempts were made by

---

92 The end of colonial rule and the handing over of power to Boers in South Africa is compared to that of handing over of power to Sinhalese by the British in Sri Lanka. By saying that just like ANC’s Umkoto-wesizwe took arms when all peaceful methods failed, the Tamil youth also had no option left open in Sri Lanka (Gunaratna, sinhaya.com).
the Sri Lankan government to revert back the decision, it could not convince South Africa with its standpoint. Through its propaganda, the LTTE also could influence Nelson Mandela to endorse negotiated settlement for Sri Lankan ethnic conflict than a military solution in various international platforms he attended.

Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora leaders had to make some effort to convince the foreign governments of their cause, the Tamil Nadu government could be easily pushed for drawing support for the ethnic Sri Lankan Tamils next door. When Chandrika Kumaratunga went for war in 1995, most Tamil Nadu political parties including the ruling AIADMK staged a *hartal* (general strike) calling for an end to war. Since the beginning of *Operation Sunray*, they demanded the Indian government to intervene in Sri Lanka. DMK’s Karunanidhi, even staged a black flag rally in Chennai on 2\textsuperscript{nd} November 2008 (The Sri Lanka Monitor November 1995). Mostly because of the pressure from Tamil Nadu, both houses of the Indian Parliament raised the Sri Lankan issues for discussion.

Also, through the elected representatives in Parliament, the Tamils abroad debate their problems, draw more attention to the human rights violations by the security forces and seek to change the policies of the Sri Lankan government by exerting pressure through their host governments. Because of the activism of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, international community became much more aware of political developments in Sri Lanka and also could express concern over the human rights violations in Sri Lanka. Some of the countries even linked up their developmental aid to Sri Lanka with improvement in human rights condition (LTTE, Political Committee, tamilnation.org, 17 March 1997). The diaspora also expresses their concerns over arms buildup by the Sri Lankan government and influence the host government not to enter into any arms deals with Colombo.

In the UK, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora are a powerful group with 3000 doctors in London, at least 5000 engineers and many thousands of accountants and businessmen. They form an influential group in individual electoral constituencies (Ganesan, Retired Sri Lankan Tamil Professor (HKU), Interview, Chennai, 20 January 2008).
In the Western countries, the Tamil vote bank is the determining factor in achieving political support for the LTTE. In the UK, politicians and the LTTE exchange assurances at the Eelam House. The LTTE secures the Tamil vote in the electorate for them ([ourworld.compuserve.com]).

In Canada, in Scarborough province, the presence of a substantial Tamil population influences the policy decisions of the mainstream parties - the Conservatives and the Liberals. During the election period, both the Canadian parties are more sensitive to the Tamil sentiments. They try not to bring any issue of ban on the Tamil Tigers as a terrorist organisation. With as many as seven candidates contesting with sizeable Tamil support in and around Scarborough, the Conservatives came up with favourable statements during the election time in January 2006 (Canadian Press; January 20, 2006).

Candidates from marginal areas depend heavily on minority votes. MPs commitment is mostly only up to the elections. Generally, political parties in the UK don't hold any position on Sri Lanka. They are mostly individual MPs who take up issues to get votes. The reporters visiting Sri Lanka bring out reports on the serious situation in Sri Lanka. They help up the MPs to defend and argue for the Tamils (Varada Kumar, UK, Interview, 14 April 2008).

The Tamil diaspora also actively participate in the all-party election debates where various contestants also bring out the issues concerning Tamils to the table. In one such debate organised by the Canadian Tamil Congress in the 2006 election, sixteen candidates from the three main federal parties and also the Green Party from the Greater Toronto Area participated, which was attended by more than five hundred Tamils. All the parties compete to show their best interests in the issues of Tamils. Ms. Pauline Browes, Conservative candidate for Scarborough-Guildwood declared, “If we are honoured with your support to form the government, I can assure you that our response to the peace process as it relates to Sri Lanka will be much different than the inaction of the present Liberal government”, while the liberal candidate for Scarborough Centre, Mr. John Cannis stated: “Your engagement today and yesterday,

93 Conservative Party, Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party.
you can be assured, will bear fruit for the community. You know very well that it has
already beared fruit because we stood by your side and hesitated not to show our
colours at events and publicly stated our position” (20 January 2006, Tamil
Canadian).

Before the elections, even the Tamil expatriate organisations scrutinise the host
governments’ policies and other political parties’ behaviour in response to various
developments in the Sri Lankan ethnic issue and their manifestoes. Based on this
analysis, the Tamil diaspora organisations judge as to which party is more supportive
of their issue and accordingly appeal to the Tamil expatriates to vote for such party. In
Canada, before the elections in January 2006, the Tamil Creative Writers Association
brought out a press release (tamilcanadian.com, 5 January 2006) questioning the
Liberal governments’ apathy to Tamil Canadians, citing concrete instances, reflecting
the LTTE stance. Claiming that the Liberal government considered Tamil Canadians
less than equal in many vital issues affecting them, an appeal was made to the Tamils
to keep all these in mind while casting their vote. Some of the issues brought out by
the TCWA include: inactive role of Canada in the Sri Lankan peace process despite of
the presence of large Tamil community; denying entry to the LTTE’s political
delegation, Members of Parliament (Sri Lanka), Tamil activists and scholars in to
Canada; Canada’s failure to condemn the human rights violations committed by the
SLAF; denying charity status to the TRO (Canada); lack of satisfactory response to
help tsunami victims in the north-east of Sri Lanka and also the stringent immigration
policies supported by the Liberal Party.

The first Tamil electoral candidate, Conservative from Scarborough South West,
was Mr. Vincent Veerasuntharam during the 2006 elections. David Thomas contested
from the New Democratic Party (Tamil Canadian, 20 January 2006). Even in Norway,
Tamils take active part in the public offices. In September 2007, 15 Sri Lankan
Tamils contested the local council elections and at least eight Sri Lankan Tamil
councilors had won the election (tamileelamnews.com, 17 September 2007). Even in
the Greater Toronto Area, Sri Lankan Tamil Logan Kanapathi got elected as
Markham councilor in November 2006 (Toronto Star; tamilcanadian.com, 17
November 2006).
In the UK, in 2007, the Sri Lankan Tamil lobby working with the LTTE got 60-70 MPs together and formed an All Party Tamil Parliamentary Group in the UK. The Tamil Tiger supporters feel proud of this achievement and call it as a significant development in their political lobbying as they could form a separate group even while a Sri Lanka All Party Group was existing for a long time, that looks in to Sri Lankan issues. They claim that this Parliamentary Group openly supports the LTTE’s cause (Varada Kumar, Interview, London, 14 April 2008).

In the Cease-Fire Agreement of 2002, between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE and the resultant peace process in Sri Lanka became very popular in relation to the importance of the Tamil diaspora to the LTTE movement. Because of this international support, Sri Lankan PM Ranil Wickramasinghe was able to get the sanction of the President and the Sinhala-Buddhist clergy. More than 20 countries and international organisations met in Oslo on November 25, 2002 and committed themselves to providing immediate humanitarian assistance in support of the Sri Lankan peace process. In that conference, the European Union agreed to strengthen its role in the peace process in Sri Lanka while engaging the Tamil diaspora. It was suggested to the expatriate community to assist in the peace process through financial assistance or through skills audits or training (BRC Report 2003). International community felt that improved economic conditions would bring ‘peace dividends’ to the people of Sri Lanka. Japan, Norway, the US and the EU worked as Co-Chairs of the peace process in Sri Lanka. That was the first time international community paid so much interest and support to the peace process in Sri Lanka. They say that it is rare that long-standing conflicts seek peaceful negotiated settlements. When such opportunity comes, international community assures all help and support (Velamati, 2007).

The Tamil diaspora could successfully mobilize international community’s support for the peace process at home. Despite all the efforts of the international community and the SLMM, an atmosphere conducive to lasting solution has not been created. Slowly, there were criticisms that the international community underplayed its expected role. Initially, the LTTE presumed that Government agreed for peace talks in its keenness to get economic aid from donor countries. On the other side, the Government believed that it’s the loss of strength and international pressure that
forced LTTE to agree for talks. This distrust hampered the talks. Involvement of international community and its economic package could put pressure and help in the stability of the Ceasefire Agreement, but the ‘peace’ as such in reality was not able to live in the island even during the CFA.

LTTE was also involved in mobilising international NGOs support to legitimise its demand for a separate Tamil Eelam. At various international conventions, the right to the Tamil people’s self-determination was emphasized. At the end of the conventions, combined statements supporting the formation of Tamil Eelam were issued. For example, in February 1993, several international NGO’s at the 49th session of the UN Human Rights Commission, which focused on the theme "The right of peoples to self-determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation", passed a joint statement declaring:

The Tamil population in the North and East, who have lived for many centuries, share an ancient heritage, a vibrant culture, and a living language which traces its origins to more than 2500 years ago. A social group, which shares objective elements such as a common language and which has acquired a subjective consciousness of togetherness by its life within a relatively well defined territory, and its struggle against alien domination, clearly constitutes a" people" with the right to self-determination. Today, there is an urgent need for the international community to recognise that the Tamil population in the North and East of the Island of Sri Lanka are such a "people" with the right to freely choose their political status (Satyendra, 1994, tamilnation.org).

When the Government of Canada planned to deport the coordinator of the WTM, Manickavasagam Suresh’s, tamilnet.com, which was considered as the official news website of the LTTE quoted various human rights organisations denouncing the proposed move (Tamilnet.com, 28 September 1997). It cited the Association of American Jurists as calling him a ‘political prisoner.’

The propagation of the violation of human rights in Sri Lanka by the Tamil diaspora could convince the NGOs and human rights organizations of the Tamils’ cause. They fought for the Tamils’ rights and condemned host governments’ actions against them. The international community could get convinced by the diaspora activism that human rights situation record in Sri Lanka is extremely poor and that is an issue which needs to be addressed. However, they were not ready to accept the LTTE’s militant position and the violent nature of its struggle.
FESTIVALS, RALLIES AND MARCHES

By organising annual festivals and rallies, the LTTE keeps alive the ethnic spirit among the Tamils. This is a way to propagate their cause and raise funds. These festivals remind them of an unfinished struggle back home. Their attention is drawn to the needs and claims of the LTTE. Such programmes are of use not only in mobilising support from the Tamils but also in creating awareness among the international community of the Tamil grievances and helps in drawing sympathy from the people and politicians in the West.

During protest demonstrations, the Eelam flag is also unfurled along with the host government’s flag displaying their support to separatist movement in Sri Lanka. They carry placards and give slogans in support of the LTTE. Hunger strikes and organized human chains are among the other means of demonstration to gain public attention.

Annually, there are few Tamil diaspora events which are regularly organized to draw the Tamils together. They conduct various programmes during the Black July, Heroes Day and also Pongu Thamil. For the Tamil diaspora, the July 1983 ethnic riots in Sri Lanka which made many of them to leave their homeland, are still fresh and is a haunting experience. Even after 25 years of this incident, the Sri Lankan Tamil expatriates round the world hold commemorations in memory of those died in that event.

The most widely celebrated annual event among the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora is the Heroes day or Martyrs day in the last week of November. Many well-known members of the LTTE address these events in the countries of North America, Europe and Australia. Customarily, Tamil Eelam flag is hoisted on this day. Even the Tamil students in various universities in the Western countries organise this event (26 November 2003, tamilnet.com). Anton Balasingham; Jaffna district Head of the

94 Check news articles and various photographs published in the Tamilnet.com on the diaspora events.
95 The week long Heroes Day celebrations generally end by 27 November on Prabhakaran's birthday, Tamil diaspora in some Western cities continue the celebrations even in the first and second weeks of December.
LTTE Political Wing, Ilamparithi; Mannar Head of the LTTE Political Wing, Amitab were some of the speakers at such events in the Western countries.\(^{96}\)

The LTTE also rewards the members of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora for promoting Tamil language and culture among the diaspora Tamils. As discussed in the earlier chapter, preservation of Tamil culture and its identity is the important ingredient of Tamil nationalism. Such efforts are more appreciated as the facilitation of such services can ingrain the Tamil culture and language in second generation Tamils born and brought up outside Sri Lanka as well, who have role to play when the LTTE establishes its Tamil Eelam. The significance given to the promotion of Tamil culture can be visualised in Prabhakaran himself felicitating the expatriate language activist, Ira Nagalingam, for his contribution to establishing Tamil education facilities in more coordinated way among the diaspora Tamil children in Germany and Europe. Noticeably, the award received by Nagalingam from Prabhakaran had Tiger emblem embossed on it (Tamilnet.com, 7 August 2004).

Tamil Theatre personalities such as Tarcisius are invited by different Tamil diaspora cultural organizations in the European countries and also Canada to help them in their activities by means of imparting training; conducting and organizing workshops etc. The focus of the cultural performances is both humanitarian and political. Through such cultural shows, the Tamil problem and the Sri Lankan situation are communicated not only to the Tamil diaspora but to the European and Canadian people as well (Tarcisius, Interview, UK, 26 April 2008).

Rallies and demonstrations, meetings or hunger strikes are organized by the Tamil diaspora for gaining international recognition or their cause and to expose the tragedy of civilians in Sri Lanka. They mostly demonstrate their support to the LTTE through such gatherings. As per the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, when the IPKF was sent to Sri Lanka, the Tamil diaspora organizations staged many effective demonstrations in the Western countries against its presence. They organized meetings, protests, marches, hunger strikes. To draw public and political attention, they organized them outside parliament or in the main city centres. In London, Tamil women’s

\(^{96}\) Anton Balasingham was addressing in London; Ilamparithi was addressing the celebrations in Germany and Italy; Amitab in Norway and France.
organizations took a march in the centre of city drawing their attention to the human rights violations against women by the IPKF (Sri Lanka Monitor, July 1989).

When Canada planned to deport Manickavasagam Suresh, 850 Canadian Tamils staged a fast in front of Canadian Parliament as a sign of protest. In the demonstration organised by the FACT from 11 am to 3 pm, Tamils carried more than 150 placards reading "Do not deport a social activist", "Amend section 40.1 of the Immigration Act" and "LTTE is a national liberation organisation". One organizer of the protest called the Canada’s idea to deport a “recognized Convention refugee to the very country he had fled from” as “reprehensible” (Tamilnet.com, 28 September 1997).

In Durban, on 4 June 1996, about 100 Tamils demonstrated against the flying in of Sri Lanka’s air line “Air Lanka” to South Africa. By carrying the placards, “Sri Lanka go home, Stop fighting before flying”, the Tamils showed their anguish against the Sri Lankan government and displayed their inclination to the LTTE. With the Indian Tamils being dominant in the Durban region, the LTTE placards also called for south Indian intervention in the Sri Lankan conflict (Gunaratna, sinhaya.com).

When some of the international governments banned the LTTE and its front organisations, many Tamils raised concerns that the entire Tamil community is often misportrayed in the media as being involved in the pro-terrorist or criminal activities. In this newly developed international political scenario, the Tamil diaspora also felt the need to prove that the majority of Tamil diaspora are law-abiding and also project the deeper issues of human rights concern and the genuineness of ethnic struggle fighting for the Tamils’ cause. The Tamil diaspora also use petitions or organise ‘walks’ to create awareness on the humanitarian and ethnic issues affecting the minorities in Sri Lanka. Some of the events are also associated with some significant date in the ethnic movement. All such endeavours by the expatriates target at creating more understanding of the ethnic conflict among the host governments and ultimately get in to dialogue with them.

When John Thompson, director of the Toronto-based Mackenzie Institute, wrote in the Toronto Sun (30 January 2000) that approximately, 30,000 of the 180,000 Tamils in Canada were illegal immigrants and that Canadian Tamils by participating in drug
Trafficking, welfare scams and credit card fraud were involved in funding political insurgencies round the world caused resentment among many Canadian Tamils, around fifty-five organisations involving 650 protestors participated in a rally, with some carrying banners “Think Before You Ink” (The Toronto Sun, 13 February 2000). They not only chanted slogans against the news report but also accused the Sun Media of racism. Speeches were also made condemning the newspaper chain. Later, Father J. Francis Xavier of the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils wrote to The Toronto Sun, declaring that only because of the support of Tamils inside and outside of Sri Lanka, the Tamil Tigers were able to resist the "genocidal war" conducted by the Sri Lankan government over the years (13 February 2000, The Toronto Sun).

Rallies and demonstrations may also end by submitting a petition to the concerned authorities by the Tamil diaspora leaders. In the above discussed rally organised against the Sun Media in 2000 in Toronto, the organisers presented a petition with more than 3,000 signatures condemning the news report and demanding an apology. Responding to their rally and petition, Mike Strobel, The Toronto Sun’s editor-in-chief said, "Frankly, I don't blame them for being upset," "They've made their point in a peaceful way and we'll be meeting this week to air things further" (13 February 2000, The Toronto Sun).

Petitions are used not only to denounce any action but are also one of the awareness campaign modules which can mobilise and symbolise formal support of Tamil diaspora to the ethnic cause. In the Tamil diaspora websites, the web links to such petitions are given for them to sign in. By bringing the issue closer to their lives and by claiming the possibility of victimisation of anyone and at anytime, the Tamils are made to feel the issue personal. In the Australian Tamil diaspora website, http://www.tamilsydney.com, before giving a link to sign a petition in solidarity with the Jaffna students, the following emotional appeal is made:

Imagine the army patrolling every single day on your campus. They threaten you with violence and death based on your ethnical origin. Your friends and fellow students are being tortured and killed. Others remain missing without a trace. Every morning you wake up with a weird feeling, the question whether you'll return home this evening will remain unanswered. The fear of being the next victim of harassment when entering university is omnipresent........
Do you think this is an unrealistic scenario in the 21st century? Unfortunately it is not. This is exactly what happens every day at the University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka. Do you consider it inhumane, against human rights and against fundamental liberties? That's what we think! Help these students by simply giving us your sign and letting them know that their sorrow isn't forgotten. Every sign counts! (http://www.tamilsydney.com/content/view/688/37/jaffnastudents.jpg).

Canada, a country with dominant Tamil diaspora population, which is known for Tamil activism and also notorious Tamil gangs, a group of eight Canadian Tamils took a journey on foot from Toronto's Nathan Phillips Square to Parliament Hill in Ottawa to what they called was to “stop errorism”. Mayuran Rhaashivam, who organised this walk, described ‘errorism’ as is when "a majority community uses stigmatized terms to bully a minority community for its own self interests" (http://www.tamilsydney.com/content/view/688/37/). They say that such efforts are positive ways of fighting against the stereotypically wrong depiction of the involvement of members of Tamil group in Tamil gangs like the Tamil Tigers. The group started its walk on May 22, 2007 to end on June 11, 2007 marking the "student uprising day" in Tamil Eelam, which is a day to pay tribute to the students sacrificed for the cause of establishing a separate Tamil state. This group expressed a hope to meet the Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper to get their issues to his notice.

The LTTE front organisations also stage plays focusing on the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. A “play of conscience” called “God is Silent” was performed by the TESM on 4th July, 1998 in Regional Hall, Arena Park in South Africa supporting the LTTE. Publicity advertisements spoke of "Thousands of Tamils being massacred and raped in Sri Lanka. Don't just sympathise with the cause. Do something about it" (Gunaratna, sinhaya.com).

The LTTE also makes official announcements in Tamil Eelam like an authorised body. After the death of its political advisor, Anton Balasingham in London on 14 December 2006 with bile duct cancer, “Liberation Tigers Officials” in Kilinochchi proclaimed a three day mourning period (14 December 2006, tamilnet.com). Following that, the IBC Tamil radio declared that similar announcement was made by the representatives of Tamil diaspora organisations (14 December 2006, tamilnet.com). Large number of Tamil activists and Tamil expatriates round the world
traveled to London to pay homage to his body displayed at Alexandra Palace in North London (20 December 2006, tamilnet.com). Memorial services were performed by the Tamil diaspora organisations in many of the Tamil dominated Western cities. Rallies were organised, speeches were made by the Tamil sympathisers, LTTE activists and local leaders. During this period of grief, his contribution to the resolution of ethnic struggle along with the grievances of Tamils in Sri Lanka was highlighted in the Tamil media and diaspora organised events. Overall, a positive and sympathetic light was thrown at the LTTE’s Eelam movement while painting a negative picture of the Sri Lankan government.

In one such event held in New Jersey, Visuvanathan Rudrakumar, a legal advisor to the LTTE stated that Balasingham believed that Tamils have a right to establish an independent Tamil Eelam “since the Tamils are denied political space to exercise their right to self-determination” (5 February 2007, tamilnet.com). In a memorial service offered in the Tamil Resource and Consultation Centre in Oslo, even Jon Hanssen-Bauer, who was Norwegian special envoy for the peace process in Sri Lanka and Balasingham’s Chief physician Dr. Per Fauchald were invited. The deputy leader for the Oslo labour party Mr. Ivar Christiansen was one of the speakers who said:

"Tamils trusted Balasingham with their destiny in the peace process. But due to the hard core sinhalese the peace deal failed and only a shaky ceasefire continues. Sri Lanka’s President Kumaratunge and her successor Rajapakse rejected the concept of a Tamil homeland and self-determination......Balasingham had the full confidence of Pirabakaran. Although he lived in London with his wife for many years, he was continually in contact with the homeland...." (16th December 2006, tamilnet.com).

The TamilNet quoted the condolence messages of various sympathetic leaders. Karunanidhi, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu expressed, “Balasingham grieved for his people dismissing his terrible illness as merely a pebble compared to the vast ocean of tragedy faced by his people” (15 December 2006, tamilnet.com). Vaiko, the General Secretary of the MDMK stated, ".... Balasingham, who acted as a pillar to the LTTE leader Pirabaharan, exposed the false and malicious propaganda of the Sri

97 Dr Fauchald from the Government General Hospital in Oslo performed the kidney transplantation to Balasingham in 2000 and later became his family friend (16 December 2006, tamilnet.com).
Lanka Government, and opened the conscience of the international community," (15 December 2006, tamilnet.com).

Tamil diaspora, even outside their country, act as a pressure group on the Sri Lankan government by expressing its disapproval to the political developments in Sri Lanka. The two incidents: arrest of former Jaffna Students Union leader, Krishnasamy Thivyan by the Sri Lankan Army\(^{98}\), the subsequent shut down of the university in July 2001 and the assassination of Tamil MP Joseph Pararajasingham at Batticaloa church on the Christmas Eve in 2005\(^99\) invited much uproar from the Tamil diaspora.

Expressing their solidarity to the students of north and east Sri Lanka, the College and University Tamil Students Union (CUTSU), Ontario; Academic Society of Tamil Students, Ottawa; Tamil Students' Associations of the University of Toronto, Ryerson, University of Ottawa, McMaster University, Queens University, University of Guelph; the Youth Organisation of American Tamils; Tamil Creative Writers Association and the Canadian Tamil Congress made press releases condemning the closure of Jaffna university and urged for its reopen (13-19 July 2001, Press Releases published in tamilcanadian.com). They demanded for the immediate release of Thivyan and gave a call to the Sri Lankan government and international community to recognise the legitimate concerns of Jaffna students and Tamils in the north and east of Sri Lanka. Demanding the Sri Lankan government to stop all military intimidation of Tamil students in the north and east, the Tamil student diaspora brought out the significant role of student activism in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and the government's suppressive attitude.

An appeal was also made by the *Tamil Circle* to highlight Thivyan's case in appropriate forum in order to facilitate his release. A request was made to all the Tamils to endorse this appeal which will further be sent to the foreign ministries of the EU, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and India and also to the diplomatic missions of these countries in Colombo. Human Rights organisations like

\(^{98}\) Sri Lankan army arrested Thivyan in July 2001 under the Prevention of Terrorism Act for helping the LTTE in procuring weapons and for possessing weapons. Rejecting these claims, Jaffna students and public had taken a huge protest (20 October 2001, tamilcanadian.com).

\(^{99}\) The Tamil diaspora accused the newly elected Rajapakse government responsible for this murder pointing to its Buddhist fundamentalist thinking and intolerance to other religions (24 December 2005, tamilcanadian.com).
Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are also included. An appeal is made to these organisations to use their offices to urge Sri Lankan government to release Thivyan.

Tamil Centre for Human Rights, along with the CASTIS organised a memorial event in Manchester to condemn the killing of Joseph Pararajasingham in Sri Lanka. Politicians, academicians, lawyers, religious, community and social-workers and the human rights supporters spoke in the event. They even invited the family of David Joseph, son of Pararajasingham, to the event to speak, who garlanded his photograph and lighted a candle. Messages from two parliamentarians, Manchester Central Constituency Labour Party Member of Parliament Mr. Tony Lloyd and Labour Party Member of European Parliament Arlene McCarthy condemning his killing were read out. The Labour party Manchester City Councillor Mr. Alistair Cox also was one of the speakers (TCHR Press Release, 6 February 2007, tamilcanadian.com).

When the Sri Lankan armed forces were intensively engaged in an armed battle with the LTTE in the north of Sri Lanka in 2009, the Tamil diaspora became all the more powerful to display its support to the LTTE. Since the beginning of the 2009, Tamils all round the world participated in marches and hunger strikes against the human rights violations committed by trapping thousands of civilians in the conflict.

The Tamil diaspora is also brought together through conferences and seminars.

CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

The Tamil diaspora organisations and various Tamil Associations in the foreign universities mostly in the Western countries also provides a platform for international academicians and intellectuals sympathetic to Tamil cause to discuss and analyse the changing political and humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka. Such forums even bring out the necessity for the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora to act and underline the kind of role they can play in the ethnic movement. In his speech to the International Tamil Foundation in London, M Sornarajah, a Professor of Law in the National University of Singapore, identified the measures that Tamil diaspora can take up on the legal front to enhance the struggle for Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka (tamilnation.org, 25 June
He called on the Tamil diaspora to build linkages with other ethnic groups like the Palestinians and Chechens fighting for their homelands and to achieve their cause in solidarity; the liberal Sinhalese who were in silent majority could be better addressed by Tamils from abroad. This was necessary for long-lasting peace and amicable relations between the communities in future. The Tamil lawyers living out of Sri Lanka could contribute to the cause of the Tamil brothers in Sri Lanka by forming a network internationally to track down Sinhalese politicians and military leaders engaged in atrocities of war against the Tamils in Sri Lanka and to institute actions against them. Tamil expatriates feel that by causing such embarrassment to the Sri Lankan government, the Tamil diaspora can prevent them from involving in fatal Tamil campaigning.

Also, the speakers in the Tamil diaspora organised conferences' give a call to the educated and the progressive Tamil expatriates on the necessity to gear up their campaigning against the Sri Lankan government which was trying to make false projection of all the Tamil expatriates as the members of front organisations or as "fund-raisers for terrorism". They claim that the Sri Lankan government was trying to portray the entire Tamil issue as a problem of 'terrorism' and thereby consolidating its military response. By calling the Sri Lankan government representatives making their propaganda internationally as "hired ministers" and "loyal servants", an appeal was made to the Tamil expatriates to render truth to the host governments and human rights organisations (Emmanuel, 1999: tamilnation.org). G.G. Ponnambalam (Jr.)

while speaking on 'the current political dynamics of the Tamil national conflict in Sri Lanka' at the international conference on Tamil Nationhood organised by the ACTS (Canada) in 1999, brought out that only Tamil diaspora can play an active and valuable political role in the Tamil conflict as the political voice of Tamils in the war zone is muted. Also, the prohibition of regional and international media in the war zone helped the Sri Lankan government to solely represent its critical and false view of the conflict and making the world turn against the Tamils. By arguing this way, G.G Ponnambalam pleaded the Tamil diaspora and its organisations in 15 Tamil

---

100 In an international conference on 'Tamil Nationhood and Search for Peace in Sri Lanka', organised by the Academic Society of Tamil Students (Carleton University), Canada in May 1999, Dr S.J.Emmanuel delivered this in his keynote address(http://tamilnation.org/conferences/cnfCA99/emmanuel.html).

101 General Secretary, All Ceylon Tamil Congress.
diaspora dominated countries to adopt one resolution setting out the political aspirations of the Tamils and their solution to the conflict. As a clear support to the LTTE, the speaker suggested that such resolution by the Tamil diaspora should give its mandate to achieve that goal to the "boys". He assures that this resolution by the Tamil diaspora associations would become the voice of half a million Tamils abroad and can eventually bring a 'qualitative change' in the stance of Tamils and their cause (http://tamilnation.org/conferences/cnfCA99/kumar.html).

People who align with the LTTE and turn up only for their meetings are those who feel that Tamil nationalism is the only solution and they find such aspirations of Tamil nationalism with the Tigers.

The conferences organised by Tamil diaspora also provides a platform to consolidate and defend their Tamil nationalistic feelings by presenting as to how the Sinhala chauvinism emerged as a threat to Tamil identity. The speakers’ who migrated from Sri Lanka as a last chance of survival have more stories to share with the audience. By narrating their personal experiences or describing the discrimination to the Tamils in the hands of Sinhala security forces witnessed from childhood, the non-Tamil audience were given the first hand eye-witness account of Tamil grievances. Almost all the Tamils are proud of their rich Tamil culture and heritage. By quoting the lines of famous revolutionary Tamil nationalist poets and writers, Tamil nationalism is all the more aroused. The following is one such poem quoted by Sriskandarajah (a Sri Lankan Tamil migrated to Australia in 1977) at one of the Tamil diaspora conferences in Canberra in 1996 written by Subramaniam Bharathi102:

In our land
we can no longer be slaves,
asleep.
We are no longer afraid.
On this earth
injustice multiplies with
impunity.
To the Motherland we sacrifice
ourselves
in adoration.

102 Subramaniam Bharathi is a Tamil poet in Colonial India at the turn of 20th Century. This is a translated version of his Tamil poem (http://www.tamilcanadian.com/pageview.php?ID=27&SID=23).
Should we continue to die, sobbing silently to ourselves forever? Or is Life so sweet we dare not risk it for rebirth in freedom? ... Is it a sin to love Freedom until Death? Is it a crime to end our suffering? Is there hatred in that? We have learnt that the only way is unity. That we have learnt well. We will no longer be surprised, confused, separated, by your cruelty. Our will is unshakeable. If you slice my flesh into bits, will you lose your fear of us? your hunger for revenge? Will you gain your purpose? When my corpse is burnt my heart will not melt. for there is locked unsatisfied my life desire: Freedom.

Even, non-Sri Lankan Tamil speakers from various other countries participate in the Tamil diaspora conferences. Justice Marcus Einfield, while delivering his presentation on “Human Rights and Tamils’ Right to Self-determination” in the international conference “Peace with Justice” organised at Canberra in 1996 (tamilcanadian.com) supported Tamils’ right to form Eelam by quoting the representative of International Commission of Jurists who supported it through legal recognition of such Tamil demand. Also the former ANC leader and the then ANC Parliamentarian Pravin Gordhan presented a paper on “South Africa and Lessons for Peace and Justice in Sri Lanka” at the same conference in Canberra in 1996 (Gunaratna, sinhaya.com; http://www.tamilcanadian.com/page.php?index=23). The
Indian journalist Pannerchelvam\textsuperscript{103}, also legitimized the LTTE's struggle while speaking at Canberra conference and ascertained that no solution is possible without the LTTE (1996, http://www.tamilcanadian.com/pageview.php?ID=21&SID=23). Other speakers at this conference include Ms Janet Hunt, the Executive Director of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA); Professor Margaret Trawick (Department of Social Anthropology, Massey University, Palmerston, New Zealand); Professor Peter Chalk (Department of History of Religion, Uppsala University, Sweden); Ms Karen Parker, an attorney specialising in International Law, Humanitarian (armed conflict) and Human Rights Law (http://www.tamilcanadian.com/pageview.php?ID=21&SID=23).

There were times when the Tamil diaspora conferences’ were also marked by messages from the LTTE leader Prabhakaran. When the LTTE was in bleak situation on the military front, he even had made a plea to the global Tamil diaspora to stir up political campaign to influence the situation at home. When the LTTE was fighting with the IPKF, which was sent to Sri Lanka after the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord (1987), Prabhakaran, though in Jaffna, gave the following message to the International Conference on the Tamil National Struggle and the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord at London in April-May 1988:

In view of this grim situation facing the people of Tamil Eelam, it is the national duty and solemn responsibility of all the Tamil patriots living abroad to organise and mobilise themselves into a powerful international voice of reason to fight for the redemption of their motherland caught in a monumental historical tragedy. The patriotic Tamil intelligentsia, living abroad should lead an effective global campaign to stir the conscience of the civilised world about this tragic human condition of betrayal and oppression. We fervently hope that the international Tamil community will understand and support wholeheartedly, the determined struggle of our liberation movement to fight for the cause of justice for our oppressed people (25 April 1988, tamilnation.org).

When a popular leader like Prabhakaran gives a message, it is all the more significant for ardent separatist nationalists among the Tamil diaspora.

\textsuperscript{103} Then he was the Chief of Bureau (South) of the New-Delhi based South Asian weekly magazine "Outlook" (http://www.tamilcanadian.com/page.php?index=23).
The international conference on “Peace with Justice” in Australia in June 1996 also received a message from Nelson Mandela, which was obtained by the Tamil Tigers. Australian Human Rights Foundation and the Australasian Federation of Tamils claimed to be the LTTE front organisations jointly organised this international conference on “Peace with Justice” in Canberra (Gunaratna, sinhaya.com; http://www.tamilcanadian.com/page.php?index=23). Protesting against this, some of the Sri Lankan Sinhala diaspora organisations wrote letters to Nelson Mandela (Gunaratna, sinhaya.com).

Characterising the war between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government as “a war of national liberation”, the Tamil diaspora conferences also reinforces the LTTE’s right to self-determination (Parker, 1999: tamilation.org). By making a presentation on “Why the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam is not a Terrorist Organisation” at one of the Tamil diaspora conferences in 1999 at Ottawa, Dr Karen Parker made theoretical and legal clarifications to the armed struggle of the Tamil Tigers. By making such conceptual explanations, the Tamil diaspora and the international community are assured that the support to LTTE’s struggle is genuine and lawful.

The Tamil diaspora conferences’ generally end with a resolution by re-affirming that Tamils are a separate nation and makes an appeal to Sri Lankan armed forces to withdraw from Tamil homeland and end its oppression. It also pleads the international community to recognise Tamils’ right to self-determination and acknowledge the LTTE as the sole representative of the Tamil nation. They also appeal to the countries providing arms to Sri Lankan government to stop all their help and support fast resolution of the conflict between the two ethnic communities (May 1999, Canada, http://tamilnation.org/conferences/cnfCA99/index.htm).

The Tamil diaspora also mobilise the support of sympathetic Sinhalese living abroad. When persons from ethnic Sinhalese community defend the Tamil cause and their struggle for separate Tamil Eelam, it is all the more justified. The Tamil diaspora invite them to speak at conferences and rallies organised by the Tamil diaspora organisations. The Sinhala supporters even write appeals and letters to international governments and authorities in support of Sri Lankan Tamils, expressing their compassion. They publish many articles on the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict opposing
the Sinhala policies. The notable ones are Dr Brian Senewiratne and Adrian Wijemanne.

Dr. Brian Senewiratne is a consultant Physician in Brisbane (Australia) and also the second cousin of Sri Lankan former President, Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga. Senewiratne took part in Tamil gatherings conducted in as far as Canada and Western Europe. He participated in conferences organised by TCHR in Brussels (Senewiratne, 7 March 2006, tamilnation.org);......He calls himself "neither pro-Tiger nor anti-Tiger" but "unashamedly pro-the-Tamil-minority in their struggle to exist with equality, dignity, safety and without discrimination in the country of their birth" (Senewiratne, 7 March 2006, tamilnation.org) while addressing the conferences. While expressing his opposition to the Sinhala chauvinist philosophy, he justifies the demand for Tamil nation as the only option left open to the Tamils. He criticises the Sri Lankan government’s policy to name all the sympathisers and supporters of Tamil nationalism as ‘Tamil Tiger Terrorists’. He acknowledges that he too became a ‘Tamil terrorist’ by revealing the Sinhala chauvinistic behaviour in his publications. Senewiratne’s publications include ‘The 1983 Massacre, Unanswered Questions’. In mid 1980s, he published another booklet on ‘Human Rights Violations in Sri Lanka’ (Senewiratne, 7 March 2006, tamilnation.org).

Dr Sunil Ratnapiriya, a Sinhala activist from the NSSP (Nava Sama Samaja Party) is a supporter of Tamil cause. In his paper “Peace - Possibilities and Obstacles” presented in 1996 at the Tamil diaspora International conference on “Peace with Justice”, he explained as to how his party campaigned for the right to self-determination and autonomy for the Tamils since its inception in 1977 (http://www.tamilcanadian.com/pageview.php?ID=21&SID=23).

TEMPLES

Apparently, the LTTE influence many Hindu temples in the West. The priests in the Hindu temples worshipped by the Sri Lankan Tamils are mostly from Jaffna or from

\[104\] Dr Senewiratne’s relationship with Mrs Chandrika was revealed by himself at a conference organised by the TCHR in Brussels in 2006. SWRD Bandaranaike and Senewiratne’s father were first cousins (7 March 2006, http://tamilnation.org/diaspora/eu/060307/symposium.htm).
Tamil Nadu (Tarcisius, Interview, UK, 26 April 2008). The traditions and rituals observed in the diaspora temples and the community festivals that are being organized are much more intensive than even in Jaffna. Almost all the Tamil diaspora families attend rituals in a temple. So, it is a good cultural gathering and the diaspora could be mobilized here for political support too. They display photographs of Prabhakaran in the temple. They also sell LTTE flags, CDs of Prabhakaran's speeches, or videos and DVDs promoting the LTTE (Human Rights Watch, 2006: 1). In 2005, the LTTE detained two British Tamils for several weeks in Sri Lanka in order to gain control over a Hindu temple in London. Such incidents have created a culture of fear within the Tamil community, stifling dissent and discouraging individuals from organizing activities that are not sanctioned by the LTTE.105

MEDIA AS AN INSTRUMENTALITY

In addition to community organizations, rallies, marches and conferences, the Tamil diaspora is mobilised in a variety of other ways. The supporters to Tamil cause admit that the provision of internet could ultimately provide a platform for the powerless Tamils to present its perspective to the international community and could balance the pro-Sri Lankan government’s media’s biased and false reports (Senawiratne, 7 March 2006, tamilnation.org). There are Tamil language newspapers, radio and internet. Tamils have their own newspapers. For example, Toronto is considered as the Tamil social capital over the last two decades. Four Tamil language radio stations broadcast throughout the week and have popular programmes like phone-in and talk shows. The LTTE has also explored these means to reach the diaspora. Every day, day-in and day-out Tamils watch the media. So, irrespective of the interest, Sri Lankan Tamils get the “daily diet of anti Sinhala propaganda and exaggerations” (Rajanayagam, UK).

The Paris-based Tamil Radio and Television (TRT) Network has hourly news bulletins which solely provides news on Sri Lanka. They are followed by current affairs in the subcontinent and also of the world. The TRT with its daily news reports on Sri Lanka could update the Tamil diaspora in Sri Lanka on the conflict in their

home. Not only news and current affairs, the TRT also has weekly programmes like "Udhavuvoma" ("Can we help?"), which invites experts to answer the queries of the Tamil diaspora (UNESCO, 2000; tamilcanadian.com). Tamils seek variety of information ranging from how to obtain work permits, administrative issues to the problems of divorce and school admission. The phone-in programme in this Tamil radio broadcast also helped non-French speaking Tamil refugees in getting guidance on acquiring valid immigration papers and also addresses issues relating to obtaining stay permit or refugee status in Western Europe (ibid.).

Tamil Radios like IBC interview people from different fields of expertise including industrialists, scientists, educationists and even local MPs-the radio takes up an issue and has a panel discussing it for weeks (Tarcisius, Interview). The Tamil media feels that it is inevitable to update Tamil diaspora about the events happening at home. As the Tamils interest lies in the conflict at home, that becomes a point of discussion in the radio as well as in the television.

Not only getting the news and the views of experts of regional importance, the views of Sri Lankan Tamil ministers and victims in Tamil areas are also presented. By interviewing members from diverse parties, the various opinions are presented to the viewers for them to judge on an issue. The Tamil Radio IBC also have correspondents in Tamil homeland, who helps in giving first hand information of what is happening in the country (Tarcisius, UK, Interview, 26 April 2008). Tamil diaspora are also encouraged to give their political views over the radio especially after a Sri Lankan minister or somebody working in the field is interviewed. IBC had a phone-in talk programme called 'Ilaikanji' (Tarcisius, UK, Interview, 26 April 2008).

The Tamil diaspora publications are also effective in consolidating the nationalist ideology of the diaspora. They prick the conscience of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora by calling them indifferent to the conflict at home. A Hot Spring editorial begins its article saying,

106 *Ilai* means herbal leaf, which is an edible part taken from jungle, *Kanji* is broth, rice- when this is mixed, people survive. It is the pot that boils them together (Tarcisius, UK, Interview, 26 April 2008).

107 Hot Spring, a Tamil diaspora publication in its editorial written by Subramaniam Sivanayagam in March 1999.
"Grandpa, where were you when the Tamil people were fighting for freedom in Sri Lanka?"

"Well, I was minding my own business, darling, and making pots of money, here in England" (http://tamilnation.org/forum/sivanayagam/990315grandpa.htm).

With almost three generations of Tamils living as expatriates in the UK, the diaspora publications reminds of the role the expatriates have to play in building their Tamil homeland.

In its publications, the LTTE illustrates its struggle for the right to self-determination of Tamils as genuine and as an accepted claim endorsing the principles in international agreements. By this, they make an attempt to consolidate their nationalist ideology. They quoted UN charter which mentions: "All people have the right to self-determination. By the virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development" (Political Committee, LTTE, 17 March 1997, tamilnation.org). The LTTE claims that Tamils make such efforts in the international arena to counter the misrepresentation of facts by the powerful Sri Lankan diplomatic lobby. Tamil diaspora organisations in their publications also urged the international community to make impartial announcements and call the co-chairs of the Sri Lankan peace process to make an effort to bring both the parties to the negotiating table (28 December 2005, CMPJSL, tamilcanadian.com).

The LTTE communication centre in Norway is the nodal point for receiving daily information from the Vanni jungles to the capital of Norway. The selective battlefield reports are sent through satellite phone links as daily faxes. Within twenty-four hours, the communication centre transfers the information on to the internet, which is viewed globally. Prabhakaran’s annual message on Heroes’ Day reaches the Tamil diaspora in minutes after its conclusion through Tamil radio broadcasts. The text of his speech in English and the photos of the event can be seen on the internet.

The internet also has become an ideal tool in the hands of Tamil expatriates crossing all the limitations. There are many websites hosted by the Tamil diaspora. Some of them are www.tamilnation.org, www.sangam.org, www.tamilcanadian.com etc. These websites carry the opinions of diasporic community on the homeland.
politics. They update the diaspora with all the recent political developments in Sri Lanka with expert analysis and comments, Guest books and discussion forums bring the politically sympathetic groups and like-minded people together for consolidating their identities. The LTTE is able to get access to mass media. This facilitates them to embark on a “careful and sustained construction of identities” (Ranganathan, 2002: 58).

Internet has become a very important playground for the LTTE supporters and anti-LTTE groups to target each other. There is Sinhalese on government side which is a clear opposition towards the Tamil websites. There is a clear division between pro and anti LTTE, groups of which clash in the cyber space. Also government uses the internet very effectively to defend their actions and to expose the LTTE’s violence.

The Tamil diaspora also finds their place in Facebook. When any campaign or programme is undertaken by a group of expatriates, they can draw the attention of other Tamils in that region who can support their initiative by coming together. For example, when a small group of Canadian Tamils took a walk to create awareness on the issue in May-June 2007, they set up a Facebook group who were encouraged and supported by 600 other Tamils joining this internet group (http://www.tamilsydney.com/content/view/688/37/).

The Tamil diaspora websites also carry the stories of the young generation Tamils born and brought up outside Sri Lanka. The personal interaction with the LTTE cadres in their visit to the north and east of Sri Lanka which revealed to them their past gruesome experiences and the necessity to take up arms; their commitment and genuineness; affection and love are underlined to explain the nature and characteristic of the LTTE. To many of the young Tamils like them who question the nature and need of the LTTE to take up violent path, such articles guide their thinking (13 September 2005, Tamil Canadian).

According to Peter Chalk, Tigers propaganda operation is unmatchable to Sri Lankan government. Internet serves not only as a propaganda tool but also helps in appealing for funds. The LTTE runs several websites. The official website of the LTTE is http://www.eelam.com. Not only this, the LTTE also funds many other
websites dealing with the Eelam issue. They have “hot links” and “jump-off points” which are networked to globally popular humanitarian and development organisations. As the technology itself provides anonymity, it is difficult to trace the LTTE funded websites. The LTTE uses the net to disrupt the government operations. The wing of the LTTE called the ‘Internet Black Tigers’ attacked the networks of Sri Lankan Embassy and Consulate with up to 800 junk emails per day (Ranganathan, 2002: 58).

Through internet, the LTTE has the advantage of addressing both the first generation and second-generation expatriate Tamil population. The young Tamils, who are techno-savvies, could help the LTTE in internet related operations.

Non-LTTE Tamil Diaspora Political Activism

There is also a category of dissident Tamil groups among the diaspora who call themselves ‘Democratic Tamils’ (Nirmala Rajasingham, Interview, London, 25 April 2008). Though they are small in number, they are quite effective as well. This very strong anti-LTTE sections in the diaspora couldn’t operate freely and only after the recent proscription of the LTTE, they became more active with their regular meetings against the LTTE.

There are few Tamil diaspora organizations which are profoundly anti-LTTE and were formed after getting wounded by the Tamil Tigers. Some of the people who have been subjected to hardship by the LTTE also direct their activism against the LTTE. One such recent group is formed by Jayadevan called Democratic Front. At the same time, some of those members associated with other groups like PLOTE, EPRLF, TELO etc had given up their struggle, though EPRLF and PLOTE are still there as groups. The members of such non-LTTE Tamil groups after all the hardship feel that they wasted their life and returned to normal life though their Tamil aspirations still endure. They feel dejected and helpless with no channel to contribute after meaningless killings of their several colleagues by the LTTE. So, they feel supporting the Tamil Tigers doesn’t only imply supporting of Tamil liberation but also implies supporting an armed group which was involved in many crimes.
The SLDF is also engaged in mobilising Tamil diaspora and the international community to create awareness among them on the militant activities of the LTTE. While the LTTE sympathetic Tamil diaspora groups were involved in exposing human rights violations by the Sri Lankan government, anti-LTTE groups like the SLDF attempts to reveal the LTTE's nature of intimidation and non democratic behavior. They work in collaboration with other active global Tamil dissenting groups and also few Sri Lankan Muslim groups. Through such propaganda, they try isolating the LTTE not only from the Tamil diaspora but also from the international community. By alleging that “a political culture of thuggery reproduces and maintains the LTTE’s hold over the diaspora community”, the SLDF gives a call to the international community that before showing eagerness to allot funds for development of North-East Sri Lanka or engage in talks with the military leadership of the LTTE, it should engage with the democratic Tamil diaspora, as genuine democratisation of Sri Lanka is possible only through their effective role (www.lankaweb.com/news/items04/191204-4.html, 19 December 2004). All these attempts which aim at isolating the LTTE from the international community to show that what they get to hear is the dominated voice of the LTTE’s “self-appointed sole-representatives” and not actually of all the Tamils who are intimidated (19 December 2004, www.lankaweb.com/news/items04/191204-4.html).

In the Tamil-dominated cities of London and Toronto, Human Rights Watch organised meetings with the Tamil diaspora community to make them aware of the conscription of child recruitment by the LTTE in the North and East of Sri Lanka. These meetings were to provide a discussion with the Tamils on the findings of their 85-page report titled “Living in Fear: Child Soldiers and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka” (19 December 2004, www.lankaweb.com/news/items04/191204-4.html). The report was also translated in to Tamil. The SLDF, along with other activists publicised this event among the Tamil diaspora. The SLDF reported the participation of almost 100 in London and 300 in Toronto. Organisation of such events against the LTTE made some of its supporters to disturb the meetings particularly in Toronto where they interrupted the meeting for long on the account of the absence of a Tamil panelist in the meeting (19 December 2004, www.lankaweb.com/news/items04/191204-4.html).
The SLDF also highlights the LTTE’s threats against the Tamil dissenting groups. The DBS Jeyaraj incident is the most propagated issue. Threats against Tamil Broadcasting Corporation in London and the Tamil newspaper ‘Uthayam’ in Australia are the other cases which are publicized by them.

The Tamil Times, which took anti-LTTE stand in its publications, faced the brunt of the Tamil Tiger threats from its beginning in the early 80s. The Tamil Times editor, supported the Indian Accord of 1987 and IPKF’s role in Sri Lanka and was critical of the LTTE. Since then, the relations between the paper and the LTTE changed. Being a lawyer and Human Rights activist, Rajanayagam was able to make a balance of the Human rights and democratic rights, and the paper reflected the violence at home and criticized the LTTE for its actions (Rajanayagam, Interview, London, 30 April 2008).

Sinhalese Countermeasures

 Compared to the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, Sinhalese diaspora or Sinhalese in general are like British. The Sri Lankan Left political organizations like the LSSP had its branch in the UK. Now, there is a JVP branch as well. Like the Tamil Tigers being financed by the Sri Lankan Tamils, the Sinhalese extremist groups JHU and JVP are financed by well-off Sinhalese doctors in the UK. The Sinhalese diaspora send their children to universities and also professionals among them earn 40,000-50,000 pound sterling per month (Upali, Interview, UK, 29 April 2008).

The biggest influx of Sinhalese diaspora was seen during the 1987-88 IPKF period and also when the Sinhalese youth faced human rights’ violations during the JVP uprising in the late 1980s. Most of them who migrated to the UK went with the help of Amnesty international and the British High Commission. This particular group of Sinhalese diaspora makes no constructive dialogue and has not even learnt English. Till early 1990s, Sinhalese took up jobs like cleaning, catering and attending super markets (Bandara, Interview, UK, 24 April 2008).

Sri Lankan government was also making an attempt to work with the Tamil diaspora and convince them. When Prof Tissa Vitarana, who was heading the APRC in Sri Lanka visited the UK in April 2008, he met certain Tamil diaspora groups and
had an interaction with them on resolving the conflict in Sri Lanka. The sympathizing
groups of the LTTE complain that he was only exposed to the anti-LTTE groups, as
arranged by the Sri Lankan High Commissioner in London. The TBC also
interviewed him during his visit to the UK.

The Tamil Tiger supporters in the UK complain that the Sri Lankan High
Commission since 2007 has been playing a much adverse role against the diaspora.
The Tamil diaspora claim that attempting to cancel the diaspora meetings and
seminars by informing the owners of the venue that the event is being organized by
the LTTE, which is a terrorist organization. They claim that an ordinary Englishman
who has no knowledge of the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka succumbs to such pressures
(Varadakumar, Interview, UK, 14 April 2008) and that the anti-LTTE diaspora groups
helps the Sri Lankan High Commission in getting informed of such events.

There is intense polarization between the Sri Lankan Tamils and Sinhalese in the
Western countries. There might be a certain degree of mingling between these
communities in Sri Lanka but in the UK, where I conducted my field study, the divide
is wider. A retired Sri Lankan Tamil Professor describes the Sinhalese diaspora as
“pro-Sri Lankan government, pro-war and anti-Tamil” (Ganesan, Interview, UK, 14
April 2008). The Sinhalese diaspora gatherings are marked by Sinhala chauvinist
rhetoric, mostly against the Sri Lankan Tamils. The Sinhalese diaspora events include
the Vaisakhi i.e Lord Buddha’s birthday and also the Sinhalese New Year that falls in
the mid- April. At the recent event of the Sinhalese New Year in Kingsbury in the
UK, the Sri Lankan minister Maitri Palar Sirisena spoke of ending the war by the next
year. He added, “We will liberate the land and bring it under Sinhala flag” (Bandara,
Interview, UK).

Musicians from Sri Lanka sing rhetorical patriotic songs at Sinhala diaspora events
especially of Sinhala military victories adding rhetoric to it in a subtle way to whip up
Sinhala sentiments. Ms Nanda Malini, a leading Sinhala singer, refused to sing the
song ‘this is the land of Sinhalese’ by the diaspora crowd in an event in the UK in
early 2008, she avoided it. But when she sang the song “Flower on the Streets”108,

108 It is a song written by Ravindranath Tagore in early 19th century paying tribute to the Indians
fighting for freedom from British.
Sinhalese diaspora took it with dual connotations relating it to the Sri Lankan military. In another musical event which happened in 2007, a Sinhalese expatriate in the crowd in the UK, asked Victor Ratnanayaka, as to why Sinhalese are close to Hindustani music than Carnatic music, he answered “we are Aryans” (Bandara, Interview, UK).

There are UK Sinhalese Association, British Sinhalese Association and England Sinhalese Association. Most of them are considered to be fundamentalist. Like the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora organizations, there is no unity among the Sinhalese diaspora. But, all these Sinhala groups agree on killing the Tamil Tigers and eliminate militancy.

There are eight to ten Buddhist temples in the UK, which also play a pro-government political role. They are always pro-government. When they take part in peace forums, they talk peace, but when war happens, they bless the soldiers. Events are also organized to bless the soldiers. Buddhist pujas mostly happen during the war. “Rana Viru” which means “War Heroes” is an event to bless the Sri Lankan soldiers in the war. There is also “Rana Viru Musical Fest” to fund the disable soldiers.109

Sinhalese is considered as a backward cultural nation. Whole culture based around Buddhist Temple or Buddhist books and is not wide open like Hindu culture. Among the Sinhalese diaspora, one can observe them having discussions on military strategies and the situation in Sri Lanka but there is no cultural discussion.

Responding to the activism of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, there are some organisations formed by the Sinhalese diaspora mostly after the 1983 anti-Tamil riots. There are many Sinhalese diaspora organisations formed in Australia. It is tough for many Sinhalese to accept the Tamil nationalism as they see Tamils as a “privileged minority” and their fight for Tamil Eelam is seen as an attempt to retrieve their lost privileged status (Wijesinha, members.fortunecity.com). Many Sinhalese and their organisations don’t even feel that the Tamil grievances are genuine. In Melbourne, the members of the Sinhalese diaspora who are prominent formed the "Organisation of Sri Lankan Overseas for National Unity" (OSLONU) and it has the objective of opposing the LTTE’s demand for a separate state. The Australian Centre for Sri

109 This Musical Fest to fund the disable soldiers happens in Sri Lanka too.
Lankan Unity (ACSLU) and the Society for Peace, Unity and Human Rights (SPUR) are the other Sinhala diaspora organisations which rejects the claim that Tamils have been discriminated (Wijesinha, http://members.fortunecity.com).

The diaspora organizations of the Sinhalese are involved in protests against any support to Sri Lankan Tamils’ Eelam movement in the West. The London branch of Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) along with other Sinhalese diaspora organisations organised a protest against the Sandeshya programme on BBC in front of Bush House, head quarters of the World Service in May 2006. Sri Lankan protestors attended in dozens of number. A petition blaming the BBC of hindering the Sri Lankan efforts to eliminate terrorism was handed over to Nicki Clarke, Executive Editor of the Asia Pacific Region and Priyath Liyanage, Head of Sinhala Service of the BBC World Service by the SLFP London organiser Rani Bulathwala. A Sinhalese diaspora organisation Sri Lankans Against Terrorism (SLAT) while giving a call for unbiased coverage on Sri Lanka made a statement which says, “Viewed internationally as an icon for the dissemination of the truth about various countries and their affairs, it (BBC) has been less than impartial or straightforward or factual in its reports about Sri Lanka” (lankalibrary.com, 15 May 2006, BBC).

Pro-government websites, especially the newspaper Asian Tribune brings out detailed reports against the LTTE. When an LTTE activist in London, Rajasingham Jeyadevan, was abducted in Vanni by the LTTE, the Asian Tribune carried a news story narrating his historical loyal relationship with the Tamil Tigers which ultimately resulted in a situation against him (19 March 2005 www.lankanewspapers.com/news/2005/3/1163.html). By pointing such incidents, the Tamil diaspora is made to feel that any Tamil however loyal he/she is to the LTTE can end up with such plight.

While there are organisations on both sides of Tamil and Sinhala diasporas’ which adopt extreme stands on the issue, there are few moderate organisations especially the Friends for Peace in Sri Lanka (FPSL) formed by both Sinhalese and Tamil professionals based in Canberra. Established in 1994, the FPSL has a long-term

---

110 The news report in BBC covering this protest also speaks of earlier media reports quoting Mahinda Rajapaksa calling SLFP to stay away from the protest (15 May 2006, BBC, lankalibrary.com).
objective to help in achieving durable peace in Sri Lanka. As Australia is a home for various ethnic groups of Sri Lanka, FPSL considers that Sri Lankan population there can play an important role in bringing a negotiated settlement to the conflict. FPSL is regarded as the only organisation “attempted to foster co-operation, collaboration and unity between different ethnic groups of the Sri Lankan community in Australia” (Wijesinha, http://members.fortunecity.com). Shakthi is considered to be another similar group working towards establishing talks with the Tamil community (Wijesinha, http://members.fortunecity.com). Solidarity for Peace has both Tamils and Sinhalese and the basic idea is to bring warring parties together and stop the war and also to lift the ban on the Tigers (Bandara, Interview, UK).

Second-generation Tamil Diaspora

Being born and bred outside Sri Lanka, the second generation Tamils are culturally more of West than Tamil. Like their parents, they have no emotional attachment to the Tamil land except few. The percentage of second generation of Tamils involved in Sri Lankan politics is always is of small proportion of the total population. Even though, it’s a small number, one can see higher proportion of them active for a particular period of time. Generally, diaspora who show interest in politics are of small percentage. It compensates for the number of children getting involved. It does not imply that the overall consciousness of Tamils with respect to the problem is less.

Members of second generation Tamils involved in the conflict might be less in 20 years but their impact will not be small. Tamil students are much more comfortable and confident as they speak good English as the indigenous people. They formed Tamil Societies in various universities and colleges. Diaspora Tamils are more powerful with their established careers in many international bodies like the UN. So, influence of second generation of Tamils might take in a different form as their influence is more compared to the earlier generation (Ganesan, Interview, UK).

Second generation Tamils whose parents are actively involved in the LTTE propaganda and campaign are more politically motivated and get more support to take active part in the Tamil youth associations. Other than that, there is a minor population of young Tamils who willingly take part in political activities. They also
see as to what is happening in through media on the killings and human right violations in Sri Lanka which creates more awareness and concern. Western education system has assisted the young Tamils to develop reasoning skills than always blindly accept their adults’ perception. They are independent in their thinking and do begin to question the parents and observe that their parents are biased. So, this also keeps the second generation Tamils away from politics. There are parents who got in to difficulty because of hard questioning by the children. They question about the violations committed by both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. But, they are not ready to play a role in contributing to the resolution of the conflict.

Some Tamil children even become more conscious of their identity as their peer group questions their roots. The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora want economic liberalization, English accent for their children but at the same time find cultural identity essential. It is a crisis point for children born outside Sri Lanka as they interact with children with different ethnicities. Tamil children question their parents’ failure to teach them Tamil when young because when they get in to broader environment like school or a work place, they come across the problem of identity. Most of them because of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka haven’t been to their homeland even once in their lifetime unlike their friends from Asia or African countries who could speak about their own countries and culture. From filling the application form in school, the diversity in cultures is maintained at local and national level in the Western countries to which the Tamil children were not able to provide answers.

Especially, this cultural dimension might impact on the political dimension because majority of Tamils are Hindus. So, even those who are politically insensitive or anti- LTTE children will get addressed as they are still culturally very aggressive. They recognize that there is a Tamil identity and that it has to be preserved. Tamil schools give them confidence that they all have a culture, where they study Tamil language, dance and music. The peer group comes together because of the weekend Tamil schools and for Tamils from different areas, it is a cultural gathering. The regular cultural stage performances by the young students in the Tamil schools are also attended by the headmasters of various schools and their white friends. The appreciation and admiration shown by the other racial groups to the Tamil culture-
their dance, music and attires give them all the more confidence and make them feel that they have a culture. When they go to universities, they go there as confident people who are fairly strong (Kuhanendran, Interview, UK).

The Temples are also places where Tamil children identify with one another. They develop an identity with some temple. (Varada Kumar, UK, Interview, 14 April 2008). While the Tamil schools and temples are the only link that brings the second generation Tamils together, tsunami helped them to have more knowledge about Sri Lanka. It made enormous stride by linking them to the people on the ground. Quite a lot of children particularly from the UK, Canada, Australia etc went to do some reconstruction work in tsunami affected areas in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan Tamil Televisions in the West also promoted such visits by publicising the amount of young volunteers going to countries affected by tsunami. So, the universities and also the Tamil community facilitated their visits to Sri Lanka. As there was a peace situation in the country, large number of students and younger generation Tamils could make a visit where they got an opportunity to absorb the real Tamil culture (Varada Kumar, Interview, UK, 14 April 2008).

R. Swaminathan, a former chief of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) stated that the Tamil diaspora support to the LTTE was more by “default” than by “choice” because they have run out of choices (Interview, Chennai, 18 January 2008). The LTTE did champion the cause and made the international community aware of the cause. At the same time, it terrified the people away with its militant methods. After the events of 11 September 2001, the LTTE was hardly championing the Tamils’ cause and its emphasis was merely on survival.

T.N.Gopalan, a correspondent for BBC Tamil Service states that the Tamil diaspora played both positive and negative roles. The diaspora could keep the issue of Tamil cause alive. They made the West understand the Sri Lankan government’s human rights violations and the sufferings of the Tamils. Without this role of the diaspora, the West would not have bothered about the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. At

They could visit mostly the Eastern villages than Jaffna as they were mostly affected by tsunami. As the war clouds loomed in Sri Lanka, further visits by the young Tamils were hindered (Varada Kumar, Interview, UK, 14 April 2008).
the same time, the diaspora essentially were being used by the LTTE to root its militant movement which was most “unfortunate” (Interview, Chennai, 20 January 2008).

Conclusion

The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, because of the political freedom they enjoyed in the West, could easily become an effective political voice for the ethnic conflict at home. They could aggressively exhibit their nationalism by participating in rallies, demonstrations, hunger strikes and various other diaspora events. By their active involvement and interaction with the Western politicians, they could carry forward political lobbying. Through diaspora publications, media and the internet, the issue was being kept alive to support the eelam movement. It is because of this activism of the diaspora that the issue got internationalized and could even help in drawing the attention of the international community to the post 2002 CFA peace efforts in Sri Lanka. Though there are non-LTTE diaspora groups among the LTTE, it is the Tamil Tiger sympathizers who dominate the political activism in the West and tried to gain authenticity to the eelam movement. The dissident Tamil community was silenced by the LTTE’s tactics of threats and intimidation. Only after the 2002 CFA and the subsequent weakening of the LTTE, these non-LTTE diaspora groups have become vocal and they basically support federalism. On the other side, there was counter political activism by the diaspora organizations of the Sinhalese, who oppose vehemently the LTTE’s militancy. The second-generation Tamil diaspora also have got involved in supporting the ethnic movement at home mostly through their associations in the Western universities.