Given the heterogeneity and complexity of linguistic, tribal, caste and ethnic minorities which co-exist in the South Asian countries along with the majority communities, the state has been called upon to manage and accommodate an increasing number of minority grievances. In most cases the state has itself become partisan, as a party to the dispute, and has helped to escalate the conflicts, generally by favouring the dominant majorities. The deterioration of political institutions seems most likely to worsen majority-minority relations.

This in turn, undermines the declining capacity of existing institutions to manage conflicts. It is inevitable in this process that when majorities become more self-assertive, a sense of territorial, linguistic chauvinism or religious fundamentalism provides a new basis for mobilisation and action to the minority communities by adopting counter strategies.

The present study seeks to discuss and analyse Tamil national question in India and Sri
Lanka. The period under discussion 1970-93 was highly important from the point of Crystallisation of Tamil national question particularly in Sri Lanka. Therefore the main emphasis of the present work is on this particular issue. The study analyses the nature and content of the problem. It also strives to examine the rationale behind the problem and the factors which contributed to the aggravation of the ethnic tensions and conflicts.

There are at least two important insights that are implicit here. The first insight of course is that the struggle for national self-determination is, in its fundamentals, a struggle against state oppression. Secondly, state oppression is most often couched in terms of majoritarian nationalism. This is an insight which is strikingly pertinent to the situation in Sri Lanka, where the post-colonial State elites have legitimised their role by portraying themselves as protector of Sinhalese Buddhist interest and identity.

Writing a dissertation is a quest in itself and at the end of it, I feel overwhelmed by the strong feelings of humility and joy emerging in my mind. The experience has been potentially rich and rewarding. It has definitely opened new vistas of
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(HARI LAL SHARMA)