Chapter – 3

India – Sri Lanka Relations During (1960-80)
India and Sri Lanka are sovereign entities and their bilateral relations can not be confined to the region only. Sri Lanka wanted a foot in the international scene. It asserted its individuality. It posed itself as a leader of the small nations in Asia. It also demonstrated its independence pursuing its external policies. This stand affected the Indo-Sri Lanka relations. Colombo started depending less and less on New Delhi. The problem of the people of Indian origin widened the gap between both the countries though there was constant interaction between them to settle the matter.

India was keen on restoring friendly bilateral ties based on equality and respect for territorial integrity. But the Sri Lanka misgivings continued and Premier Senanayake and his successor Kotelewala were unconcerned about India’s friendly feelings.

In the successive chapters an attempt would be made to depict the overall dimensions of continuity change-paradigm of India’s policy towards Sri Lanka during the period 1960 to 1980. During this period it caused no serious security threat to Sri Lanka and India felt no urgency to use it as an instrument to pressurize Sri Lanka to achieve its security objectives.

1. Misra, S.N. India the Cold War Years (South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi 1994) P-63
Regional Security and Indo-Sri Lanka Relations: -

By the early 1960's the Indian Ocean perimeter of Indian strategic interests assumed a new importance. The acting U. S. policy shifting, under the British umbrella to a direct use of naval power in the Indian Ocean to show for a new big power rivalry in the Indian Ocean.2

On the other hand, for India the 1960's were a decade of insecurity. Relations with China, the keystone of Nehru's foreign policy in Asia, turned into a dramatic conflict which was aggravated by the acquisition of nuclear capability by China in 1964 and the Sino-Pakistani Collusion. The two Indo-Pakistan wars of 1965, Pakistan got direct assistance from outside powers, amounted to the failure of Nehru's strategy of keeping external involvement out of South Asian conflicts.

All these made India embark on defence and strategic planning with a new determination. These developments had a marked influence on Indo-Sri Lanka relations from the early 1960. While India was deeply involved in regional conflicts Sri Lanka was inclined to avoid commitment in order to safeguard its own national security. This required more positive diplomacy than before.

3. Ibid
In these period Mrs. Bandaranaike was inclined to adopt a independent and assertive policy then her late husband. In her policy the friendly relationship with India was considered the corner stone but not to the extent of community to support India in the regional conflict.

Mrs. Bandaranaike very carefully played a balancing game and brought the China link as a countervailing device to the dominate power in the South Asian set up. The response of Sri Lanka to Nehru’s appeal for sympathy and support for India’s cause during the 1962 Sino-Indian war was a carefully worded position of neutrality. India expected Sri Lanka at least to brand china as aggressor. However, Mrs. Bandaranaike even resisted the pressure from within and outside her party to avoid taking such a position.

She interpreted the war as a part of power politics of the Cold War on the argument that India received military assistance from western powers. India on the other hand preferred a narrow interpretation of the principles of non alignment. The principal tents of Indo- Sri Lanka relations as illustrated by the Sino-Indian war and the Indo-Pakistani conflicts of 1965 and 1971 appear to be that India did expect Sri Lanka to play a friendly role in the event of a conflict between India and another power, but was not in a position to exert pressure on Sri Lanka to make a positive commitment.

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5. Ibid
Though Bandaranaike’s stand in this dispute was particularly friendly to India as was expected from a fellow member of non-aligned Movement, Indo-China Conflict did not affect the ongoing cordial relationship between India and Sri Lanka.

**SINO-INDIAN WAR (1962) AND SRI LANKA:**

The Sino-Indian dispute of 1962 had brought to test the strength and genuineness of friendship between Indian and Sri Lanka. Although Sri Lanka was anxious for the solution, she did not want to antagonize either of the two countries. She maintained neutralist posture and remained ‘equidistant’. The economic constraint of small country like Ceylon was guiding factor on its action. As Ceylon exported more than 60% of its total rubber exports to China and acquired from China more than 40% of her total rice imports under the rubber-rice barter agreement. So the trade and also patterns of aid which as liberal since 1957, were favourable to Sri Lanka.

However, Sri Lanka arranged a conference of non-aligned nations in Colombo to solve the conflict where Srimavo Bandaranaike expressed vociferously that the conflict was not only a threat to non-alignment but also a negation of the agreed principles of ‘Panchsheel’. Keeping in mind the economic relation with China. She criticized India for seeking military aid

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from Western Countries, and viewed it “a kind of entanglement with the power blocs”, which negated the policy of non-alignment.

In sum, it could be said that during Srimavo Bandarnaike’s period (1960-65) Sri Lanka moved closer to China than India. But in response to it India did not disregard the “Colombo Proposal”. She accepted it in toto whereas China had done so only ‘in principle’. Here, it is significant to note that Sri Lanka government denied having adopted any pro-China posture and claimed to be impartial in bringing both India and China together.

However, China’s rejection of the Colombo proposal was something against the prestige of Sri Lanka. Later Sri Lanka’s role of peacemaker did not bear any fruitful result and failed to win the admiration of either of the countries. Again, India might perhaps have been more pleased, had Sri Lanka’s official attitude to the war been more pro-Indian, but it appreciated the Sri Lanka government’s independent stand.

The two Indo-Pakistan wars, Pakistan got direct assistance from outside power, amounted to the failure of Nehru’s strategy of keeping external involvements out of South Asian Conflicts.

8. Ibid.
9. Kodikara, P-27 op.cit, No. 4
INDO-PAK WAR (1965 & 1971) AND SRI LANKA

During Indo-Pak war of 1965 and 1971, Sri Lanka maintained a neutral stand. As Sri Lanka had better relations with Pakistan at that time, Pakistan was in advantageous position to persuade Sri Lanka to adopt an anti-India posture. But since it was an internal affairs of Pakistan to preserves latter’s unity and integrity. Sri Lanka welcomed the speedy solution of the problem, expressing that Kashmir dispute is not only a cause of trouble between the two great neighbours but also for the whole South Asia.\textsuperscript{10} India on the other hand also wanted an early solution of the problem because it feared that it might pose a hindrance to her relationship with other neighbouring countries.

The bitter relationship between India and Pakistan since their independence, had played a crucial role in hampering India’s cordial relationship with other countries in general and Sri Lanka in particular. The Indo-Pak war of 1971, provided a ticklish problem for Sri Lanka and at the same time a grave challenge to India. But Bandarnaike, declared on 30 November 1971, showing an unhelpful attitude, that “her government did not want to get involved in the present Indo-Pak dispute”, and would follows a strict policy of non-alignment and non-involvement in the question.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10} Banerjee, Dipankar, Security in South Asia (Manas Publications, New Delhi 1999) p. 63-64
\textsuperscript{11} Asian Recorder, New Delhi, Vol. XVII, no. 27-31 (December 1971), pp. 105-124
During the crisis, unlike India, Sri Lanka allowed transit facilities to Pakistan's aircraft, keeping in view its strict adherence to the policy of non-intervention. This move left room for certain elements in India to brand Sri Lanka as an anti-Indian country.\textsuperscript{12}

However, it is said that Sri Lanka stand was probably due to her economic relation with China and United States and the ethnic and linguistic diversities with South Asian nations. Besides this, during this war Sri Lanka was busy in dealing with internal disturbance of insurgency, that broke out in 1971. Again, India's "Treaty of Friendship, peace and cooperation" with the USSR proved to be another factor for the indifferent attitude of Sri Lanka government. But in early September 1971, India's the then foreign minister, Swarn Singh, had a discussion with Sri Lanka Prime Minister about the development in East Pakistan and emergence of Bangladesh. He assured Sri Lanka about India's strong determination not to interface in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries and particularly Sri Lanka. They again realized that early settlement of the refugee problem was a matter of urgency, which posed for India social and economic problems.\textsuperscript{13}

It is important to mention that during the Indo-Pak war of 1971, Sri Lanka initially adopted a low key profile while expecting a solution of the East Bengal Crisis which would preserve the integrity of Pakistan. Even

\textsuperscript{12} Banerjee, Dipankar, P-64, op.cit, No. 10
\textsuperscript{13} Dutt, V.P., India's Foreign Policy (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi) p. 233
after crisis in order not to offend Pakistan, Sri Lanka did not accord diplomatic recognition to Bangladesh unit March 1972. But in the process, Sri Lanka did unwillingly offend Indian susceptibilities.14

India was first country to confer recognition of Bangladesh, while Sri Lanka was the last south Asian nation to do so. India realized and gave more respect to Colombo inhibitions and hesitations even after latter’s hostile vote at UN. But India did not allow to hamper their bilateral relation by latter’s stand on Bangladesh’s development.

Notwithstanding this, the Indo – Sri Lanka relations advanced towards more close and more friendly. Sri Lanka extended whole hearted support to the Indian effort for integration of Goa, Daman and Diu. The second non-aligned conference in October 1964 at Cairo, also reflected their common outlook. Their stand on world affairs were broadly analogous. The non-aligned conference at Lusaka in 1970 also gave them enough scope to express their common approaches and suggestions to international problems. It was at Lusaka summit, India supported whole heartedly Bandarnaike’s proposal for making Indian ocean as a zones of peace. Their support to New International Economic order and an identity of approach was again revealed on the problem of apartheid in South Africa.

14. Kodikara, S.U. P-139, op.cit., No.4
INDIA AND LEFTIST REVOLUTION IN SRI LANKA

It is pertinent here to mention about the leftist revolution in Sri Lanka vis-à-vis India’s corresponding role. The leftist movement in 1971 in Sri Lanka had adversely affected India’s security concern and reinforced its interest of maintaining cordial relations with her neighbours. India is well aware of the fact that internal disturbances in any one of them have a spillover effect on India’s polity or segment of it.\(^{15}\) And India being the nearest neighbour of Sri Lanka remain alert to the internal situation of that country. Therefore, when Sri Lanka appealed for help during leftist upsurge in 1971 (March-April), India as a friendly neighbour responded promptly and came to Sri Lanka’s rescue. Although, India was the second country after Britain who offered assistance consisting of Helicopters and Ships in order to lessen the troubled situation. Again, a press report had mentioned that New Delhi had provided some 55 million worth of military assistance to the Colombo government of course India’s own security interest in the stability and order of Sri Lanka became the guiding force for such action. India’s assistance comprised: six helicopters (with crew) four naval fregates (with 2500 personnel), 150 military personnel, small arms and ammunition.\(^{16}\)

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16. Appadorai, A and Rajan, M.S. India’s Foreign Policy and Relations, (South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, 1985) P-198
Although this assistance was modest in the quantity, it seems to have played a decisive role in defeating the insurgency.

India’s immediate response to this incident established. India’s strong position in South Asia. It also proved India’s keen interest in maintaining the safety of her neighbours, gave a confidence to Sri Lanka and to the South Asian countries that India had no intentions of invasion or any design of territorial expansion. But she is more concerned about the safety and security of these countries.

Towards a Peace Zone in the Indian Ocean:

Sri Lanka has always perceived its vulnerability as a small island situated in the centre of the Indian Ocean. By the early 1960’s it was clear that Britain was no longer capable of continuing its role in the Indian Ocean. The US decision to bring the Indian Ocean also under the operational sphere of the seventh fleet in 1963, on the other hand was looked upon by Sri Lanka as the beginning of super power naval rivalry in the Indian Ocean with all its security implications.17 Sri Lanka, apart from protesting to the United States against this decision, initiated the Indian Ocean Nuclear Free Zone proposal at the Cairo conference of the non-aligned nations. At this stage there was no prospect of India becoming a dominant power in the Indian Ocean and

the proposal as it developed in the 1960’s was focused against the super power presence in the Indian Ocean.

At the beginning the Indian attitude to the Nuclear Free Zone proposal was lukewarm. On the US decision, Nehru commented in the Lok Sabha:

“If the US government decides to do this, all we can say today, is that outside territorial waters of India the Ocean is naturally open to than as to the vessels of any other.”\(^{18}\)

This attitude was influenced by India’s bitter memory of the 1962 Chinese attack and its acceptance of military assistance from the US. Just two days before the entry of the seventh Fleet into the Indian Ocean in December 1963. Nehru had talks with the US General Taylor in New Delhi. This is interpreted to mean that the US had the tacit approval of India for this operation.\(^{19}\)

When the Soviet naval operations in the Indian Ocean commenced in 1968, India preferred to refer to them as a mere reactive presence because of India’s close links with the Soviet Union.\(^{20}\) But with this entry of the Soviet Union the naval rivalry in the Indian Ocean intensified the threat it posed to the security of the littoral countries created a renewed interest in the Nuclear Free Zone proposal. During the period 1965-70 the Sri Lanka government

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18. Kodikara, S.U., P-183-184, No. 4
19. Jayasekera, P.V.J. P. 493-94, op.cit, No.2
20. Ibid.
(UNP) under Dudley Senanyake with its traditional friendship with the Western powers, showed little interest on the subject.

Up to the beginning of the 1970’s the Sri Lanka feeling of threat and the mutually conflicting perceptions of national security constantly surfaced in Indo- Sri Lanka relations in connection with bilateral issues and sub-systemic and regional conflicts.

The developments took place in the background of regime changes in both countries which made the earlier policy of restraint and mutual accommodation of each others security interests difficult J. R. Jayawardena’s government was outspoken in its friendship towards the short lived Janata government (1977-79). The return of Mrs. Indira Gandhi to power provided the internal political atmosphere in India which contributed to bring Indo- Sri Lanka relations on to a path of confrontation. The years (1977-79) was historic for both countries.

**Indo- Sri Lanka relation under Janta government**

This chapter seeks to explain and analyze the foreign policy which Janta government initiated towards Sri Lanka during its reign of power i.e. 1977-79. The year 1977 was historic for both India and Sri Lanka. In India Janata party emerged victorious by breaking the political hegemony and
long rule of congress. In other words it can be said that it was the first time since independence that the myth on one party dominance system was exploded in India. In Sri Lanka too, The United National Party captured power by bushing aside Sirimavo Bandarnaike and her united front. The year 1977 also witnessed emergence of a new political leadership in both India and Sri Lanka. Both veteran politicians Morarji Desai and J.R. Jayewardene in their respective countries took over the reigns of power.

R. Premdas, who was later to become Prime Minister under Jayewardene viewed this development as a "rejection of dark regimes of mis-rule by the people of both countries." 21 Similarly Atal Behari Vajpayee the then Indian Foreign Minister noted that he was struck by the similarity in the way the peoples of India and Sri Lanka has asserted their democratic right and also a commonalty in thinking between the election manifestoes of Janta Party of India and that of the UNP in Sri Lanka. 22 On Jayewardene’s assumption of office as Sri Lanka’s Prime Minister, Morarji Desai sent him an unusually warm message of felicitations. He congratulated the people of Sri Lanka for the “peaceful transition of power—yet another triumph of democracy in this part of the world.” He added: “I recall that on my assumption of office (in March 1977), you had drawn my attention to many

22. Gupta, M.G. India’s Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice (M.G. Publication, New Delhi, 1985) P-305
similarity between our approach. The manner and extent of your victory also affords on interesting parallel. This encourages the hope that we shall succeed in working together for the common good of our two countries.”

In the context of interstate relations this identity of purpose was further consolidated by the Janta Government’s desire to return India in to “genuine non-alignment”, improve relations with Washington and concentrate on “neighbourhood diplomacy.”

Here what we feel more important is to discuss the broad features of Janata Governments foreign policy. Also, a brief sketch of the domestic developments in Sri Lanka is essential. The period was crucial in the annul of Sri Lanka political history as several developments such as TULF’s electoral victory in North-East, Ethnic violence, constitutional amendment, state terror towards militants etc. were the conducive factors for the growth of terrorist upsurge and decline of Tamil Sinhalese relations. Such a development was also somehow related with India’s security concern. How Sri Lanka’s domestic developments were suitably accommodated in to the foreign policy framework of Janta Government is the crux of this chapter. Hence, I have tried our best to highlight all the important issues that concerns our study.

23. Indian and Foreign Review, (New Delhi Publication, Division 1 August 1977), P.20
Following continued pressure to end the Emergency rule and hold general elections, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi finally decided in January to hold elections in March 1977. The opposition parties decided to join hands in contesting the elections under the newly-established Janata Party banner. The elections were mainly contested on domestic issues. The choice presented to electorate was between “freedom and slavery, between democracy and dictatorship.” With its slogan of “Bread and Liberty”, the Janata Party was voted in to power at the Sixth general elections. Foreign policy was not a question in debate. In foreign policy, Janata Party called for “genuine non-alignment free from attachment to any power bloc and for a solution to outstanding issues with some of the neighbouring countries in order to promote a good neighbour policy.”

The event was historic and the implications moments. First non-congress government came to power since 1947. It resulted the end of Indira Gandhi’s 11 years of premiership and on 24 March, Morarji Desai was sworn in as Prime Minister. Atal Bihari Vajpayee became the new Foreign Minister.

24. Initially made up of the party of Jan Sangh, Bhartiya Lok Dal (BLD) and Socialist Party, it was launched in New Delhi on 23rd January 1977, with Morarji Desai as Chairman and Charan Singh as Vice-Chairman on 25th January, the Swatantra Party also announced its decision to become a constituent of Janta Party. The biggest fillip was given to the Janta group, however, when Jagjivan Ram a stalwart of ruling congress party and a senior cabinet Minister of the Government resigned from the party and the ministry on 2 February 1977. Under his leadership, a new party was formed, the congress for Democracy and decided to contest the forthcoming elections under a common symbol with the Janata.

When Janata leadership confronted the fast changing global and regional environment they found that the policy followed by their predecessors was sound, may be they lacked the capacity to give new directions to the foreign policy. Highlighting the foreign policy of Janata Government, Vajpayee said that it was based on national consensus with in the parameters of 'genuine non-alignment'. For him the Janata Government has followed the principles of continuity in foreign policy where it is desirable and is based on national consensus, and where the national perception is in favour of a change, or a changed in emphasis, Janata has not hesitated to bring that about.26 The way the Prime Minister and his Foreign Minister reiterated showed that the object of foreign policy was to create around India an environment of peace, trust and stability which would permit optimum utilization of India’s natural and man-power resources for economic, social, and cultural advancement. For them it was only in a climate of trust and peace that the creative forces of our people can be released and harnessed for improving the well-being of society.

Vajpayee also emphasized India’s commitment of non-alignment. But he was against any biasness towards either of the superpowers. In the Lok Sabha on June 6, 1977, he said:

“We cherish our national independence but reject the need to consign national arrangement. Non-alignment frees a nation from the pressure to borrow foreign model or adapt other ideologies which may be alien to all nation’s civilization or its ethos.”

Significantly, not the policy of non-alignment as a whole but its new interpretation after the signing of Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971 was particularly criticized by the rightist forces. To them it was like India’s alignment with the Soviet union. Therefore, it was a natural outcome of Janata Government to give a new direction to India’s foreign policy. The Janata leaders called it a more towards ‘proper’ or ‘genuine’ non-alignment. Morarji Desai, at a press conference on 24 March declared: “his government could follow a policy of ‘proper non-alignment’ and special relationship with any country would cease. India’s relationship with all countries would be on the basis of reciprocity of relations with one country would not be allowed to come in the way to relations with another country.” In his inaugural address to the meeting of the 26 Members coordinating Bureau of non-aligned countries which began at the level of foreign ministers in New Delhi on 7 April 1977. Desai said that non-alignment represented the national consensus and had become a national article of faith. He declared:

27. Foreign Affairs Record, (June, 1977), P. 90
28. Apadorai A. and M.S. Rajan, India’s Foreign Policy and Relations, (South Asian Publications, New Delhi, 1985), P. 598.
“India will remain non-aligned in the real sense of the term because non-alignment engenders the freedom from fear in the realm of world politics.”

In a speech in Gwalior on 9 May 1977, Vajpayee said that the policy of non-alignment could be followed “more vigorously and honestly.” It was a product of India’s freedom struggle. A big country like India would not follow any other policy nor would be a camp follower of any country. He expressed similar views in the Lok Sabha, in London during the commonwealth Prime Ministers conference in June 1977, in UN General Assembly and in the council of Foreign Affairs in New York in October 1977.

From the very first day of its existence, the Janata Government endeavoured to erode the Cobwebs of suspicions, misunderstanding, doubts, and fear of interference relating to neighbouring countries. In a speech at Jawahar Lal Nehru University in May 1978, Vajpayee threw light on Janata Government’s neighbourhood policy. For him, Janata Government has not only professed but practiced strict non-interference in the internal affair of neighbours.

29. Apadorai, A and M.S. Rajan, P-598 op.cit., No. 28
Open policy of friendship, mutually advantageous co-operation and equal and beneficial bilateralism with the neighbours were the key to Janata’s neighbourhood diplomacy.\(^{31}\)

Janata Government also started a confidence building exercise vis-a-vis the neighbours. Proposal for special attention to the strengthening of ties and economic and technical cooperation with non-aligned and other developing countries was given by the government. Vajpayee was very much confident to make due share of sacrifice to promote the well being and development of its neighbours which in the long term serves India’s own national interest. Criticizing the foreign policy prior to the Janata Government Vajpayee said:

"We have done away with the duality that had crept into the conduct of country’s foreign policy some time ago. By promoting trust and cooperation, we have only furthered our national interest."\(^{32}\)

The first priority in Janata Governments foreign policy was of course the promotion of cooperation and trust with immediate neighbours. Here, the importance given to personal high level contact should not be undermined, while Desai was able to visit Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, Vajpayee undertook extensive tours of countries in the region. The purpose was to acquaint neighbouring states of new Indian leadership as well as

\(^{31}\) Foreign Affairs Record (May 1978), pp. 207-13
\(^{32}\) Prasad, Bimal, P-4, op.cit., No.26
promoting mutual trust, bilateral relationship, strengthening peace and stability in the region. Broadly speaking, India’s policy was as Vajpayee himself stated “turning swords in to ploughshare,” A normal and relaxed relation with Pakistan and beneficial bilateral relations’ with China were adopted. In west Asia, like Nehru, Janta Government supported the Arab cause and nuclear policy was put in to cold storage. As K.P. Karunakaran aptly remarks:

“The Janta Party, which replaced the congress party from power in 1977, did not indicate that if was departing in any sense from the fundamentals of the foreign policy so far followed by the Indian Government since 1947. It can be said that Janta party followed a foreign policy which was highly pragmatic and aimed at promotion of national interests. However, there was not much deviation from the basic principles on which the Indian foreign policy had been based so far.”

It can be said that the shift in India’s foreign policy under the Janata rule were neither new nor great. They were continuing adjustments. Sometimes more marked than in the past, to the India’s changing need in the changing domestic and external context. Even Vajpayee admitted:

33. Foreign Affairs Record (June 1977), P-91-92 also see S.C. Gangal “Trends in India’s Foreign Policy in K.P. Mishra (ed.) Janata’s Foreign Policy (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979), P-39
“if there has been a change, it has been to impact honesty and sincerely to our national purpose consistently with our principles. If there has been a change, it has been to impart a fresh thrust to the promotion of the cause of peace and disarmament to strengthen stability and cooperative spirit to fortify independence and freedom from exploitation.”

The above framework of Janta government’s foreign policy can be helpful in understanding and analyzing the India’s policy towards Sri Lanka during the same period. Equally important here is the brief discussion about the domestic development in Sri Lanka during the same period and India’s response to those developments.

**DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS IN SRILANKA**

India remained well-nigh aloof from domestic developments in Sri Lanka. Many ethnic riots have taken place between the Sinhalas and the Tamils since 1956; though at times even the Indian Tamils and some Indian passport holders suffered in the riots, India did not go beyond issuing a customary statement expressing its concern. The Sinhala-Tamil battle in Sri Lanka was being fought out for the last three decades without India being directly dragged into it. Even in early 1970’s the main demands of Tamil organizations were-

(i) Tamil should be recognized by the constitution as an official language along with Sinhala.

(ii) Buddhism should not be declared as the sole state religion, and that Sri Lanka should be a secular state.

(iii) There should be a specific provision in the constitution of our flow the caste system; and

(iv) That the traditionally maintained distinction between the Sri Lanka Tamil and the plantation Tamil of Indian origin should be dispensed with.\textsuperscript{36}

On the otherhand the 1972 constitution, disregarding these Tamil demands, provided ‘Sinhala’ as the official language and gave to Buddhism the foremost place in Sri Lanka. Opposition to new constitution provided a common platform on which all the Tamil parties could unite for the first time since the break up of the Tamil congress in 1949. In 1973, the Federal party, the Tamil congress, the Ceylon workers congress and the united front of Eelam Tamil formed a Tamil United Front (later on named as Tamil United Liberation Front; TULF) to fight for freedom dignity and rights of the Tamil people. By the mid seventies the Tamil guerilla movement started taking format shape. It consisted mostly of Tamil youths and they began to engaged themselves in assassinations, robberies and other types of violence.

\textsuperscript{36} Vaidik, V.P., Ethnic Crisis in Sri Lanka: India’s options, (National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1986), p. 35
On May 5, 1976, Velupillai Prabhakaran’s organization gave itself the name of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Their underground activities came to be known as tiger movement.

In this backdrop, the 1977 election was contested and the results reinforced the idea of Tamil Eelam. The TULF manifesto sought a mandate from the northern and eastern provinces to set up “an independent sovereign state of Tamil Eelam.” The TULF won all the 14 seats in the North and 4 in the East (it contested for 8 out of 10 seats in eastern provinces). The TULF emerged as the largest party in opposition.

The TULF vehemently criticized the various policies of government which deprived the Tamil’s rights. The ‘Sinhala only’ bill of 1956 hampered their dignity and as a result the Tamil employment in the government services declined from 30% in 1956 to 20% in 1965 to only 5% in 1970 and to almost nil in 1978. Describing the problems among the two communities in a nutshell, C.R. Desilva writes:

“There are four issues which continue to fuel conflict between Singhalese and Sri Lanka Tamils. These are language and employment, regional autonomy, settlement of Singhalese on lands claimed to be traditional homelands of the Tamils, and access to higher education.”

In this context Mohamamed Humayun Kabir maintains that, in fact one of the common causes behind ethnic or other sectarian turmoil is the sense of deprivation and discrimination regarding its share in political and economic power suffered by a communal, religious, linguistic or regional groups which begins to agitate. In Sri Lanka, the Tamils felt that they had been discriminated against by the Singhalese majority at least in four areas – education, colonisation, language and employment.

The TULF committed itself to the goal of separate sovereign state for Tamils, the “Eelam”. A. Amirthalingam interpreted the election results as a clear cut mandate for Tamil Eelam. The militancy of the Tamil ethnicity and the militarisation of the Tamil movement was an inevitable logical course to follow.

It is also because the electoral promises made to the TULF by the UNP in 1977 elections were not honoured. The UNP election manifesto in 1977 maintained:

"There are numerous problems confronting the Tamil Speaking people. The lack of solution to their problems has made the Tamil speaking people support even a movement for the creation of a separate state. In the interest of national integration and unity so necessary for the economic development of the whole country, the party feels such problems should be solved without loss of time."\(^{41}\)

However, the manifesto promise was neglected by the UNP. On the other hand despite the overwhelming Tamil vote for a separate state the TULF did not precipitate the struggle to attain its declared objective.

In fact, the TULF has been using the resolution of Tamil Eelam as a starting point in the prolonged negotiations with the Sinhalas. It was also meant to serve another purpose, that is, to blunt the criticism from the Tamil terrorists.\(^{42}\)

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42. The Tamil terrorists had started calling the TULF leadership “Impotent” and “deceitful”, Balasingham, A.S. Liberation, Tiger and Tamil Eelam Freedom Struggle. (Centre for South and South East Asian Studies, Madras 1983), p. 29
This ambivalent attitude of the Tamil leadership was very well read by the shrewd politician Jayewardene who tried his best to co-opt the Tamils into a broad Sinhala Buddhist system. The Bandarnaike government during its last phase had also tried to assuage the TULF by initiating serious discussions for mutual cooperation with chelvanayakam but the entire exercise proved to be barren.43

After the 1977 election the situation in Sri Lanka was rapidly changing towards a critical point. With in a month of UNP'S electoral victory violence erupted in the North, with Tamils mostly at the receiving end. In that gruesome riots of August 1977 almost a hundred Tamils were killed and more than 40,000 Tamil refugees were evacuated to the camps in Colombo and Kandy.

The backdrop to the riots was provided by the inflammatory speeches made by the Tamil leaders during the election campaign.

What mattered most with the Sinhala people was the distorted version of the speeches made by the TULF leaders rather than what was actually said and meant. The 1977 riots were provoked by a clash in Jaffna between students attending a school carnival and the police.

The Tamil militant groups were still mostly in their nascent phase. To this day, no one has assessed "how this chain of violence between 1977-81 contributed to shattering Tamil hopes from the UNP regime and encouraging Tamil Militancy."45

When elected by the land slide margin in 1977, the Prime Minister turned President,46

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44. A few examples of such speeches have been quoted by Dissanayaka as below:
A. Yogeswaran, the TULF candidate from Jaffna said, "We can not help it if there is chaos... we foresee recurring communal disturbances, defiance of the Sinhala government, chaos, Jails filled with Tamils and near anarchy in the North and the East because we will make it impossible for the Sinhala Government to rule us!",
The youth leader declared: we will swim in the blood of the Sinhala people”. We will wear shoes made out of the Skins of the Sinhala people and drink their, blood,” “We will watch over the dead bodies of the Sinhala people to form out Tamil Eelam.” Some of these remarks were attributed to the wife of A. Amrithalingam by rumour-mongers. See, T.D.S.A. Dissanayaka, Agony of Sri Lanka’, (Swastika, Colombo 1984), p. 21


46. With the installation of the Prime Minister J.R. Jayewardene as the first elected Executive President on February 4, 1978, Presidential system was established in Sri Lanka. Asian Recorder, (New Delhi) Vol. XXIV, No. 10 (March 5-11), 1978, p. 14205.
Jayawardene took a helpful step aiming at diffusing the tension and insulating the Sinhala-Tamil conflict for its ultimate liquidation. In his address to the Nation from the historic Buddhist temple “Delada Majagawa” he declared that “our aim is to see that every law abiding person in this land could walk on the streets fearlessly with heads erect.” He also claimed to have restored with in six months of his UNP coming to power a full democratic freedom which got eroded during the last regime of Sirimavo Bamdarnaike. Jayawardene embarked upon a three-pronged strategy to face the Tamil challenge. First, whatever concessions it could bestow upon the Tamils, it tried to enshrine them partly in the constitution and a part of them were granted through parliamentary resolutions and executive orders without bothering to seek the support of the TULF. Secondly, a wedge was successfully introduced between the Sri Lanka Tamils and Indian Tamils; and thirdly, state terror was unleashed on the Tamil terrorists. In May 1978, the National state assembly passed a Bill banning the Tamil Militant separatist movement called ‘Liberation Tigers’ and all organisations professing violence.

Moreover, a new constitution was unanimously adopted on August 16, 1978. Among the concessions granted to the Tamils were some on language. Article 19 of the 1978 constitution under chapter four, ‘language’
reads: "The National language of Sri Lanka shall be Sinhala and Tamili, though the official language of the Sri Lanka shall be Sinhala (Art. 18)," 47

The District Development councils were set up for the development of power and new admission policy was adopted in the universities. But in actuality, these steps were far from satisfying the Tamils. The DDC’S were given very little powers. The executive committee members of the DDC’s were appointed by the president and thus had full control over them. Regarding the university admission they were based on the basis of districts since six of the countries twenty four districts are Tamil majority, the Tamil students were at a disadvantageous position than their Sinhala counterparts.

        The 1978 constitution of Sri Lanka too enhanced the Sinhala-Tamil Schism. In Article 9, it made Buddhism the only religion of the country. Article 18 shows as Sinhala was made the national language. The constitution also abolished the long-obsolete distinction between ‘citizen by descent’ and ‘citizen by registration’ and provided for one citizenship. 48

47. Vaidik, V.P., P-49 op.cit, No.36
To contain ethnic conflict president Jayawardene moved one step further by expelling the TULF from Parliament on the ground of promoting separatism. On October 7, 1977, he said in National State Assembly “You gentlemen of TULF only talk of federalism you don’t speak on the bills that come before this House” such a drastic step backfired on him and the guerilla’s gained support from the Tamil areas. In 1979, a special Task force, (an antiterrorist group) was set up and as has been alleged for the training of this force the government enlisted the help of Israel’s ‘Mossad’, the most undisciplined force in the world.49

The settlement of Sinhala farmers in Tamil areas was another step put forward by the government. About 200,000 Sinhalese armed and trained farmers were supposed to be a security cordon across the North. From 1979 onwards, there was military occupation in the Tamil areas. It was during this time that the Tiger movement gathered momentum. They began to attack police stations, kill Sinhalese peple, loot banks and things like that. As a result the state sponsored violence was started and became unawaited in Jaffna.

The anti-Tamil feeling was being created among the people by the important figures of Jayawardane’s UNP government. Taking this opportunity, the Sinhalese trouble shooters started violence on the Tamil farmers in the north. The Tamil houses were burnt, their shops looted and burnt, and finally the Tamils has to resort to refugee camps. A Hindu temple was destroyed at Amparai.\(^{50}\)

With the growing tough attitude of the governments the incidents of terrorism were increasing. The terrorists celebrated the New constitution Day, 7 September 1978, by blowing up an Air Ceylon aircraft at Ratmalana airport. The incident attracted international publicity. A few informants were also killed by the ‘Tigers’ who also robbed banks post offices and schools. The day-light murder in Jaffna peninsula became the common feature. In such a circumstances the government enacted the most suppressive ‘prevention of Terrorist Act’ in July 1979. The Act was on the pattern of the South African Act and was more stringent than the British Act meant to prevent IRA terrorism. The Act denied trial by Jury, enabled the detention of suspects for a period of 18 months, allowed confessions extracted under fortune to be admissible in evidence and made it a criminal offence to be aware of the activities of the terrorists and not to report them to police. The innocent peoples were tortured due to this Act. The Act was

condemned by TULF and even by non-political elements like the Christian missionaries in Jaffna.51

In the wake of these developments, a state of emergency was declared by the government from the midnight of 12 July 1979 in Jaffna. President Jayawardene gave special mandate to army commander Brigadier T.Z. Weeratunge by saying:

“"It will be your duty to eliminate, in accordance with the law of this land, the menace of more specifically from the Jaffna district. I will place at your disposal all resources of the state. I earnestly request all law abiding citizens to give their cooperation to you. This talks has to be performed by you and completed before 31 December 1979."”52

The unrestrained use of military power led the torture and murder of many innocent young men. Even politically non-active people were harassed in the course of interrogation. The Amnesty International and International Commission of Jurists severely criticized this act of the government.53

The period 1977 to 1980 shows domestic turmoil in Sri Lanka. It was the period of sharp division between the Tamils and Sinhalas. Terrorist activities started getting momentum. Also the political situation in Sri Lanka was in a doldrum. From the Indian point of view the domestic developments in Sri Lanka was also related to the security concern for India.

51. Ibid
52. Bullion, Alan J. P-29, op.cit No. 17
INDIA'S RESPONSE

As mentioned earlier, the Janata Government’s policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries and ‘good neighbourhood’ diplomacy did not bring India directly into the picture. Although several thinkers in India interpreted the development as an alarming threat to Indian security concern, the Janata Government tried to wash off its hand.

Thus when violence broke out in Sri Lanka in August, 1977 Prime Minister Desai expressed his concern to Sri Lanka and appealed for the restoration of normalcy. Desai also sent a representative to Colombo to satisfy himself that the violence was not directed against the Tamils of Indian origin, some who awaited repatriation to India under the 1964 and 1974 agreements. However, it is noteworthy that despite the ‘mandate’, the TULF claimed it had won in North-East Sri Lanka for the creation of ‘Eelam’, the Indian government did not in anyway encourage it. Infact, Desai responding to a Sri Lanka Tamil who canvassed his opinion about the growing movement in Sri Lanka to press for federation with India, declared, “I don’t encourage them. They should not do this. They are ceylonese and not Tamilians.”

54. Gutpa, M.G., India’s Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice (M.G. Publication, New Delhi, 1985), p. 305
The following year India's High commissioner in Sri Lanka Thomas Abraham told a meeting in Jaffna, "India would never support a demand of the TULF for a separate state in Sri Lanka."

During the Janata regime India's policy towards Sri Lanka was based on a high degree of cordiality. It was the logical outcome of Janata's good neighbourhood policy. Hence, despite domestic turmoil in Sri Lanka and a possible threat to India's national interest, Janata government maintained ignorance. In fact Indian government endeavored for a more intimate relationship. Such an intimacy could be seen at the ceremony held on February 4, 1978 for installation of Jayewardene as the first elected executive President of Sri Lanka. While other countries were represented by their Ambassadors, India was represented by its Home Minister, Charan Singh.

President Jayewardene was warmly welcomed when he arrived at New Delhi on October 27, 1978 on a 14 day visit. Referring to Jayewardene as the leader of a friendly neighbouring country with which India was linked by close ties of history, culture and tradition, Indian, President Sanjiva Reddy said "the welcome for Jayewardene was such as was accorded to someone considered close to us." He also recalled the Ramgarh congress session in which Jayewardene had participated as a fraternal delegate from

55. Ibid.
the Ceylon National congress. In his reply Jayewardene said that the freedom movement inaugurated in India, based on the twin principles of love and ahimsa, had helped dependent nations to become free and regain freedom after World War II. Also, Prime Minister Morarji Desai and Minister of state for External Affairs, S. Kundu, held discussions with Jayewarndene on a wide range of issues. An assurance was given by Jayewardene that repatriation of Indian labour from Sri Lanka would have to proceed in accordance with the agreement between India and Sri Lanka. During the discussions the need for trust and understanding between India and Sri Lanka was stressed.\(^{57}\)

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, Jayewardene made it clear that he had no racial, colour or caste prejudices, would extend his hand of friendship to all and maintain ethnic harmony. He also said there was no changed in Sri Lanka's policy on keeping the Indian ocean as a zone of peace.\(^{58}\) However, Jayewardene's concept of a nuclear-free zone and his country's desire to give port facilities to foreign ships in futures; were interpreted by Indian leaders as against India's security interests.

\(^{57}\) Indian and Foreign Review, 1 September 1977, pp. 8-9
\(^{58}\) Asian Recorder, P-14627, op.cit., No. 56
At the invitation of president J.R. Jayewardene, the Indian Prime Minister, Morarji Desai also paid an official visit to Sri Lanka in February 1979. He was the guest of honour at National Day celebration held in Kandy on February 4, to mark the first anniversary of enforcement of the new constitution. He held official discussion with his Sri Lanka counterpart R. Premadasa. They shared views on steps being taken by their respective government in restoring the freedom of the press, which was curtailed during the regimes of Indira Gandhi and S. Bandarnaike. On bilateral matters and the regional and international situation he had also discussions with president Jayewardene. The discussions reflected an identity of views. The two sides reviewed the implementation of the Indo- Sri Lanka agreement of 1964 on the status of persons of Indian origin. It was also agreed that the question of improving facilities for Buddhist pilgrims travelling to India, such as provision of land for establishment of rest houses should be pursued.59

Morarji Desai praised Jayewardene for his effort to the promotion of good neighbourliness between India and Sri Lanka. He also addressed a special session of Parliament. Highlighting the role of Sri Lanka in world affairs both as the current chairman of the non-aligned movement and otherwise, he said:

59. Annual Report 1979-80, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, Government of India, p.8,
“This proves that it is not only the size but the quality that contributes to world affairs. We salute you on your great contribution to world councils of moderation and to your efforts to find possible and concrete solution to world problems.”

Referring to common democratic traditions of India and Sri Lanka, Desai pointed out how attempts to mould governments into an authoritarian form was unsuccessful and short lived. He said “we can rejoice whole heartedly over a common landmark, in that two years ago we set at rest any question that our peoples would accept any but a truly democratic system.” Morarji Desai also expressed satisfaction at the implementation of the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement on the future of people of Indian origin. Infact, the discussions were concluded in a spirit of warm cordiality and close friendship and covered a wide range of subjects. Moreover, between the two countries a close identity of views was revealed.

Broadly speaking, during the Janata regime India extended all cooperation to the tiny Sri Lanka. A confidence-building exercise started emerging in the South Asian region, so that India’s neighbours could root out the clouds of fear-psychosis of India’s regional hegemony. It can be said

60. Ibid
61. Ibid.
that because of the Janata Government's foreign policy, neighbours came more nearer to India by brushing Asiad the 'post 1971 war syndrome'.

This was also in line of the true spirit of non-alignment. For, Morarji Desai wanted not only the non-aligned movement to grow strong but also all power blocs to be liquidated for the progress of peace. In the light of this broad perspective India’s policy towards Sri Lanka can better be judged.

**Economic relations**

Even in the field of economy India followed a quite generous policy towards Sri Lanka. President Jayewardene’s new economic policy was a contributory factor in strengthening its economic ties vis-a-vis India and the world. Up to 1977, the economy of Sri Lanka was inward-looking and rigidly regulated by controls. The Jayewardene government, on the other hand attempted to reintegrate Sri Lanka into world economy by liberalising trade, price and investment controls. The reform was designed to implement various measures such as exchange rate reforms, price reforms, tax-reforms, interest rate reforms and most importantly import liberalisation.

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62. The 1971 Indo-Pak War established a kind of fear-psychosis in the mind of India’s South Asian neighbours that India wants to establish hegemony in the region with all it’s might.

Although Jayewardene's economic policy made Sri Lanka closer to western world, however, its trade relations with India also gained momentum. In 1977 close cooperation in economic field became more pronounced. India extended to Sri Lanka a credit of Rs. 70 million for the purchase of intermediate goods and essential articles of mass consumption. India also donated a sum of Rs. 8 lakhs to Sri Lanka as contribution towards relief and rehabilitation to those affected by the anti-Tamil disturbances.64

On 11 January 1978, Finance Minister of Sri Lanka Ronnie De Mel arrived at New Delhi. During his meeting with Morarji Desai, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and H. M. Patel (Finance Minister of India) he had exchanged views on the policies and programmes of the new government in Sri Lanka and about the scope for further identification of economic cooperation with in the frame work of the close and friendly relations which has always existed between the two countries. As a result India extended a credit of Rs. 10 crores to Sri Lanka which carried a rate of interest of 5% and be repayable over a period of 15 years six months with a grace period of three years. This credit was to finance purchase of capital and intermediate goods which include buses, bus chassis lorries, trucks, railway wagons, industrial raw material and industrial machinery, steel, wire-rods and other items used in construction activities and heavy equipment for large scale irrigation

project like earth moving equipments. Also, an interest free loans of 30,000 tonnes of wheat was given to Sri Lanka, which was to be repayable in kind in three years. The Sri Lanka Finance Minister, who made this announcements in New Delhi on January 14, said that the wheat loan might be repaid as wheat, most probably from wheat Sri Lanka received from the U. S. A. under the PL-480 programme.\textsuperscript{65}

The concessions given under the Bangkok Agreement of 1976, helped Sri Lanka increase export to India. Janata Government also tried to reduce the trade gap between the two countries by offering incentives on tariff concessions on several items. Comparing the period 1976-77 with 1977-78, Sri Lanka’s share in the India cocoa beans import bill rose from 0.7 percent to 2.5 percent, of the cinnamon leaf oil bill from 34 percent to 55 percent and of the cloves bill from nil to 27 percent.\textsuperscript{66} India also diversified its imports from Sri Lanka by including items like crockery, handicrafts, automobile tyres and tubes of bicycles.

Moreover, in a joint statement issued in October 1978 at the end of Jayewardene’s visit to India, both countries agreed to increase trade between them and stimulate Indian investment in joint ventures in Sri Lanka. It also said that the two government would exchange delegations at ministerial level at an early date to work out methods to achieve these objectives. The

\textsuperscript{65} Asian Recorder, New Delhi, Vol. XXIV, No.8 (February 19-25, 1978), p. 14178
\textsuperscript{66} Maheshwari, B.B. India and Sri Lanka Economic Relations (Agam Prakashan, New Delhi 1987), p. 59
joint sub-committee on economic cooperation would meet more frequently and that the working groups would initiate action on their recommendations as early as possible. The discussion between Morarji Desai and Jayewardene was very fruitful and from expanding bi-lateral cooperation emerged in a most favourable climate. Jayewardene too, stressed that the free trade zone scheme in Sri Lanka would certainly attract Indian investors and further lead to a better balance of trade between the two countries.

In December 1978 trade agreements were reached between the visiting Sri Lanka Trade delegation led by its Minister for Foreign Trade and shipping, Lalith William Athulathmudali and the Indian delegation led by Mohan Dharia, Union Minister for commerce. India agreed to provide tariff preference for items like cocoa, beans, cloves, nut meg, torai rubber, natural graphite etc. Similarly Sri Lanka would give tariff preference for items like automobile ancilliaries, storage batteries, storage accumulators etc. As a result, India strengthened its trade relationship with Sri Lanka. Table shows value of major items of India's import from Sri Lanka during the year 1978 and 1979.

67. Asian Recorder, P-14627, op.cit., No. 41
68. Maheshwari, B.B., P-61-62, op.cit., No. 66
**COMPOSITION OF INDIA'S IMPORT FROM SRI LANKA**

(In Sri Lanka Rs. Million)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>1978</th>
<th>1979</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cloves</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Natural Graphite</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Coconut oil</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Raw Hides and Skin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Cocoa Beans</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Furnace Oil</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Natural Rubber</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Dried Vegetable</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Tea</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Sri Lanka News Letter Vol. III (February 1983),
(Sri Lanka Rs. 211 = Indian Rs. 100)*

During Morarji Desai's visit to Sri Lanka in February 1979, a spirit of warm cordiality was seen. He participated in the inaugural function of the work on the kotamale multi purpose reservoir project, under the Mahaweli development scheme. Feasibility study of this project was financed by the
Government of India and prepared by an Indian company water and Power Development Consultants Limited. Stress was given to increase the trade between the two countries and the establishment of joint ventures in the industrial and export promotion zone in Sri Lanka. While addressing the special session of Sri Lanka parliament, Desai praised the development Sri Lanka had made in education, health and social welfare and hoped that it would achieve success in its ambitious programme of economic development and bring a better life to its "hard working and united people."  

India and Sri Lanka also signed in New Delhi on August 22, 1979, agreement under which India promised to extend a credit of Rs 10 crores to Sri Lanka under liberal terms as of January 1978’s to finance the export of capital and intermediate goods from the country. These items included vehicles, electrical and telecommunication equipments, industrial, agricultural construction and general purpose machinery and railway equipments.  

In 1979, India also agreed to set up a joint unit for the manufacture of synthetic resin in Sri Lanka.

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also see Asian Recorder, Vol. XXV, No. 12 (March 12-25), 1978, p. 14627  
70. Ibid, p. 15094
Table shows that while India’s export and import both from Sri Lanka increased considerably during Janata period (1977-79), the balance of trade was not favourable to Sri Lanka. The reason is that Sri Lanka is mainly an import dependent economy.

**SRI LANKA’S IMPORT AND EXPORT WITH INDIA**

(Value in million of US dollar)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Import from India</th>
<th>Export to India</th>
<th>Balance of Trade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>- 21.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>- 37.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>- 79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>149.9</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>- 134.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>- 62.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Moreover, from the above mentioned table a high degree of economic cooperation between India and Sri Lanka can be noticed during the Janata period (1977-79), although India’s import from Sri Lanka was much more in 1980 when Indira Gandhi again came to the power.
The leg end of Janata Government occurred in early 1980 Charan Singh, the then Prime Minister and his Government resigned on 20th August, 1979 and continued as a caretaker government till the new government was formed on 14 January after the general elections held on 3-6 January, 1980. And then Indira Gandhi resumed practically where she left in March 1977.

In retrospect it would seem that although the period 1977-79 saw many conciliatory gestures made by Indians towards Sri Lanka. The 'apparently' high level of cooperation between the two countries was rather superficial. The reason being that it was done by a regime in New Delhi which was more “idealist” than “realist” and particularly regarded as “soft” on foreign policy. For instance unclear as to whether to go “left” or “right” the Janata government did not in anyway react to the Jayewardene regime’s westward orientation, which was bound to prejudice Indian interests in the long run. Nor did it fully comprehend the transition of the Tamil nationalist movement from a “democratic” or a militant path or its implications to India. It was probably this oversight on the part of the Janata regime, that gave Colombo so called a honeymoon period in her relations with India. One in which perceived high cooperation was largely a myth. At best it could be described as having been moderate.