As pear shaped compact Island, Sri Lanka with an area of 65,000 Sq. Km. lies in the Indian Ocean of the Southern coast of India. It is a detached portion of the mainland of India. It is separated from Indian sub-continent, by a strip of shallow water of Palk strait. This strategic location of Srilanka influences the Indo-Sri Lanka relation. Other factors which influence Indo Sri Lanka relations, are ethnic factors. Among these ethnic factors Tamil problem is of great importance. In this chapter I have tried to highlight the Tamil aspect in Indo- Sri Lankan relations.

There are two very important, indeed, fundamental facts which must be born in mind whenever Indo-Sri Lanka relations are discussed in the Tamil context. First, the social and cultural linkages between the two countries. Both the major communities inhabiting the island, namely, Tamils and Sinhalese, are of Indian origin. This racial linkage and cultural heritage of Ceylon from India is also a religious one. Both Buddhism, the religion of the
Sinhalese, and the Hinduism of the Tamils, are a spill-over into the island from India. The other fact to be remembered is that the Sinhalese, though constituting almost three fourths of the total population, suffer rather acutely from what can be described as a minority syndrome. They see themselves as an island in a huge Tamil ocean around them, comprising the northern, eastern and even central parts of their country, backed by over sixty millions of Tamils in adjacent Tamil Nadu.

The period under study (1980-93) is fresh and most significant in so far as Indo-Sri Lankan relations are concerned. Nevertheless, in order to comprehend fully the developments of this period one must briefly have a look at the situation prevailing as subsequently evolved since independence, in 1948.

Prior to the western invasions of Ceylon, the relations between the island's predominantly Tamil speaking north and its Sinhala areas alternated between tension and equilibrium. With the coming of the British, however, natural equations changed. The Tamils of the island's north, better educated, came to be recruited by the British to

official position in numbers that were disproportionate to their size. The British did something else as well, in order to entrench their designs of commercial exploitation through a plantation economy, they introduced a cheap labour force recruited from Tamil Nadu into the kandy area and nearly places. An altogether fresh complexity was created. The promotion of the Jaffna Tamils (Sri Lankan Tamils) by the British had ignored majority feelings generally, and the induction of Tamil Indian labour hurt the Kandyan land-based classes. An 'us' and 'them' syndrome came increasingly to mark different Sri Lankan segments.

By the 1920s, Ceylonese political and trade union leaders began to express concern about the effects of free immigration from India. This worsened the employment position in the island, and inescapably, curbs began to be placed on immigration. The visits of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawahar Lal Nehru took place during this crucial period. The two leaders were aware of the impact of these division on present and future Indo-Lankan ties. Speaking to the congregation of Indian Tamils in Colombo, Gandhi advised


3. In a speech delivered at the Reddiar Sangam, Colombo on 25.11.1927 for details, see in Mahadev Desai's travelogue with Gandhi in Ceylon Madras S.Ganesa, 1928.
I would leave one or two thoughts with you before I leave Colombo. Since you are earning your bread in this beautiful island, I would ask you to live as sugar lives in milk. Even as cup of milk which is full up to the brim does not overflow when sugar is gently added to it, the sugar accommodating itself in the milk and enriching its taste, in the same way, I would like you to live in this island so as not to become interlopers and so as to enrich the life of the people in whose midst you may be living.

But things were not going to be quite that easy. Political opinion soon added a twist of lime to the milk. Nehru as early as 1945 had pointed out to the ethnic linguistic and cultural unity of India and Sri Lanka and supported the formation of a close union as an autonomous unit of the Indian federation. This had created some misgivings in Sri Lanka. Later when Nehru became Prime Minister, he repudiated any such suggestion and said that India did not wish to interfere with the Island's sovereignty and assured them of Indian goodwill and peaceful intention towards Sri Lanka. Speaking during the debate on foreign affairs in the Lok Sabha on May 15, 1954 Nehru said:


5. Jawahar Lal Nehru, India's Foreign Policy, Delhi, Publication Division, Government of India, 1961.
We want an independent Ceylon and a friendly Ceylon. In every sense Ceylon is nearer to us than any other country—culturally, historically, linguistically, and in the matter of religion. Why should we look with greedy eyes on Ceylon? We do not. But the fact remains there is fear, and because there is this fear, I would beg this house not to say at any time things which might add to the fear. A member talked of economic sanctions and the like. I deprecate that kind of talk, although, I have been deeply pained by many events in Ceylon, because I want this House and this country to look ahead. We are a country with a great future. It is proper for us not to get lost in the present, but to have some vision of the future. We should not do things now which may come in the way of that future, whether in regard to Pakistan or Ceylon or any other country. We should treat and continue to deal with Ceylon in a friendly way, even though Ceylon's response might be unfriendly.

Since then, almost all the Prime Ministers, have assured Sri Lanka that India has no intention to harm her sovereignty and the territorial integrity, yet Sri Lankan politician always create the fear psychosis of the danger from the big neighbour.

When the constituents of the Tamil congress fell out on the issue of whether plantation Tamils should enjoy franchise, the stage was set for Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike to announce his 'Sinhala Only Act' policy in 1956. This marked the most important watershed in Sinhalese-Tamil relations. India had consistently refused, during Nehru's lifetime, to accept as a solution to the
'Indo-Ceylon Question’ any proposition for the repatriation of plantation Tamils. 'They are or should be citizen of Ceylon was Nehru’s stand. Thus in the Nehru - Kotelawala Pact in January 1954 no binding obligation had been created to repatriate plantation Tamils. Nehru could not accept the principle of compulsory repatriation as it might creat a precedence for other African and Asian countries. But the afterglow had barely abated in 1964, when Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike arrived in New Delhi and succeeded in obtaining India's assent to repatriation what has come to be known as the Sirimavo - Shastri Pact 1964. This pact imposed obligation on both governments to confer citizenship on their nationals even if the prevalent laws did not permit it. During this period the Indian policy shifted from being adamantly to flexibility and from idealism to realism. It was essential to ractify the mistakes made by the Indian government previously with regard to the problem of statelessness of person

6. The pact provided that out of total number of 9,75,000 stateless persons; the Ceylonese citizenship would be granted to 3,00,000 persons alongwith their natural increase (i.e. sons and daughters) India would repatriate 5,25,000 persons alongwith their children and grant Indian citizenship. For detail see J.S.Bains "Indo-Ceylon Agreement, A legal Analysis, Indian Journal of International Law, New Delhi, Vol.4 No.4,1964, p.p. 522-25.
of Indian origin and to save Indians from facing the ordeal they faced in Burma. A few years later in 1974 Bandaranaike signed yet another pact with Prime Minister India Gandhi which, together with the 1964 one, would have the effect of translocating about one million plantationer Tamils from Sri Lanka to India. Finally, India and Sri Lanka agreed to resolve, one for all the problem of statelessness of Indian origin in Sri Lanka in an agreement on January 16, 1986. As a consequence the Sri Lankan government announced on October 12, 1988 its decision to grant citizenship to all stateless persons of Indian origin in Srilanka. This finally clinched the issue of stateless persons of Indian origin in Sri Lanka. But this issue was a part of Tamil problems in Sri Lanka. The Tamil question in Sri Lanka was the question of securing for the Tamils their rights of meetings their legitimate aspirations.

7. The pact provided to share equally the remaining 1,50,000 stateless Indian origin persons between India and Sri Lanka.

8. In the agreement it, was agreed that India will proceed with the process of conferring citizenship on 85,000 people of Indian origin, who applied for Indian citizenship prior to October 30,1981 and Sri Lanka will simultaneously take necessary legislative and executive action to grant Sri Lankan citizenship to all the remaining persons of Indian origin estimated to be 4,69,000.

From 1958 onwards, anti-Tamil riots, occurred with increasing frequency till the holocaust of 1983 which in its intensity and savagery, surpassed any anti Tamil outburst experienced till then. From that onwards, the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka assumed external dimensions as well, and it was highly unrealistic to expect India to remain unconcerned and unaffected. The events since 1983 have not only confirmed the inextricable link between the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka and India, but also provided India with an opportunity to reiterate the importance of Sri Lanka in India’s regional security considerations. India felt an urgent necessity of finding a satisfactory solution to the Tamil question, in order to limit its emotional and electoral fall out or impact upon Tamil Nadu.

When the riots broke out between Tamil and Sinhalese communities on July 24-25, 1983, in Sri Lanka, India found itself in a delicate situation. It bore responsibility for the safety of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, but in ensuring their safety. India had to impress upon the Sri Lankan government that it had no intention of interfering in the island’s internal affairs. India’s major concern was to prevent the crisis from escalating to a degree that might warrant
the involvement of extra regional powers. The then Indian External Affairs Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao also confirmed during his visit to Colombo on July 29, that the Sri Lankan government had sought military assistance from the United States, Britain, Pakistan, and Bangladesh to meet the crisis. Indira Gandhi expressed disapproval of the Lankan move. The Indian Prime Minister also warned Sri Lanka that 'any external involvement will complicate matter for both the countries. This threat was followed by swift developments. Sri Lankan president sent his brother H.W. Jayewardene, as his personal emissary to India on August 10-12, 1983, with the demand that the Indian government stop the Tamil militant groups based in Tamil Nadu from operating against Sri Lanka. He conveyed to Prime Minister Gandhi that Sri Lanka was ready for talks with Tamil leaders and would accept India's offer of good offices. Following her talks with Jayewardene, Mrs. Gandhi told Parliament that India was opposed to a separate state for Tamils in Sri Lanka, and she also informed the House that President Jayewardene had expressed willingness to make major concessions to the TULF if it renounced its

separatist demand.

The TULF leader, Appapillai Amrupalingam, met Gandhi on August 14, 1983. Though he refused initially to renounce the demand for Eelam, a separate homeland for Tamils, he expressed readiness after a second meeting with her to negotiate with the Sri Lankan government without preconditions and to consider any reasonable offer that Sri Lanka was prepared to make to meet the 'substance of Eelam'. The Indian government went ahead to prepare the ground for a negotiated settlement to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Indira- Jayewardene summit talk during the Commonwealth conference in New Delhi in November 1983 achieved two things: abandonment of certain preconditions by Sri Lanka that stood in the way of the TULF's participation in the proposed All Party Conference on the ethnic issue and agreement on a devolution plan— which would serve as the basis for talks.

Sri Lankan government was not really enthusiastic about the Indian involvement in its

ethnic crisis. Before G. Parthasarthy was to visit Colombo, President Jayewardene said that Sri Lanka envisaged 'no role' for India in settling the Tamil problem. There was no let up in the anti-Indian campaign in the Sinhalese media, and there was a clear perception of a threat from India to Sri Lanka. Yet the Sri Lankan government accepted India's good offices and received the TULF leaders for the negotiations.

The All Party Conference in which all the recognised political parties and non political organisations of Sri Lanka participated, met in three rounds in 1984. Attending the initial discussions representatives of the governing UNP, its chief rival the SLFP, the principal party of Sri Lankan Tamils the TULF and five other parties all active on the island, the SLFP, withdraw itself from the discussions. Later the ethnic and religious organisations representing Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians were also invited. The substantive issue before APC was the devolution of certain governmental powers and

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15. Gopalaswamy Parthasarathy was entrusted by Indira Gandhi to prepare the draft for a negotiation of the settlement to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. He played a significant role during the early period of Indian mediation.

resources to sub-national units. An idea apparently accepted in principle by all groups but subject to many different views on the constitution of the units and the extent of powers to be delegated. However, the proposed regional councils, which would replace the existing District Development Councils (DDCs) and enjoy a fair degree of autonomy, faced strong opposition from the Sinhalese Buddhists who were in no mood to concede anything beyond the DDCs. The Buddhists saw the very concept of the region councils as Indian inspiration and the handiwork of India. Eventually, proposals were offered for Inter District Co-ordinating Units, presumably coinciding with the larger, administrative defunct provinces, and for a second legislative chamber with members drawn from 17 popularly elected DDCs. But the proposal failed to receive the support of any Sri Lankan party. The Sri Lankan government dissolved the APC in December 1984.

It was time, of course, that the response of the Indian Government to the situation in Sri Lanka after the 1983 riots was largely dictated by the backlash in Tamil Nadu. The inflow of thousands of Tamil refugees into India and their tales of

17. Ibid p.259.
atrocities by the Sri Lankan army against the Tamils aroused the passions of Indian Tamils. For the DMK, it was an opportunity to refurbish its image. It openly supported Tamil militants and the demand for independent Eelam and in that process invoked the memory of bygone days where a Dravidanadu was on its political agenda. There were sure signs of Tamil separatism coming to the fore; posters carrying slogans for a separate Tamil Nadu made their appearance, thousands of Tamil youths came forward to enrol themselves as volunteers to be sent to Sri Lanka to fight along with their brethren.

In such a changed atmosphere, the ruling AIADMK was also forced to pay lip service to the Eelam cause. Pressure was exerted on the central government to deal more firmly with Sri Lanka, including direct military action against it, if necessary. Mrs Gandhi had to act quickly because, elections to the Indian Parliament were due in 1985, and the Congress Party at the centre, which preferred an electoral pact with the ruling AIADMK, had to appear to act firmly. The government, however, rejected the Eelam demand as well as the demand for military action against Sri Lanka, but decided to allow militants to use Madras as their

base. India refrained from dislodging the Tamil militants from Tamil Nadu since such action would have further inflamed the tempers of the local Tamils. The militants were allowed to build up arsenals of sophisticated arms, ship them to Sri Lanka, run training camps, set up communication facilities, open Eelam information Centre' and move freely between India and Sri Lanka. Mrs Gandhi seemed to keep the boys in leash and used them to harass Colombo only to the extent of forcing it to reach an agreement acceptable to Delhi.

After Rajiv Gandhi succeeded Indira Gandhi as prime minister, Indo-Sri Lankan relations showed signs of improvement. His party did handsomely well in Tamil Nadu and the DMK was no longer perceived as a threat. He took two important steps that seemed to convince Sri Lanka of his earnestness and sincerity of purpose in solving the ethnic problem. Ramesh Bhandari replaced G.Parthasarathy as the prime minister's special envoy dealing with the Lankan problem, and a second and more important step taken by him was to curb Tamil militant...
activities in India. Indira Gandhi's reluctance to discourage the Tamil militants had been a major irritant in Indo-Sri Lanka relations, and curbing Tamil separatist activities was an important prerequisite to convincing Sri Lanka of India's sincerity in serving as an honest broker. Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan government, particularly after the attack on the sacred city of Anuradhapura on May 22, 1985 accepted the reality that, given the support the militants were enjoying in India, there was no way the Sri Lankan army could suppress the insurgency through military means alone. It expressed its willingness for a political solution.

Ramesh Bhandari succeeded in obtaining a new peace package from Jayewardene in April 1985, that included a general amnesty for Tamil rebels, release of detainees, confinement of security forces to barracks and resumption of negotiations to settle the Tamil issue. As a result a summit was held between Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewardene in New Delhi on June 2 and 3, 1985. Agreement was reached that India would curb Tamil militants activities on its soil and the flow of arms from India to Sri Lanka, while Sri Lanka


agreed to keep its army under firm control. Colombo regarded the summit a 'change of heart in New Delhi.'

India initiated the talks to end the carnage and resolving the issues in contention between the Tamil separatists and the Sri Lankan government in Thimpu in July-August 1985. In the talks, Sri Lankan delegation was headed by Hector Jayewardene and Tamil groups were represented including the moderate TULF and a grouping of guerrilla organisations called Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF). The Indian delegation was present but did not participate.

The first phase of Thimpu talks was held on July 8-13, 1985. This meeting was of an exploratory nature and both sides restated their viewpoint. It was agreed that the second round of talks would be held in August. At a second meeting on August 12-17, 1985, the terms offered by Sri Lankan government were not much different from those offered at APL in 1984.


The Tamil representatives introduced a series of four points: recognition of the Tamil population as a distinct nationality; of the existence of a territorially delimited Tamil homeland; of a Tamil right to self-determination and of a right of citizenship for all Tamils living in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan government viewed the first three principles as tantamount to secession, and refused to view them as even a starting point for the negotiating process. It addressed the fourth demand in a way that made a major political point.

The negotiations at Thimpu ended abruptly when the ENLF representatives walked out, charging the Sri Lankan Army with atrocities against Tamil civilians. The government of India reacted to the walkout by expelling several militant Tamil separatist leaders from India.

After the collapse of Thimpu talks, the government of Sri Lanka came out with a comprehensive and detailed set of proposals in August 1985. Through these proposals Sri Lanka expressed her willingness to

establish provincial council in each province and for this agreed that Indian should indirectly hold the negotiations with the Tamils.

The TULF, subsequently put forward a revised set of proposals in December 1985, that proposed a reasonable solution, that a Tamil state could be created within the framework of the Sri Lankan constitution. The proposal again entailed four elements: devolution of legislative, administrative, and judicial authority to appoint provincial Governors and elect Provincial Assemblies; Union of the Northern and Eastern provinces as a single Tamil homeland; provincial autonomy in matters related to police and internal law and order; and provincial autonomy in matter relating to the allocation of land, including allotments within areas irrigated by inter-provincial development schemes such as the Mahaweli Ganga project.

After considering the TULF proposals, the government of Sri Lanka put forth a revised version of the Provincial Councils proposal that had been offered during the 1984 and 1985 negotiations. The new

proposal of June 1986 acquiesced to the TULF demand for provincial autonomy in matters of internal law and order as well as the allocation of agricultural land. TULF, for its part considers the government proposals reasonable, but it could do little more than ferry them to the militant’s political offices. The militants rejected the Government’s proposals out of hand on November 3, 1986, claiming that they failed to meet even the most basic Tamil demands for political autonomy in a Tamil homeland.

The outright rejection of the Colombo proposals annoyed the Indian government, which felt that the Tamil militants were approaching the matter of political solution with a wholly negative attitude and with no concrete counter proposals of their own. In a coordinating move between the Central and Tamil Nadu government, the Tamil Nadu police arrested some militants and their leaders and confiscated their arms and ammunitions in a statewide crackdown on November 8, 1986. The immediate reason


31. The Hindu. November 10, 1986. However those arrested were released the same day and their confiscated weapons were returned later.
for the government action against the militants was to create a better climate for the Rajiv-Jayewardene meeting during SAARC summit in Bangalore. Following the meeting between Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewardene, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran and the LTTE leader Prabhakaran and his aides were flown to Bangalore. The Sri Lankan president then offered to trifurcate the Eastern province to a Tamil majority Batticaloa province, a Sinhala majority Trincomalee province, and a Muslim majority Amparai province. Each could have its own provincial council. No offer was made to merge any part of the Tamil-speaking areas in the Eastern province with the Northern province. The Indian response to the trifurcation plan was favourable, but the Tamil moderates as well as militants rejected it.

The recalcitrant attitude of the Sri Lankan government, together with the violence unleashed by the LTTE, only served to push their realisation further down the road away from a successful outcome. Therefore, it was incumbent upon India to continue with its efforts. As a result, a fresh set of proposals emerged, known as the December 19 proposals. These proposals represented an

32. P. Venkateshwar Rao, op.cit, p.430.
advance on anything worked out earlier, as they did seek to create a Tamil homeland by slicing off the Sinhalese dominated Amparai district from the Eastern province and leaving the rest of the Northern and Eastern provinces lumped together. India wanted both sides to show restraint and asked the government of Sri Lanka to cease all hostilities and resume negotiations with Tamil groups within the framework of the proposals for finding a peaceful solution to the island's ethnic problem. The Sri Lankan government decided to go ahead with the military offensive and it was decided to take all measures to eliminate terrorists and terrorism. This policy gave rise to possibility of outside involvement in Indian neighbourhood.

Israel and Pakistan were the two countries that actively helped Sri Lanka in its fight against the Tamil militants. The Israeli secret service, Mossad, gave counter insurgency training to Sri Lankan security forces and Pakistan also responded with arms and military training for the island's army. China, South Africa, Singapore and Malaysia were the other countries which supplied arms to Sri Lanka. The Government of India cautioned Sri Lanka against such activities but got an

unsupportive reaction from Sri Lanka. Therefore, the stage was set for a more forceful intervention on India’s part an intervention that really arose out of the need to re-establish India's credibility, as by then India looked like having lost out with both sides.

With a view to curbing political and violent activities of the LTTE members who had virtually declared their complete command on the civil administration in Jaffna, the Sri Lankan Government imposed blanket ban on petroleum products to the peninsula with effect from January 2, 1987. It was followed by suspension of telephone and telecommunication links. All this had a desired effect on public services and government offices and the vehicular traffic had come to a standstill. India expressed its concern over the economic blockade imposed by the Sri Lankan government. It cautioned Sri Lanka against exercising any military option. Jayawardene took note of Indian concern and lifted fuel embargo on March 17, 1987 to provide relief to civilians. Petrol and diesel was rationed in a way


that would not assist the terrorists.

The standoff continued and in the Eastern Trincomalee district, 107 people were killed in a massacre, and a bomb went off in Colombo bus stand and killed more than hundred people. The Government blamed these incidents on Tamil militants and imposed a curfew and mounted retaliatory air attacks against militants positions in the north. New Delhi strongly showed deep concern over Premadasa's (the then Prime Minister of Sri Lanka) remark emphasising a military solution to the Tamil problem. The government of India had noted with deep concern and anguish the escalation of violence and called upon an early resumption of negotiated solution to meet the legitimate demands of Tamil minority with the framework of the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

Facing a Tiger rebellion in the north as well as the JVP revolt in the South, and contemplating a possible link between the two, the Sri Lankan government decided to launch another major offensive against LTTE strongholds in late May. Employing more than 3,000 troops in a land, air and sea assault, the

government recaptured a large portion of Jaffna. The Indian government once again found itself under increasing pressure to take action against Colombo. This time, by way of helping the Jaffna citizens the Indian government dispatched a miniflotilla of fishing boats flying Red Cross flags and ladden with humanitarian aid. The Sri Lankan government did not permit these boats to deliver the relief supplies to Tamils of Jaffna. India strongly condemned Sri Lankan action as deliberately negative. Thereupon India decided to air drop the essential life securing supplies. Five AN 32 transport aircrafts escorted by four Mirage - 2000 accomplished the assigned task.

This was an unprecedented act in the history of relations between two sovereign states. In Sri Lanka this act was condemned as cowardice and an act of aggression. Two super powers also expressed their concern. Washington urged India and Sri Lanka to reach an accord on the question of providing aid to Tamils. Western Press had criticised the action and described it as big stick diplomacy. The then USSR supported the relief mission. Edward Shevardnadze,


Soviet foreign minister communicated to his counterpart his country’s support over air dropping of material aid to Tamils in Jaffna. This forcefully relief mission clearly gave a warning to the Sri Lankan government that India was not prepared to be a helpless spectator of the mass killings being done by the Sri Lankan forces.

Though initially Sri Lanka charged India of a naked violation of Sri Lankan independence, later, it realised the necessity and importance of the mission. And with a view to pacify the deteriorating relations and sustaining good neighbourly relations both the governments came to an agreement on June 15, 1987 saying that relief supplies will be sent by unarmed Indian vessels upto Kankesanthurai and will be inspected by Indian Red Cross and Sri Lankan government before unloading. The route will be conveyed to Sri Lanka and Indian vessels will be escorted by Sri Lankan Navy at the time of entering Sri Lankan territorial water.

41. *The Times of India* June 7, 1987
42. *The Hindu* June 15, 1987. It further provided that the arrangements for off loading of supplies at Kankesanthurai Port and distribution of goods to Jaffna, Vadamarchi, Tenmarchi and Vallikancan will be undertaken by the Sri Lanka government, 6 representatives of Sri Lanka Red Cross, 6 representatives of Indian – Sri Lanka Red Cross, 6 representatives of Jaffna multipurpose cooperative societies and 2 representative of the Government of India.
The result of Indian mediation was obvious when Sri Lanka offered a new plan for peace, known as 'New Colombo Plan'. Unlike the December 19 proposal, the New Colombo proposal conceived of a single council for the Northern and Eastern provinces inclusive of Amparai as well. It also offered official status to Tamil language. Jayewardene expressed desire that his government would adopt a peaceful solution to the ethnic crisis if India supported in a peaceful way.

New Delhi invited leaders of Sri Lankan Tamil Organisations, the TULF, EROS, TELO, PLOT and EPRLF for discussing the new peace plan for political settlement. The leaders who attended the meeting were: Amirathalingam, M. Sivasithamparam, R. Sampathan, of TULF; V. Balakumaran, R. Shankar of EROS; L. Ketheeswran, K. Padmanabha of EPRLF; K. Uma Maheswaran, T. Siddhartha of PLOT; and A. Selvam of TELO. EROS express

43. According to the new plan the provincial council would have a Governor and a Chief Minister and both the council would remain district for administrative purposes. There would be 36 seats from the Northern and 35 seats from the Eastern provincial council and if this scheme was accepted there would be a special referendum in the East province to decide whether or not they wanted a merger with the north and also the militants would surrender their weapons before these elections and the Government troops would be confined to the barracks.

44. Swaroop Rani Dubey, op. cit p.113.
view on the proposal that it could not be a comprehensive solution. However, they assured Indian government not to obstruct the peace initiative. TELO and EPRLF expressed their faith in the concept of an undivided Tamil homeland and were willing to negotiate with Jayewardene only on this promise. V. Prabhakaran, the LTTE leader described it as an act of betrayal and affirmed his resolve to continue the arm struggle in Sri Lanka. He was apposed to the disarming of the militants until the government military camps in their areas were dismantled.

However, on July 12, 1987, Sri Lankan armed forces launched another massive offensive operation in the Mullaitivu district, and got engaged in a serious battle with LTTE guerrilla units. The Tamil problem once again became very hot issue between India and Sri Lanka. When Sri Lanka found it hard to deal with Tamil militants through the use of its armed forces, it signed a pact with India on 29th July, 1987 known as 'Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement (henceforth ISLA), where by Sri Lanka agreed to give a large

47. For details, see Appendix, "Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement".
measure of autonomy to the North-Eastern provinces and India took the responsibility of getting the pact enforced. Here it is important to probe into some of the major terms of the Accord in so far as these have bearings on the Tamil problem.

It was clearly stated at the very outset that both countries sought to preserve the 'unity' sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka (Section 1.1). This was a gain for Sri Lankan government, since it had stood firmly against negotiating on these issues with the separatists. At the same time, the Tamil guerrillas lost the purpose of their struggle - the creation of separate state. This was what both Sri Lanka and India had watched all along. India assured Sri Lanka that it would never allow separate Tamil State in Sri Lanka. The agreement also recognized that the Northern and Eastern provinces have been areas of historical habitation of Sri Lankan Tamil speaking peoples, who have at all times hitherto lived together in this territory with the other ethnic group," (Section 1.4). This clause was included as it seemed to satisfy all the groups who argued for the existence of a traditional Tamil homeland in the Northern and Eastern provinces. However by not using the word homeland and stating that other ethnic groups, too have lived there for
more or less the same length of time as the Tamils, it attempted to satisfy the Sinhalese and other ethnic groups which argued against a Tamil homeland. By stating that the Northern and Eastern provinces have been areas of historical habitation of Sri Lankan Tamil speaking peoples, it recognised other groups also who speak Tamil and laid claims to certain parts of Easter Sri Lanka i.e. Muslim.

In the accord, the government of Sri Lanka proposed to permit the Northern and the Eastern provinces to join to form one administrative unit (Section 2.1), at least until the people in the Eastern province decided in a referendum whether to continue to remain linked with the Northern province (Section 2.3). The provision of referendum was made due to the opposition of other ethnic group in the Eastern province to establishment of a joint administrative unit. The Accord provided that the same mechanism and organisations would be utilised for the purpose of law enforcement and maintenance of security in the Northern and Eastern provinces as used in the rest of the country (2.10). It further provided that 'the president of Sri Lanka will grant a general amnesty to political and other prisoners held in custody under the Prevential of Terrorism Act and
other Emergency laws, and to combatants as well as to those persons accused, charged and/or convicted under these laws (Section 2.11). By stating that "the official language of Sri Lanka shall be Sinhala. Tamil and English will also be official languages" (Section 2.18), it recognised Sinhala as the first among equals.

The most important aspect of the Accord was that it had given India a free hand in dealing with the militants. However, neither Tamil separatists nor any other Tamil political organisation was party to the agreement. Tamil separatists like the Sri Lankan government had no choice but to accept its terms. The agreement stated that if they (militants) did not accept it, military action would be taken against them by India (Section 2.16).

The Accord was a document which was not only well intentioned but represented the best possible hope that has emerged till then. It reaffirmed the unity of Sri Lanka and sought to put an end, once and for all, to the secessionist bogey there. At the same time, it did seek to address itself seriously to the task of meeting the legitimate Tamil aspirations.

The ISLA was followed by the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment of Sri Lankan constitution
which tried formally and for the first time, to bring about a certain devolution of powers. It also, despite its promising start, has seen the impact largely still born. This is principally because a large number of subjects of immediate and direct concern to the Tamils, such as law and order, finance and land alienations have been placed on the concurrent list, thereby giving rise to much avoidable confusion and tension. The governor has been given discretionary powers emasculating the executive and legislative authority of the elected representatives. It confer on the president abundant powers to impose emergency in the province.

The Accord not only made India a formal party to the Sri Lankan ethnic crisis, but it also placed on it the onus of obliging Tamil groups to respect the Accord in its letter and spirit. On the request of Sri Lankan government, an Indian Peace Keeping Forece (IPKF) was despatched to Jaffna peninsula.

The ISLA drew a great deal of flake from various circles. The misunderstanding was largely due to a communication gap between intention and

achievement, on the one hand, and appreciation and realisation on the other. Moreover, it came on the heels of the traumatic from the Sinhalese point of view. From the beginning it was clear that the pact was not palatable to the Sinhalese population exposed to years of virulent anti-Indian propaganda. The Accord got opposition even from the Tamils whom after all, it was meant to assist in the realisation of their legitimate aspirations. Initially the accord had made impression in the minds and hearts of the ordinary Tamil that, India, had come to their rescue.

The Indian government did succeed in bringing various Tamil groups to accepting the accord, although the LTTE approved it reluctantly under New Delhi's heavy pressure. However, the Tamils have come to realize soon that there is a significant difference between what they expected from India and what they obtained. The Tamil militants felt that all of them were disgruntled and, by the XIII amendment thoroughly disenchanted. They looked to India as saviour and after Accord feel betrayed by their own trustee.

This extract from the speech of a LTTE leader, voiced the view of the Tigers:

The Indo Sri Lanka Accord secures India's geopolitical interests and strategic objectives. The LTTE is sincerely pleased that the government of India was able to put an end, through the Agreement, the dangerous activities of the international subversive elements who operated in Sri Lanka as agents of imperialism. As a revolutionary movement committed to anti-imperialist policy, we recognise India's security concerns in the region and support her cardinal foreign policy of making the Indian ocean as a zone of peace free from interference of extra territorial powers. In this context, we wish to point out that it was the LTTE fighters who put up a heroic and relentless fight against foreign mercenaries. Our liberation movement is not opposed to India's interest. We have no objection whatsoever to India's strategic aspirations to establish her status as the regional superpower in South Asia. We always functioned and will continue to function as a friendly force to India. We would have extended our unconditional support to the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord if the Agreement were only confined to Indo-Sri Lanka relations aimed to secure India's geopolitical interests. But the Accord interferes in the Tamil issue, betrays the Tamil interest. It is here the contradiction of interests between the LTTE and India emerges.

LTTE made only a token surrender of arms to the IPKF. They argued that, since the Tamils were consulted ex post facto, they were not bound by the agreement. Thus it was obvious that the LTTE was bent on flouting the Accord on the slightest pretext.
The sudden and massive shift of allegiance of the Tamil mass population in the North toward Indian army form LTTE in earlier days of the Accord, irritated the latter. They felt alienated from their own people. They adopted a new strategy to win back the loyalty of than common Tamil. They initiated several fights with the Indian troops. The inability of Indian forces to distinguish a Tamil guerrilla from an ordinary Tamil benefited their strategy. Indian troops faced the same kind of problems that Sri Lankan armed forces prior to July, 1987.

The Indo Sri Lanka Accord, however, failed to provide a good foundation to Indo-Sri Lanka relations, particularly because of opposition from a section of Sri Lankan led by Premadasa. In the presidential election held in December 1988, Premadasa was elected. One of his campaign promise was to remove the Indian army from Sri Lanka. After his election as the president, the issue of withdrawal of IPKF came to be a source of big strains on Indo-Sri Lanka relations. His regime was notable for its own upheavals. On the one hand, he was the first Sinhalese politician who could sympathise with the Tamils who, in turn, felt that he was the one

50. N.N. Jha, *op.cit* p.61.
Sinhalese politician with whom they could do business. This would explain his basic lack of antipathy of the LTTE and the implicit faith—highly misplaced as it turned out to be in their promises and assurances for peace. On the other hand, he was a person of infatigable energy, who chose to oversee, virtually single-handedly, every department of the governments activities.

The IPKF interference had placed India in an extraordinary situation and resulted in much strained relations with Sri Lanka. There was a complete loss of confidence and mutual trust between the two countries.

During May 1989, Premadase negotiated successfully with LTTE for cessation of hostilities and to negotiate with the government over their differences. On return he promised them to ask India to withdraw IPFK from Sri Lanka. He observed in one of his public meeting that the last soldier of IPKF would leave the island by the end of July 1989. India wanted to continue IPKF in Sri Lanka. The Direct negotiations of Premadasa annoyed the Indians. Indian troops concern was that LTTE would anhilate the

members of other Tamil rebel such as EPRLF, TELO and PLOT, who had laid down their arms after the arrival of Indian troops in July, 1987. Since the Accord, EPRLF and TELO assisted IPKF in identifying LTTE for IPKF operations. As such India's fear was that Indian departure would precipitate a blood shed of fratricide.

The major event which took place in late 1989 was the electoral defeat of Congress Party in India and V.P. Singh became prime minister of National Front government (minority government). The new government had made some new attempts to rectify the parameters of Indian policy towards Sri Lanka. Otherwise, India had learnt a lesson that while dealing with an independent sovereign country, there was a limit beyond which one could not go. Whereas, Gandhi was opposed to pull Indian troops out of Sri Lanka, V.P. Singh was more than enxious to do so. His government was committed to not getting Indian troops involved in the internal conflicts of India's neighbours. And even he had wanted to, Indians had their hands full in 1990, not only in Punjab and

Kashimir but also nationwide, with the Hindu-Muslim conflicts. IPKF was pulled out of Sri Lanka by March 1990. In November 1990 National Front government fell and was replaced by another minority government led by Chandra Shekhar. The latter was in power only because the Congress Party was not ready to contest election at that time.

The most unfortunate event occurred in India in May 1991, when Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated. It was indeed the Tiger who did it. The assassination had created hostility in Southern India towards the Tigers. LTTE killed him as a act of revenge for sending IPKF which fought against the Tamil Militants particularly LTTE. The LTTE was banned in India. Why the LTTE did it, is the question. As the LTTE is a fanatical, fierce, highly disciplined fighting force with one goal: independence for the Tamil people, they do anything to achieve that goal. They killed everyone they could who stood in their way, Sinhalese, Tamils or Indian.

That Rajiv Gandhi was in a position to help them and indeed that India had in the past given them a great deal of help in no way seemed to have stopped them from taking revenge on Gandhi for having fought them from 1987 to 1990 when IPKF tried to
impose a peace on all of the combatants. From the LTTE point of view, one of India's cardinal sins while in Sri Lanka, aside from having killed LTTE fighters, was that it consciously used the animosity, fear, and distrust between LTTE and other Tamil militant groups in Sri Lanka. The Indians devoted a great deal of time and effort in the North and East to building up rival Tamil militant groups, both militarily and politically. From the LTTE perspective, this was an Indian effort to divide and conquer the Tamil independence movement. LTTE not only had to be the only group, it also would not tolerate anyone, Tamil or otherwise, who would have the Tamils settle for anything short of Eelam. That is why the Tigers have killed most of the moderate Sri Lankan Tamils who have spoken out. Certainly, if Gandhi's party had been elected to power—as happened, the likelihood was that he would have tried to use whatever influence India could muster to see that the civil war in Sri Lanka came to an end, with the Tamils granted, only some sort of autonomy short of total independence.

While Jayewardene was already out of power, the death of Rajiv Gandhi has eliminated the other signatory of the Accord as well. This has added

a new dimension to the India-Sri Lankan relations. Premadasa's anti-Indianism, while continued after the departure of the IPKF tended to make him suspect those who did not share his perceptions. That he was also a pragmatist, as the sametime can be seen from the fact that he was till the very end, an enthusiastic supporter of the closest possible economic relations with India. That he was also a realist was disclosed by the fact that Sri Lanka was perhaps the only Indian neighbouring country, which chose to express sympathetic concern and understanding in the immediate aftermath of the December 6, 1992 events. In the last six months of his life he paid as many as three official visits to India.

After the tragic assassination of Premadasa on May 1, 1993, the situation is that while relations with India are close and warm, the domestic situation of Sri Lanka has been getting from bad to worse. There appears to be an unfortunate indifference to the real situation in the north eastern areas of Sri Lanka.

54. The level of Indian exports increase from approximately US$ 100 million for calendar year 1990 to US$300 million approximately for calendar year 1992. without the Sri Lankan exports increasing beyond the earlier figure of US$ 10-15 million per annum.
Though, some incidents had soured relations between the two countries, yet India cannot remain a silent spectator ignoring the ethnically based human rights violations quite often with support of the government. India is still willing to bring about political solution of the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka.

As stated in the last chapter the latest situation is that the recently held parliamentary election, the UNP was defeated after a long time and SLFP with the support of minor groups formed its government and Mrs. Bhandaranaike’s (ex-PM) daughter Mrs. Chandrika Kumartunga became the Prime Minister and she expressed her keenness to improve relation with India and also to solve the Tamil problem. She initiated peace talks with the LTTE which has been temporarily suspended because of the assassination of UNP presidential candidate Gemini Disseneke. She herself contesting the Presidential election and won her main electoral plank to abolish the presidential system and revert back to pure parliamentary system. Now she is the president and her mother is the prime minister. UNP has blamed the SLFP for the assassination which the SLFP has denied and no body has claimed the responsibility and the LTTE has specifically denied
it. But this does not mean anything because LTTE had denied its involvement in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. Now para to be brief, the Tamil nationality question in Sri Lanka is the major determining factor in Indo-Sri Lanka relations, though India cannot afford to make Sri Lanka hostile because of its geopolitical location and also because of its close proximity and very close ethnic religious ties of the people of the two countries.