Chapter – 4

India – Sri Lanka Relations During (1980-84)
In this chapter we will discuss about between 1980 to 1984 period after the end of Janta Government the return of Mrs. Indira Gandhi to power provided the internal political atmosphere in India which contributed to bring Indo-Sri Lanka relation on a path of confrontation. Frankly speaking, Indira Gandhi was not merely an individual, she was an institution with sharper contours and thrust even than her father. From January 1980 until her tragic assassination on 31 October, 1984 she not only lent a fresh dynamism and drive to India’s foreign policy but continued to pursue relentlessly nationally accepted objectives – disarmament, world peace, creation of more peace zones, elimination of racialism, colonialism, imperialism, and adventurism ensuring peaceful settlement of international disputes. She gave strengthening the non-aligned movements, reinforcing commonwealth ties, support to United Nations and achieving a new world economic order based on balanced development of world economy, through North-South dialogue and South-South cooperation.

Undoubtedly, the re-emergence of Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister with P.V. Narsimha Rao as her foreign Minister established the case of a tidy came-back. It became apparent that India would soon regain her lost place of honour-and the non-aligned movement would receive its
renewed vigour. Denouncing the external interference Indira Gandhi, in a press statement reiterated “We are against foreign interference, military or otherwise, in any country. It is unfortunate but true that there has been and is interference in many developing countries.”¹ P.V. Narsimha Rao too said “we can’t allow the non-aligned movement to be used as a vehicle or instrument for propagation of any single ideology or for promotion of the interest of any single great power directly or indirectly.”² Indira Gandhi Strongly criticized establishment of a military base at Diego Garcia and insisted on keeping Indian Ocean as the ‘zone of peace’. She launched the movement for North-South and South-South dialogue and engaged the attention of all developing countries of the world to assist generously their undeveloped and developing counterparts so as to usher in a new and better international economic order. The highest watermark of all such reiteration found their expression in 1983 when India hosted the seventh conference of the non-aligned nation and then the conference of the Commonwealth Heads of Governments.

¹. The Times of India (New Delhi), 3 August 1982.
². Abraham, Thomas, India and Sri Lanka : Looking back ( Main stream, vol. XXV, No. 17, New Delhi, January 10, 1987 ) p. 21
Moreover, the period of Indira Gandhi’s second term to the office of Prime Minister was one of increased activity in India’s foreign affairs. She mentioned several times that India was neither pro-Soviet nor pro-United States but pro-its own interests. Her firm handling and initiatives of contentious international, regional and bilateral issues drew the respect of not only the two Superpowers, but also the sympathy of the west European and industrialized states. It attracted the attention of its traditional hostile neighbours, China and Pakistan-evident from the interest taken by both countries to mend fences with India by the end of 1981, while smaller neighbours re-affirmed their friendship and cooperation. Also, by the end of 1981, India’s image as projected already was one of strength and a power of no small potential.³

As far as India’s policy towards Sri Lanka is concerned the period somehow can notes a love-hate relationship. It was also a period of historic significance. In the preceding chapter it has already been highlighted that Janta Government did not involve itself in the domestic affairs of neighbouring countries. Prime Minister Desai and Foreign Minister Vajpayee repeatedly denounced India’s any intention to interfere in the affair of Sri Lanka. Desai went to the extent of branding terrorist movement

for Eelam as ill-conceived and illegal. Also, Janta government did not extend any help to the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The myth of high cooperation in political and economic field that prevailed during Janta regime was effectively shattered with the return of Indira Gandhi to power in 1980. She appeared cautious of the path Sri Lanka was treating, opening herself up to western multinationals. According to Sri Lankan perceptive scholar Kodikara, “the important factor that sound Indira Gandhi’s attitude towards the Jayewardene regime was questioning democratic credentials, in the context of the civil disabilities imposed on Bandarnaike in October 1980.”

He further observes that at no time in the past had the personal relationship between the two Head of Governments in New Delhi and Colombo fallen to such low ebb and that there appeared to have been a coolness in Indira Gandhi’s attitude to Ministers of the Jayewardene Government. Despite such possible strains in relations to a personal level, the Indian Finance Minister R. Venkataraman who visited Sri Lanka in January 1981 described Indo-Sri Lanka relations as being “at their best.”

4. The National Assembly on October 16, 1980, voted to deprive the former Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranakie, of her civil rights for seven years and to expel her from the House for misdeed and abuse of power during her second regime between 1970 and 1977, which had been brought out by the Presidential commission. See S.U. Kodikara, Foreign Policy of Sri Lanka: A Third World Perspective” (Chanakaya, Delhi 1982), p. 49, Also see, Asian Recorder, Vol. XXVI, no. 45 (November 18-24), 1980, p. 15757.
5. The Hindu (Madras), 7 January 1982.
Venkataraman carried a letter from Indira Gandhi to Jayewardene urging the latter to expedite the repatriation of Indians, as the period covered by the citizenship agreements were to lapse in October, 1981.

**ETHNIC EXPLOSION**

The activities of the terrorists were resumed by the end of 1980 and the beginning of 1981. By this time they appeared to be well trained and better organized though instead of one broad front almost half a dozen separate organisations had sprung up. The LTTE was led by V. Prabhakaran; the PLOTE by Uma Maheshwaran; The TELO by Thangadorai and Kuttimani; the EROS by Eliathamby Rathnasabhapathy; the EPRLF by K. Padmanabha under the overall leadership of GUES. The period was also marked by significant in fighting among the various Tamil Militant groups. A powerful new group emerged when in 1980 the LTTE lost its Secretary General, Uma Maheshwaran, who founded the PLOTE of wage a conventional liberation struggle with a decisive show down rather than the hit and run tactics of the LTTE. On the other hand, it is said that the Sri Lanka government sought the help from abroad; British, Rhodesian, Israeli, and South-African mercenaries were hired through a private security company called 'keeny meeny services.' This shadowy agency with an unusual name was based in the channel islands and was reported to have
links with the British Government. Assistance was also sought from Israel's Mossad, the external intelligence agency, and Shin Beth, which dealt with counter insurgency, became active in the island.⁶

Moreover, the Tamil terrorist organisations vied with each other in undertaking daring missions to avenge the humiliations suffered by the Tamil people. The UNP leader from Kilonchohi, R. Balasundarm; was killed by the terrorists of PLOTE at the end of 1980. They then shot the UNP candidate for the District Development Council (DDC) elections and a former Tamil Congress M.P., A Thiagarajah on 25th May 1981. On 31st May, a day before the District Development Council elections, four policemen were shot of who two died. As a revenge, the policeman went on ram-page in Jaffna. The first week of June witnessed unprecedented rowdiness by the army and police who burnt the famous library of Jaffna and destroyed the statues of Mahatma Gandhi; Thiruvalluvar and Awayar. The Tamil Tigers blamed the government in Colombo for this outrage which was said to be master minded by two cabinet ministers (Cyril Mathew and Gamini Dissanyake), who were in Jaffna during the riots and were supervising the orgy of police violence.⁷

⁶ Kadian, Rajesh, India's Sri Lanka Fiasco: Peace keepers at war' (Vision Books: New Delhi, 1990), p. 67
⁷ Balasingham, A.S. Liberation, Tiger and Tamil Eelam Freedom Struggle (Centre for South and South East Asian Studies, Madras 1983), p. 31
Instead of expressing regret over the Jaffna episode, the Jayewardene government permitted a motion of no confidence to be discussed against the leader of the opposition, A. Amrithalingam. Making a mockery of parliamentary tradition, this motion was debated with the most out-rageous statements emanating from the treasury benches. A member of the ruling party even suggested the public whipping of the leader of the opposition and dumping of his dead body in the sea. The bitter and irresponsible utterances in parliament provided new vigour to the rioters. The Indian Tamils settled in Eastern province were the main victims.

Seven people died, 200 cases of arson were reported and thousands had to flee to save their lives. The 1981 riots proved to be a cementing force between the Jaffna Tamils and the plantation Tamils. The Sinhala mobs made no distinction between them while unleashing the reign of terror. The national council of the Ceylon’s workers congress (CWC) issued a long statement condemning the atrocities perpetrated on the helpless workers in the plantations. Its statement on 29 August 1981 recorded:

“The very fact that the plantation workers innocent of any crime, were singled out for murders and mayhem, created a feeling among the people that the thousands of hooligans covertly enjoy the patronage of powerful

personalities, and that the incidents were planned and orchestrated by unseen hands."²⁹

The Sinhala conscience appeared to be stirred by these events and Jayewardene was so enraged that he scolded his partymen and offered to resign. Disciplinary action was taken against some partymen and controversial minister, Cyril Mathew, went abroad on a pretext.¹⁰

On the whole, the militaristic approach to subduing the Tamils backfired. The regime was alienated from the people. The army and the police became a focal point of hatred, the Tamil militants gained enormous public sympathy, the popularity of the TULF nose-dived, a new emotional link was forged between the Jaffna Tamils and the Indian Tamils, an international campaign against Sri Lanka gained currency and the overall credibility of the Jayewardene regime was shaken.

In 1981, president Jayewardene decided to have peace talks with the Tamils after so much atrocities were done to them. He might have feared that it would receive international attention and consequently invited the TULF for talks. But the fact that the British Queen was to come to Sri Lanka on a state visit. The TULF put forth six demands which are as follows:

(i) the appointment of an international commission of inquiry into the May-June army rampage in Jaffna.

(ii) Homeguards should be set up to prevent further violence and disturbances.

(iii) 75 percent of the police personnel in the north and the east should be Tamils.

(iv) Powers should be given to the DDC's as effective decentralized units of administration.

(v) The 'Standardization' system for university admission should be reviewed; and

(vi) Policeman responsible for the rampage in Jaffna should be prosecuted.¹¹

The president accepted all these proposals excepting the first one. May be because of this reason, there was wide publicity over the police atrocities on Tamils in the world media. Also, as a reaction to this, the Sri Lanka government signed an agreement with a British firm for anti-propaganda.

In the following year, presidential elections were held. The due date for general elections was 1983. But instead of waiting till then, the president asked the people to extend the term of parliament for seven more years i.e.

till 1989 with the power of the mandate. Although in 1972, Jayewardene had resigned his seat in protest to this type of extension of the parliament by the Sri Lankan Freedom party. Now, he got it done by an amendment to the constitution. According to the provisions of the new constitution it was obligatory to seek people’s sanction through referendum. He therefore organized a referendum in November 1982 and won with a clear majority. The United National party was successful in contrasting its extension of parliament with that to the SLFP by telling the voters that while the SLFP sought people’s sanction on such an important matter, the UNP explored the first opportunity to obtain it.\(^\text{12}\)

In the Presidential election of 1982, the Sri Lankan Tamils voted for the Tamil parties who demanded autonomy for the Tamil areas. Though the TULF did not participate in the Tamil areas, it let its supporters to vote for other Tamil candidates. But the TULF joined with the opposition parties for the referendum. It was during this period, that the separatist activities of both TULF and the Tiger groups had increased.

As mentioned in the preceding chapter that after the victory of TULF in the Tamil areas in 1977 elections, a country-wide anti-Tamil violence was instigated. The police and army did rampage in Jaffna areas on many occasions in 1977, 1980 and 1981. As a result more and more Tamils turned

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against the government. The Sinhalese fanatics thought that the Tamils should be ‘taught a lessons’. The Tamils refused to submit and were able to mobilise help from Tamils abroad, and also find a safe haven base in South India. After 1977, Tamil terrorism on the one hand and anti-Tamil violence on the other became endemic. It reached a high watermark in July 1983.13

The July 1983 holocaust, which was provoked by the killing of 13 soldiers in an explosion set off by the militants, also seemed to have had its origin in the lawlessness of the army Jawans: hardly a week earlier, Jawans in mufti were said to have raped three Tamil girls in Jaffna who while returning home after attending a private teaching institute got in to the minibus of the Jawans by mistake, and the murders of the soldiers was a reprisal by the militants.14 James Manor mentioned that the July riots were provoked by the army men and it was the army which indulged in arson, looting and cultural vandalism.15 According to the government figures at least 400 people were killed in the riots and more than 150,000 Tamils sought asylum in the refugee camps.

13. The Tribune, September 15, 1984, p.5
15. James, Manor, “Sri Lanka: Explaining the Disaster,” The World Today, Vol. 39, No. 11 (November 1983), pp. 450-459, also in an interview with 'The Hindu Ananthalingam said “it has been planned by somebody in authority who could have combined the action of armed forces alongwith that of groups of Civilians who were acting in a very organised way. In Jaffna the army personnel shot and killed at least 51 civilians on July 24 and 25. (The Hindu, August 25, 1983 ).
The causalities in Colombo’s slum area were the highest. Tamil shops, factories and houses were burnt, while the Sinhala establishments remained untouched. Dissanayaka, who was also a senior official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Colombo, admitted:

The rioting hitherto was by leaderless mobs. In the afternoon the violence took a different form. There was organised violence by gang as which were quite obviously trained and who operated with military precision. Their targets were the economic basis of the Tamils in Colombo and their homes. Tamil homes were thus systematically consigned to the flames. Such homes were identified with pinpoint accuracy using electoral lists.16

One notable thing in this whole trauma of July 1983 is that the common Tamil people in the north and the east were the worst sufferers. For them, death was never far away. The Tamil in the north and the east, had been feeling persecuted for the generations, though arm atrocities became an everyday affair only a few years ago. People were numb with fear and a killing in public hardly evoked any shock or curiosity. They knew it was either the army shooting down a fleeing suspect or the militant annihilating a traitor or police informer.17

After the 1983 violence, the day to day life in the north, especially in the Jaffna city became totally different. Schools were unnecessarily shut down. During class hours, if there were a new that the Tigers attacked some police station or killed some body, the terrified teachers would disperse the classes immediately. Shops remained half open during business hours. The Ceylon Transport buses plight very infrequently. Army trucks and vans of the Tigers were seen moving on the roads. Young men were seeing moving on bicycles on the streets exchanging notes on the position of the enemy. The militants quite benefited from these people. The army and police were afraid of the guerrillas. This fear had filled the forces with hated for the Tamil population. By the beginning of August violence had been brought under control.

Caught between Tiger extremism and army atrocities, the passage to India remained the only hope for the Tamils in Sri Lanka. A lot of Tamil refugees came over to India since 1983. The Indian government has done all possible help to feed and house them, while most of the refugees have fled Sri Lanka because of Army and Tiger harassment, a section of them have a different reason altogether. That is they are denied of their livelihood at the sea. The Sri Lanka government had placed restriction on fishing on ground of preventing Tamil terrorists from ferrying arm as and men from India. This
restriction has affected about 20,000 people whose main occupation was fishing. S.P. Amarsingam wrote in the TRIBUNE about the violence and the Tamil attitude thus:

Many Tamils now think that a point of no return has been reached and that only a surgical division of the country will end the bloodshed and the communal confrontation. On the other hand, there are Sinhalese who believe that a solution can be found only when the Tamils are assimilated culturally, linguistically and even racially or driven out to make a Sinhala only state a reality. Between these two groups of extremists, the country is being slowly pushed in to quagmire which threatens to swallow up all that is decent and worthwhile.¹⁸

GOVERNMENT EFFORTS

The handling of the July riots is a telling commentary upon the efficiency of the Jayewardene regime. President Jayewardene was on record as having told Amrithalingam in the wake of the July riots that “the Sri Lankan Army was not carrying out his orders. The mutinous troops necessitated special military protection to the president who was scared to being overturned by the Junior Officer.” In an interview with the Japanese news paper, Asahi Shimbun, Jayewardene himself admitted that “there was no problem with the Senior officers but there were army code of violations

¹⁸. The Tribune, September 8, 1984, p.3
among the lesser ranks. Some will be court martialed."19 In other words, the Head of State lost control of both the political as well as military apparatus of Sri Lanka.

In the meantime, the government of Sri Lanka took steps at finding a political solution to some of the problems of the Tamil minority. For that, three separate committees consisting of senior ministers and government officials were set up. But this step did not work because the Tamils were in no position to accept these proposals. On 29 July Jayewardene in a speech to the nation appealed to the people to give up arms. He promised to protect the rights and privileges of the majority communities i.e. the Sinhala people. He also pledged a total ban on the Eelam demands. Also, the government on 10 August passed a draft for the sixth Amendment of the constitution that will make provisions requiring all future M.P.'s to swear on oath that they will not ask for a separate state. A month later, the house unanimously approved the draft with 150 members for and one member against it.

After the riots, a committee consisting of three Ministers, Gamini Dissanayake, Ronnie do Mel and Anadatissa de Alwis was set up to probe into the current situation in the country. The Ceylon workers congress president, Thandaman said that the violence against the Tamils was not a Sinhalese up rising, but the work of a well organised group.

19. Vaidik, V.P., P-18, op.cit, No.14
The President although showed his willingness to discuss the Tamil problem, he rejected the idea of a separate state outright. In his address to the nation on 22 August, 1983 Jayewardene said that the government has decided not to have any talk in future with any party that wants to advocate the separation of Sri Lanka. No one would get benefit of this violence. No solution could come to the problem faced by violence. He further said that there was a growing feeling of tension and animosity between the Sinhalese and the Tamil people. That animosity was recreated and flamed up for the purpose of political activities and desires of those who, led spear-headed and outlined the movement.

The Minister for rehabilitation, Lalit Atulathmudali appealed to the Tamils to follow the examples set by the Muslim and catholic communities who live in harmony with their Buddhist brethren. He also said that the government would not allow any power to use Sri Lanka as an anti-Indian base.

**INDIA AND EMERGING CONFLICT**

In this chapter we have discussed that by the early 1980 the ethnic situation had become explosive in Sri Lanka. Also a number of Tamil militant leaders and their associates left for Madras to carry on with their struggle against the Sri Lanka state. 1981 marked an important year in India
Sri Lanka relations in the context that it saw a shift in India’s position with respect to the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka. While the state government in Tamil Nadu and the central government in New Delhi were keeping a close watch on development in Sri Lanka they scrupulously refrained from doing anything that could be construed as interference in its affairs. The state chief Minister M.G. Ramchandran, addressing in the Tamil Language Research Conference in Madurai in 1981 objected to even a reference to the ‘Tamil Problem’ in Sri Lanka, asserting that Tamil Nadu did not want to interfere in the internal affairs of the neighbouring countries.²⁰

Nevertheless, the communal disturbance in Sri Lanka led to adverse reaction in Tamil Nadu. A series of protest in Tamil Nadu occurred in which all political parties were associated. All party meeting was organised by sheriff of Madras. While condemning the violence in Sri Lanka against Tamils, the meeting urged the government of India to raise the issue in the U.N.O.²¹ A peaceful agitation was observed in Madras on 12th June, 1981. The state government also passed a resolution condemning the incident. Till then there was no talk of any intervention or use of good offices by India.

²¹ Kodikara, S.U, P-14, op.cit, No. 4
The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramchandran, who in January, 1981 objected to references being made at the 5th Tamil language research conference in Madurai to the so called ‘Tamil problem in Sri Lanka’, in August the same year, was started lobbying Indira Gandhi in New Delhi to “ensure the safety and security of Tamils in Sri Lanka. The ostensible provocation appeared to have been the anti-Tamil riots that broke out in the aftermath of the District Development Council (DDC) elections in Sri Lanka, in June 1981. In August/September, 1981 for the first time in post independence history, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs made a verbal protest to Sri Lanka expressing concern not only at the plight of the Tamils of Indian origin but of all Tamils. It was but natural that fifty million Tamils of Tamil Nadu would have sympathy for their fellow Tamils in Sri Lanka. The Tamils had the sympathy of another 150 million Dravidians in three other southern states of India. The rest of India did not think differently from the south on matter of relations with foreign or neighbouring countries. Therefore, the Tamils in Sri Lanka got the sympathy of the Indian masses.

On the other hand, India tried to resolve the problem of stateless persons in Sri Lanka. The External Affairs Minister expressed confidence in the Rajya Sabha on 12th March 1982 that it was possible to resolve the issue even though the bilateral agreement had expired. He said that the dimension

22. Kodikara, S.U., P-44 op.cit. No. 4
of the problems of one lakh persons in Sri Lanka, presently stateless, had become manageable and that it should not be difficult to find a solution. Pointing out that 90 percent of the problems had been solved in 17 years, the number of stateless persons who had registered themselves for Sri Lanka citizenship was 375,000. Of them 163,172 had been granted citizenship, while Indian citizenship had been given to 376,281 persons. As the period of the two agreements concluded in 1964 and 1974, had expired on 30 October 1981, India was trying to ensure the final resolution of the problem. This had been facilitated, P.V. Narsimha Rao mentioned, by the passing of a bill in the Sri Lanka parliament which delinked the grant of citizenship to India. Earlier 4 registered persons were given Sri Lanka citizenship only after 7 persons were actually repatriated to India. But now an attempt was being made to know the wishes of the remaining unregistered people without reopening the question of registration.23

The Indian Foreign Minister went to Sri Lanka from 26-28 April to discuss the final disposition of the problem. Apart from meeting his counterpart A.C.S. Hameed in Sri Lanka, Rao also met president Jayewardene. The ‘Joint Communique’ issued at the end of his visit stated that the two Ministers had “apprised the President of the present situation regarding implementation of the India-Sri Lanka agreements. The President

said that he would be taking appropriate steps to resolve the outstanding matters. 24 Meanwhile India had arrested Sri Lanka’s leading Tamil ‘terrorist’, Uma Maheswaran, a leader of the ‘Tiger’ movement of Tamil ‘Eelam’ state in Sri Lanka. The Tamil Nadu Police had also nabbed a rival ‘Tiger’ leader, Prabhakaran in a bazaar shoot out among Sri Lanka in Madras and according to Colombo reports, these energetic steps were much appreciated in Colombo. 25

Moreover, the situation on the ground in Sri Lanka deteriorated rapidly. The police and the armed forces were under considerable Chauvinist influence. The government imposed a Public Security Act which permitted disposal for bodies without inquest. This caused concern among the Tamil in Sri Lanka. The government of India also conveyed to Colombo its concern about the implications of some of the provisions of this Act and its likely impact on the situation. The Sri Lanka Government reacted somewhat angrily and taking the cue from its reactions the Colombo press stridently accused India of meddling in the internal affairs of the island. The charge was immediately rejected by India maintaining that the exchange of views was based on mutual interest in a spirit of friendship.

25. The Times of India (New Delhi), 28 May, 1982.
“We have a lot of people there. In this context we drew their attention”, a foreign office spokesman said.\(^\text{26}\)

Here, it is also important to discuss the extent of involvement of either the government of Tamil Nadu or the Central government in New Delhi. Although, it is said that India intervened in Sri Lanka only after 1983 riot but some Sri Lankan sources raised its finger even before. According to one source the militant leaders organised military training for themselves and their cadres in Tamil Nadu through under-world connections and by employing retired Tamil military personnel of the Indian army also concedes. It must be emphasised that this training was done surreptitiously and without the knowledge of the government of India or the government of the state of Tamil Nadu.\(^\text{27}\) The involvement of RAW (Research and Analysis Wing), the Indian intelligence outfit, was also highlighted by the Sri Lanka analysts. For them RAW had become involved with the Tamil guerrillas and was helping them even before the anti-Tamil violence of July 1983. But this is based on the assessment of a former US intelligence analyst, Tom Mark, who was rather close to the Sri Lankan security establishment, as is evident from his writings.\(^\text{28}\)

\(\text{27. Ibid.}\)
However it can be said that the purpose of RAW involvement was only to keep a vigilant eye on the development at the ort of Trincomalee with the help of Tamil Millitant groups. Even the LTTE documents released subsequently claim contacts between RAW and Tamil militants for providing assistance and military training to the latter, nor before September 1983.²⁹

By early 1983, there was a gradually emerging atmosphere of support and sympathy for the Tamil Militant in Tamil Nadu. Such an upheaval caused concern of New Delhi. The local politician started advocating New Delhi’s intervention as well as for asylum to the struggling Tigers. It was in this background that Indira Gandhi, on the eve of her visit to the state on 20 July 1983, through quite diplomatic channels, expressed her concern for the safety of the Indian citizens’ to the Sri Lanka government. She further assured Colombo that India had no intentions of interfering in Sri Lankan affairs. But the message was anyhow leaked. As a result the media in Colombo started insulting the government of India for interfering in the affairs of Sri Lanka. Such news items were also reproduced in the media in India thereby creating unpleasantness and further tension in Tamil Nadu.³⁰

²⁹. Kadian, Rajesh, P.101-102, op.cit, No.6
³⁰. Dissanayake, T.D.S.A., P-671, op.cit, No. 16
The violence of July 1983 has the greatest impact on the history of India-Sri Lanka relations. India was directly affected as a result of this violence. The victims of this holocaust included not only the Sri Lankan Tamils but also the estate workers of Indian origin, Indian nationals – both among estate Tamils and casual visitors – and the members of the Indian High Commission. Public opinion in India was greatly exercised. In Tamil Nadu passions were aroused and a volatile situation prevailed. Under these circumstances no government in India could remain a silent spectator. This ethnic riot also impinged on India’s regional security concerns, its ideological sensitivities, including threats to internal stability and order in its own southern state of Tamil Nadu.

After the violence, the Sri Lanka government approached friendly countries like U.S.A., U.K., China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Malaysia etc. for military and political support. India and Soviet Union were deliberately excluded. This showed Sri Lanka governments pro-west approach. From Indian point of view such a move of Sri Lanka government was designed to isolate India in the region by facilitating the strategic presence of the forces inimical to India’s perceived security interests in the region. This effort stirred the Indian government’s sentiment. As a result India’s External

31. Muni, S.D. P-50, op.cit, No.28
Affairs Minister cautioned all outside powers to keep away from Sri Lanka’s internal turmoil. Indira Gandhi in her telephonic conversation with President Jayewardene on 5 August also strongly disapproved of Sri Lanka seeking external military support.

However, Jayewardene did not show any reluctance from moving ahead. He visited many countries such as China, West Germany, U.K., and United States in May-June 1984 and also sent his ministers, diplomats, special envoys, son Ravi Jayewardene and brother Harry Jayewardene etc. to a number of countries to secure military and political support. The other purpose of these missions was to emphasize the threat to Sri Lanka’s unity and integrity posed by Tamil terrorism working with the support and encouragement of government and people in India. The image of direct military invasion by India and the creation of an independent sovereign Tamil State on the pattern of Bangladesh was also projected and highlighted.

As a result, Sri Lanka achieve a lot. It secured the assistance of Israel’s intelligence agency Mossad and Shin Bet. British ex-SAS commandos (in the name of Keenie Minee Services), Pakistani military equipment (supplied through civilian planes), sizeable and cheap military supplies from China etc.

32. The Times of India, 3 August 1983
Later in the conflict, Malaysia, Britain, South Africa and even the U.S. supplied arms to Sri Lanka through private arms dealers. During week-long official visit to Pakistan in March-April 1985, President Jayewardene went to the extent of equating 'Kashmir' with 'Afghanistan', asking both to be allowed to decide about their future themselves. He also supported the Pakistani proposal for South Asia as a nuclear weapon free zone. The most notable development among all was the high level US strategic visit to Sri Lanka in 1983-84. US Defence secretary Weinberger (October 1983), Special envoy General Vernon Walters (November 1983) and Defence Appropriation committee of the House of Representatives (January 1984) visited Sri Lanka to discuss the possibilities of providing military assistance.

In return for these supports, Sri Lanka had to agree to accommodate certain western strategic interests, notably with regards to the U.S. three significant arrangements came to light. First was the facilities for refuelling and crew-rest for the US naval ships at Trincomalee. Secondly, to renovate and expand refuelling facilities at the strategic harbour of Trincomalee, a contract was awarded to a Singapore-based private consortium with suspected US links. It was feared that Sri Lanka might permit rest and recreation facilities to be set up to serve beefed-up US Navy in the Indian

ocean. Several questions were asked in the Indian Parliament about Sri Lanka’s intentions with regard to the strategic Trincomalee port. It is notable here that Indian’s interests in Trincomalee was not necessarily to control it, but to be assumed that no interest inimical to India had a hold of it. While prickling the Indian feeling Jayewardene asserted in May, 1983 that “we will give it to anybody we like...and we must have friends in the world.

Also in December 1983 Sri Lanka allocated 1000 acres of land to U.S. for the establishment of a powerful voice of America transmission facility, expected to be the largest of its kind outside the U.S. This led to the fears in India that the facility could serve as a high-tech outfit to monitor naval and land communications and movements in the region, including India. This facility could also be able to beam high frequency messages to US submarines deployed in the Indian Ocean region. The developments discussed above created a wide-spread impression that Sri Lanka was also being co-opted in to western strategic structure for the region.

36. A former commander of the Indian Navy Ravi Kaul has observed “Sri Lanka is as important to India as Eire is to the UK or Taiwan to China. As long as Sri Lanka is friendly or neutral, India has nothing to worry about, but if there be any danger of the island falling under the domination of a power hostile to India, India cannot tolerate such a situation endangering her territorial integrity. See Ravi Kaul, “The Indian Ocean: a strategic pasture for India;” in T.T. Poulouse (ed.) Indian Ocean Power Rivalry, (Young Asia Publications, New Delhi, 1974), p. 66
There were reports of new strategic facilities and infrastructures in Sri Lanka being set up by the U.S. to take care of the contingencies if and when created as a result of the withdrawal or reduction of base facilities in the Philippines.

The strategic presence of extra-regional powers in the subcontinent gave India a sense of Weakness and vulnerability in the regional context. From the very beginning, Nehru was protesting strongly against the extension of the cold war to South Asia, because in this he saw a move to contain India in the region as well as in Asia. On the eve of US military assistance to Pakistan Nehru said: “In effect Pakistan becomes practically a colony of the United States….. The Unites States imagine that by this policy they have completely outflanked India’s so called neutralism and will thus bring India to her knees. Whatever the future may hold, this is not going to happen….”

Also, because of US-Pakistan-China axis, India had to bear the brunt of US and Chinese arms in its encounter with Pakistan in 1965 and 1971. Afghanistan crisis too added the fear in India that the arms supplied to Pakistan could have provided Pakistan a technological edge over India in any possible future encounter.

During Indira Gandhi's reign the new dimensions of political and regime vulnerability were added. This was when she feared a covert western attempt (through the CIA) to oust her from powers in the mid-1970's, particularly in the aftermath of violent coup that eliminated Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of Bangladesh. This explains much of India's sensitivity towards any of its neighbours establishing a security or strategic relationship with extra-regional powers. Hence, when Sri Lanka extended its cooperation with USA, China, Pakistan, Israel, U.K., etc., India was bound to take a more aggressive and tougher stand on the domestic situation in Sri Lanka. Lastly, it can be said that India's security perception was not something that could be blown in to the air. In fact, India's suspicion regarding internal threat to India from external actions have also been activised in the context of such developments as the assassination of Indira Gandhi in October 1984, as well as whenever doubts are cast on the unity of diverse cultures and ethnic groups within the Indian State.

The violence of July/August, 1983 have often been marked as a turning point in studying Indo-Sri Lanka relations, in the modern period. India’s relations with Sri Lanka came under some strain in the wake of this violence. This caused widespread concern in India, not only because of the human suffering involved but also because a large number of Indian nationals and persons of Indian origin in Sri Lanka were severely affected. Many hold the view that it was only following the riots that India took a more hardline position to Sri Lanka’s intransigence in attempting to meaningfully resolve the ethnic problem. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier the atmosphere was quite charged even before the outburst of the riots. The wave of sympathy which was growing for the Tamil cause, particularly in India where over 30,000 Tamils including the TULF leaders took refuge, was one of the important causes for India’s agony. Also, India and Sri Lanka were already embroiled in an intensive diplomatic offensive almost a week before the occurrence of violence. India formally communicated to the Sri Lankan High Commission in New Delhi about the deteriorating situation in Jaffna, the emergency regulations, disposal of bodies and government action to deal with the situation. But above all, India perceived security threat in strategic terms before the said riot and ‘all hell’ of July was the biggest shot.

fired at India which crossed all limits of India’s tolerance. As a results overt active Indian intervention in Sri Lanka appeared as a ‘strategic necessity’.

Now, it is essential to mention here that while Janata government maintained neutrality with respect to the Sri Lankan domestic affairs, a shift in Indira Gandhi’s foreign policy was evident especially after the ethnic violence of 1983. Domestic compulsions and security perceptions were the main reasons behind such a shift in India’s policy towards Sri Lanka.

In the aftermath of the July backlash, Indira Gandhi told a delegation from Tamil Nadu that “the centre was dealing with the Tamil question in Sri Lanka as a national issue.” 43 She told Jayewardene that the matter also affected India. It can be said that this political fault and miscalculation of Jayewardene government led to the ethnic volcano in Sri Lanka. It also created a flaming field in Tamil Nadu. Sri Lanka’s connection with the west and later on efforts to get assistance from the countries such as Israel, U.S., U.K, Pakistan, China etc. was rightly conceived as the precondition for India’s security threat distabilisation of the Asian region as well as extra regional power rivalry in the Indian Ocean zone. As a whole the political blunder of Jayewardene combined with the riots of July 1983, provided India sufficient opportunity and moral justification to counter such a fissiparous tendency in South Asian region.

43. Kodikara, S.U. P-155, op.cit No.26
In such a situation, as S.D. Muni opines India had three objectives behind its approach towards Sri Lanka question. These were:

(i) To reverse Sri Lanka’s policy of cultivating extra regional and adversarial strategic interests perceived as a threat to India’s immediate and long term security interests.

(ii) To persuade the Sri Lanka government to seek a negotiated political solution of the ethnic crisis with in the framework of unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka but based upon justice and equality for the Tamil minority.

(iii) As a part of point (ii) India did not lend any legitimacy to the Sinhala hegemonic state in Sri Lanka and disapproved of Colombo seeking any military solution of the ethnic crisis through decimation or subjugation of the Tamil minority. In the same vein, India had no support for the Tamil militants’ demand for the creation of a separate, sovereign Tamil Eelam.44

While pursuing these objectives on July 29, Indira Gandhi asked the External Affairs Minister Narshimha Rao to air dash to Colombo for a first-hand assessment and for consultation with President Jayewardene, after a telephonic conversation with the Sri Lankan President and having secured his consent for the visit. Rao conveyed the anxiety of India to the Sri Lankan

44. Muni, S.D. P.68, op.cit., No. 20,
President who assured him that his government would be doing everything in its power to restore peace and normalcy. Sri Lankan authorities indicated the need for a passenger ship to carry the riot affected people for Colombo and other southern parts to Jaffna where the Tamil population was in majority. Rao informed Jayewardene that the Indian government was ready to help in Sri Lanka’s programme of relief and rehabilitation.\textsuperscript{45} However, the controlled media at Colombo railed at India interference as a matter of the higher concern amongst other nations as well. The logic of an Indian attack was raised and President Jayewardene was quoted as having said that “if India by some chance even decided to invade us we will fight and may be lose, but with dignity. Then we will go into exile and come back to our country later…”\textsuperscript{46}

The Migra, a newspaper close to the President himself, asked whether India would send her Foreign Minister wherever troubles broke out in the world involving people of Indian origin.\textsuperscript{47} This was written ignoring that Mrs. Gandhi had telephoned the Sri Lankan President who had stated his willingness to receive the Indian Foreign Minister.

\textsuperscript{45} Abraham, Thomas, “India and Sri Lanka: Looking Back”, Mainstream, P-21, op.cit. No.2
\textsuperscript{46} Dutt, V.P. India’s Foreign Policy, (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi 1984), p. 325.
\textsuperscript{47} The Times of India (New Delhi), 2 August 1983.
With in a week of Rao’s return, Indira Gandhi declared in the Lok Sabha that India had a vested interest in the happenings on the Island and it was “not just another country”, thereby clearly defining as Indian geo-strategic interest in Sri Lanka. She went on to state that her government supported the integrity of that country, but warned Jayewardene against involving other external powers in the crisis.\textsuperscript{48} Then she offered India’s mediation. Sri Lanka accepted India’s mediation. Jayewardene’s brother Hector, a jurist arrived in New Delhi as Presidents’ personal envoy on 10 August. But while discussing possible solutions to the ethnic problems he also asked the Indian government to stop the Tamil militants from using bases from India. As a whole, Hector described his talks with the Prime Minister as productive’ and the offer of good offices as ‘gracious’. Talking to newsmen before his departure on 12 August he said that the details have to be worked out by the two governments.\textsuperscript{49}

The Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, told Parliament that she had conveyed to the special emissary, H.W. Jayewardene, the deep concern of Parliament and of the people of India at the recent happenings in Sri Lanka and our distress at the human suffering resulting there from. We have always condemned such violence, killing and discrimination, especially when the victims are defenceless. She also said that she took the opportunity to

\textsuperscript{48} Kadian, Rajesh, P. 90, op.cit, No.6
\textsuperscript{49} The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 13 August 1983.
reassure Jayewardene that India stood for the independence, unity and integrity of Sri Lanka. "India does not interfere in the internal affairs of another country. However, because of the historical, cultural and such other ties between the Tamil Community of Sri Lanka and us, India can't remain unaffected by such events there,"50 She said. The Prime Minister announced the establishment of a Sri Lanka Relief Fund and a Sri Lanka Relief Fund Committee under her own chairmanship with an initial contribution of Rs. 1 crore from Prime Ministers National Relief Fund.51

As a subsequent development Prime Minister Indira Gandhi appointed G. Parthasarthy as her personal envoy to mediate between the Tamil militant groups and the Sri Lankan government. G. Parthasarthy visited Sri Lanka on 25 August 1983 for preliminary talks with President Jayewardene.52 Indira Gandhi also succeeded in persuading the Sri Lankan President and the TULF leadership to talk to each other without any preconditions to consider any other reasonable alternative to Eelam offered by the Sri Lankan side and to seek a solution to the Tamil problem with in the framework of Sri Lanka's unity and territorial integrity.53

50. Dutt, V.P. P-328, op.cit, No. 48
52. Ibid.
53. Amrithalingam disclosed this subsequently in an interview to N. Ram of the Hindu, Frontline, 23 March to 5 April 1985; Indira Gandhi met President Jayewardene in New Delhi twice when the latter had come to attend the commonwealth Heads of the Governments conference in November 1983. As a result of these talks Jayewardene agreed to hold talks with the TULF without insisting on them to give up the demand of Eelam. (The Hindu, Madras 1 December 1983).
Although the TULF leader, Amrithalingam appreciated the mediatory role played by India and the acceptance of the good offices of India by the Government of Sri Lanka. The 'Sinhalese hawks', representing powerful sections in the UNP, were opposed to the mediation’ efforts of G. Parthasarthy. The development in Sri Lanka affecting the Tamil minority came in to focus at the United Nations on 24 October 1983 amid a clash between India and Sri Lanka in which India rejected allegations of interference in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka. It was the first time that India raised the issue in the special political committee of the world body. But Sri Lanka Ambassador, I.B. Fonseka, reacted sharply to what he called ‘internationalisation’ of the problem of Tamils in Sri Lanka. Fonseka, in a strong caveat on the Indian statement told the committee: “I would be communal, linguistic, and religious disturbances in his own country, would show a greater degree of sensitivity before throwing the first stone in this committee.” 54 However, apart from the statement made by India and Sri Lanka and their exchanges, no other member-state chose to comment on the subject in the committee.

G. Parthasarthy went thrice to Colombo between August (1983) and January (1984) to help prepare the ground for round table talks. As a result

54. Kumar, Satish, op.cit No.44; also see Asian Recorder, New Delhi Vol. XXIX No. 51 (December 17-23), p. 17519
of these developments, a set of proposals popularly known as Annexure C emerged for consideration by the Tamils and the Sri Lankan Government.

The broad provisions of the proposal were devolution of power, with District Development Councils as a basic unit in a province; merging of the DDC’s into Regional Councils, recognition of Tamil as a national language, proportional representation of ethnic minorities in the armed forces and police forces (in the regions), provision of a national policy on land settlement, which would not seek to alter the ‘demographic balance’ in ethnic terms. It also reiterated the objective of preserving Sri Lanka’s unity and integrity. (See Appendix VI) these proposals were put before the All Party Conference convened in Colombo on 10 January 1984. 55

Much before the conference, however, anti-Tamil propaganda was mounted with unusual ferocity by the Sinhala chauvinist and Buddhist elements who threatened the Government with dire-consequences if it conceded anything more than the District councils. The five Mahanayakas in a letter to Jayewardene, had already rejected the idea of regional councils. 56

55. The participants in All party Conference were representatives of ACTC, CWC, CP, DWC, FP, LSSP, MEP, SLEP, TULF, and UNP. Socio-religious organisation that also took part were the supreme council of the Maha Sangha, the group of Sinhala Associations, the council of Muslim organisations, Hindu Organisations and Christian organisation, Asian Recorder, Vol. XXX. No. 14 (April 1-7, 1984), p. 17681, The statesman, 13 January 1984.
56. The Statesman, 10 January 1983.
Before the APC could discuss matters on the basis of Annexure ‘C’, the Mahajana Eksath peramune walked out of the APC and was followed by the SLFP on 6 February 1984. The SLFP denounced the Annexure ‘C’ as a ‘foreign-based formula’ through which the TULF was trying to ‘invite South India intervention in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka. The UNP government was castigated for thrusting a ready-made solution on Sri Lanka. The APC meeting in January, February and March bore no results except that they discussed the modalities for conducting the discussions. The APC took a long recess on March 20 until May 9, ignoring Tamil protests that the Government was seeking to buy time and dragging its feet.

In the meantime, an anti-India tirade got into full swing. The good offices of India were called ‘odious Indian intervention’ by an influential daily of Colombo.\(^57\) Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa on 22 March alleged in parliament “India had a hand in training the Tamil terrorists. We will stand up to any challenge. We won’t let India bully us. I make this statement on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka.” Sri Lankan Foreign Minister A.C.S. Hameed also said “From 1978 we have had information that terrorists are being trained in Tamil Nadu, by 1983 we had positive information”\(^58\).

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\(^ {57}\) Ghosh, P.A. Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka( Printed in India at Efficient offset printers New Delhi, 1999) p. 76

Jayewardene too said that Sri Lanka was not going to frightened by India. But about his relationship with Indira Gandhi, he said it was very good. “I want her to know that I am doing nothing more than what she is doing to control terrorism in Punjab.” However, the SLFP leader Anura Bandarnaike in the Parliament praised the initiative taken by Indira Gandhi and G. Parthasarthy for solving the ethnic crisis and sought India’s cooperation rather than misread a baseless story. He spoke for details about such terrorist training camps, if any. He also asked the Government to send a minister to Delhi for talks.

India, on the otherhand, reacted sharply on the baseless allegations made by Sri Lanka. On April 3, 1984, Indian Minister of state for External Affairs A.A. Rahim stated in the Parliament:

“It is unfortunate that responsible members of Sri Lankan Government have seen fit to make baseless allegations against India. These are totally false and we have conveyed to the Sri Lankan Government that there are no catches of arms or training goodwill for Sri Lanka and have done nothing to warrant the campaign being directed against us in recent days... I would like to re-affirm that India poses no threat to Sri Lanka. We have repeatedly expressed our commitment to Sri Lanka’s unity and integrity and our opposition to secession and all form of violence.”

60. Ibid., Vol. XXX no. 22 (May 27-June 2, 1984), p. 17772.
However, India was not a silent spectator of Sri Lanka’s violence. The loss of lives of innocent people in Sri Lanka undoubtedly caused deep concern and anguish in India, specially in Tamil Nadu. Furthermore, after the July 1983 riot a large number of people came to India and sought refuge. This exerted heavy pressure on India. Hence, it was necessary that renewed effort should have made to work out a political solution of the crisis acceptable to all communities in Sri Lanka.

The frequent scuttling of Amrithalingam from Colombo to Madras and New Delhi for consultation also aroused the suspicions of the Sinhala lobbies and the attack on the Jaffna Tamils on 9 and 10 April by the armed forces resurrected the spectre of a holocaust among the Tamils. Moreover, the 9 May meeting of the APC resulted in a deadlock because the TULF boycotted two expert panels proposed by Jayewardene to look into the devolution of powers for redressal of grievances of the minority respectively.

Moreover, the dialogue was still continuing. The visits of National Security Minister, Lalith Athulathamudali, in April, and Jayewardene in June-July 1984 to New Delhi paved the way for a new proposals which replaced the discredited Annexure ‘C’ with an offer for the institution of a second chamber in Parliament. This was discussed with Indira Gandhi at
length but Jayewardene could not revealed it to the Press as it was still at a formative stage and had to be discussed at the All party Round Table Conference.' However, a National Hindi Daily\textsuperscript{61} had already published the details of the proposal.

Jayewardene's visit to New Delhi, instead of bringing any reconciliation between the Sinhala and Tamil opinions gave a mild jolt to Indo-Sri Lanka relations. In his press conference Jayewardene said that the "Tamil problem is not a problem, it is a national disaster as you have in India of Kashmir, of Punjab and of Ulster in Britain. We will have to live with it for the decades to come" and "the scope for further Indian initiative is limited."\textsuperscript{62}

On 23 July 1984 the proposal for second chamber was placed before the APC despite the protest lodged by the TULF against convening it on the anniversary of the July riots. And like Annexure 'C' the proposal for a second chamber was also rejected by the opposition. Also, while the talks between the Government and the TULF have been dragging on endlessly, the TULF's popularity and political standing had steadily declined with the militant organization like EPRLF denouncing its negative stand towards the demand for Eelam. All the same, the All Party Conference eventually ground to a halt in September 1984, a month before Indira Gandhi was

\textsuperscript{61} See, the interview of Authulathamdali with Nav Bharat Times (New Delhi), 24 July 1989.
\textsuperscript{62} The Times of India (New Delhi), 3 July 1987.
assassinated; it was formally dissolved in December 1984 without yielding any concrete results towards resolution of the crisis.

To contain the Sri Lankan government’s hardline approach towards the Tamil, Indira Gandhi also started international diplomacy. She sent several diplomatic missions throughout the world, particularly in the western capitals. The atrocities on Tamils by the Sri Lankan armed forces was highlighted. International attention was drawn on human rights issues. Aid donors were requested to put pressure on Sri Lanka for a political settlement of the Tamil issue. India also activated its mission in the Arab capitals to put pressure on Sri Lanka after the report of Israel’s involvement in Sri Lanka. In UN general Assembly the issue of human rights violations were raised several times. During Indira Gandhi’s period a good relations was emerging with USA too. Therefore U.S. support to Sri Lanka was in a sense ‘limited’.

Assessing the outcome of India’s policy towards Sri Lanka during Indira Gandhi’s phase (1980-84), we find that nothing much was achieved. But the importance of starting of negotiation between the Sri Lanka Government and Tamils with the mediation of India, can’t be negated. It was infact a good beginning. Also, there were several causes for Indira Gandhi’s limited achievements in solving the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka. To begin with, the period involved here was too short, only 16 months, after beginning of
the July riots in Sri Lanka and up to Indira Gandhi’s assassination in October 1984. The personal and political relations between Indira Gandhi and Jayewardene was also not cordial. Each distrusted the other intensely. President Jayewardene distrusted even Indira Gandhi’s envoy G. Parthasarthy, not only for being Tamil and therefore suspected as partial to Tamils, but also because he was a tough negotiator. Further, every time he was in Sri Lanka, he conveyed a message to the president form Indira Gandhi’s that Sirimavo Bandaranaike’s civil rights, taken away by the Jayewardene government should be restored. This was taken by Jayewardene as a support for his political adversaries.

The president Jayewardene also seemed neither willing nor capable of forcing decisions on his cabinet. This is because of the deep divisions with in his cabinet on the nature and extent of accommodation to be shown towards Tamil demands and good offices’ role of India.

**India’s Economic Cooperation with Sri Lanka**

Although Indira Gandhi did her best to solve the ethnic problem of Sri Lanka, India’s role as a mediator was looked down by Sri Lanka on several occasions as an ill-designed strategy to interface in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, India did initiate few bold measures on economic front. Even Sri Lanka’s response was not negative. To facilitate a greater flow of

Indian capital and technology and exchange of experts in economic and cultural fields, in March 1980, both India and Sri Lanka initiated an agreement avoiding double taxation replacing the 1956 convention. Sri Lankan Government also offered to prospective Indian investors of capital and exporters of India technology terms comparable with the best offered to any other country by the Government.\textsuperscript{64}

During his visit to Sri Lanka in January 1981, Indian Finance Minister R. Venkatraman held discussions with Ronnie de Mel, Sri Lankan Minister of Finance and Planning on matters of mutual economic interest and Indo-Sri Lanka economic cooperation. The two ministers signed a credit of Agreement of Indian Rs. 1\textsuperscript{00} million.\textsuperscript{65} This credit was to utilize for the purchase of machinery and equipment from India. The Indian side indicated that they would be prepared to consider, as a special case, additional financing for any project when this credit would be fully utilized. Both sides reviewed implementation of projects, identified by the joint commission for Indo-Sri Lankan economic cooperation. This included livestock project, micro-wave telecommunication link, science and technology programme, rural technical service centres, and technical assistance in sugar technology and fisheries development.

\textsuperscript{64} Asian Recorder, Vol. XXVI, No. 17 (April 22-28), 1980, p. 15429.
Sri Lanka also proposed a cooperation with Indian banks in the sphere of rural credit and rural development. It was suggested that the Reserve Bank of India and the State Bank of India could provide assistance to Sri Lanka in formulating credit plans towards the provision of medium and long-term capital to enterprises in the agricultural sector. The Indian government promised to assist Sri Lanka in activating a group of entrepreneurs in India to identify projects suitable for joint ventures. To herald a more efficient and reliable communication system between the two countries Indian communication minister C.M. Stephen, on 18 January 1982 inaugurated the Rs. 4 crore microwave link between India and Sri Lanka. The completion of India-Sri Lanka microwave project connecting Rameshwaram with Colombo was seen as an important landmark not only for communication between the two countries but also for the regional telecommunications network in South and South-East Asia.

India and Sri Lanka also signed in New Delhi on January 27, 1982 a revised convention on avoidance of double taxation. The main objectives of such agreements was to stimulate the flow of capital, technology and personnel from one country to the other and remove the obstacle that double taxation presented in the development of bilateral economic relations. In September 1982 India and Sri Lanka signed an agreement on the

67. Ibid., Vol. XXVIII, No. 13 (March 26 – April 1, 1982), p. 16521.
establishment of joint enterprises – a sugar factory in pelavatta and sugarcane plantations in the area of Moneragala. A few joint ventures were already in operation in truck manufacture and fertiliser production. Indian experts had already helped in getting Kotmale reservoir completed in that country. Besides, India was approached to help Sri Lanka in modernising its railway system. Sri Lanka had also shown interest in oil exploration in its offshore areas by India’s Oil and Natural Gas Commission on a production sharing basis. The Sri Lankan Government has allotted some portion of its offshore region to India’s ONGC to explore the prospects of oil discovery in the sea bed. Bilateral exchanges between the two countries under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme and the TCDC activities under UNDD auspices were further increased. During 1982-83, ten senior Indian Engineers were sent to Sri Lanka in connection with the Mahawali Development project. Besides providing training facilities to Sri Lanka personnel in India, services of Indian experts were made available to that country.

Moreover, in 1983 India and Sri Lanka agreed to undertake a cooperative programme for development of Marine resources in the Indian Ocean. The accord was reached at the end of a four-day India-Lanka conference held in Sri Lanka on development of Marine resources, science

68. Sharma, Shri Ram, Indian Foreign Policy: Annual Survey, (Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1982), pp. 25-26
and technology. The conference identified nearly 30 areas of collaboration, which include securing vessels for joint projects, harbour facilities and onshore laboratories. It was also decided to undertake a multi-disciplinary study of Palk Bay and evolved a management model with a view to reducing tension caused by fishing disputes in the area. Sri Lanka agreed to import training in ornamental fishery development and new packing techniques for marine food products to Indian personnel. India too agreed to provide training opportunities to Lankan personnel for conducting off-share mineral resources surveys. Seen as a landmark in India-Sri Lanka relations the agreement was the first to be concluded by the two countries after the UN convention on the Law of Sea.

The Indian Minister for External Affairs, P.V. Narsimha Rao, paid a visit to Sri Lanka in April 1983 on the invitation of A.C.S. Hameed, Sri Lankan Minister for Foreign Affairs. The two ministers discussed several issues concerning international as well as bilateral interest. They also reviewed the existing position to the prevailing trade gap and suggested that one way to reduce it would be for India to set up joint industrial ventures in Sri Lanka with buy back arrangements. Both sides agreed to explore possibilities in this regard. They also agreed that the India-Sri Lanka joint
Commission should meet again without delay in order to give an impetus to expanding the economic relationship between the two countries.

India and Sri Lanka also decided to reactivate their Joint Economic Cooperation Committee which had held its last meeting in 1969. This was decided in New Delhi on 30 November 1983 during talks between P.V. Narsimha Rao and A.C.S. Hameed. Hameed told newsmen that the two countries wished to promote their economic relations and it was partly Sri Lanka’s fault that the joint committee had remained dormant for so long.70

Despite worsening of India’s relations with Sri Lanka during Indira Gandhi’s tenure (1980-84), political dialogues as well as trade relationship was unhampered. But like wise the earlier period, balance of trade was unfavourable to Sri Lanka. Table depicts the details of Indo-Sri Lanka trade during the period 1980-84.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Import</th>
<th>Export</th>
<th>Balance of trade</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>2833.6</td>
<td>317.5</td>
<td>-2516.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics, also in South Asia Journal 1,3 New Delhi, Sage Publication, 1988, p. 289

In sum, the analysis of Indo-Sri Lankan relations during 1980-84 suggest that the relations reached its lowest point since 1947. During the period, India’s effort was to trim Sri Lanka’s extra regional connections. India moved for attempting to woo Sri Lanka to be closer to her. India also applied diplomatic and other pressures to reduce Sri Lanka’s extra-regional connections that had grown since 1977, which were feared inimical to India’s security concerns and interests as a whole. India also tried to play the role of mediator in order to resolve the Tamil crisis of Sri Lanka and also to improve its own image in the region as well as in the world which was somehow fading on the eve of the Sri Lanka’s accusation of training and arming the terrorists. In sum, it can be said that Indira Gandhi started sincere efforts to solve the Sri Lankan crisis in the broader canvass of India’s national interest.