Ethnic management has acquired a great dimension today. Power-sharing is no longer an easy task particularly to the states where the multi-ethnic composition exists. This will naturally lead to inter-ethnic group rivalries. The ethnic conflicts and its impact may be minimal in those states which have abundant resources and technological skill to absorb multi-ethnic groups. The multi-ethnic groups have to face multifarious problems if the states are small and its resources are limited. In such states the dominant ethnic group tries to extend its sphere of influence and corner all benefits
for itself. The central authority is monopolised and the laws are passed and executed to the disadvantage of other minority groups. This type of partisan attitude on the part of dominant ethnic group will definitely aggravates the ethnic harmony and it may ultimately lead to violence, race war and secessionist demand. Sri Lanka being a small island with multi-ethnic composition is facing crisis due to merciless and tactless strategies adopted by the dominant ethnic Sinhalese community against the Tamils. Further, for the Sri Lankan Government race comes first, religion next and human beings last.

In Sri Lanka, the Tamils are systematically deprived of the political power by the Sinhala majority. In addition, the process of modernisation, in a way, hastened the political awareness among the competitions and the sense of relative deprivation among the Sri Lankan Tamils, intensified in their secessionist demand. This seems to have a positive correlation with economic and political development.

The inter-communal rivalries between Sinhalese majority in Sri Lanka has had a long and intermittently
violent history. The Tamils had legitimate grievances which could easily have been redressed. Instead, successive regimes reneged on assurances and agreements, aggravating bitterness, eroding credibility and giving birth to Tamil militancy. Given the volatile situation prevalent in Sri Lanka, it is very difficult to offer a satisfactory solution to the present crisis.

Of all the ethnic groups in Sri Lanka, the Indian Tamils perhaps are the worst sufferers due to the deteriorating economic condition and growing threats to their life and property. Added to this, the disenfranchisement policy of the Sri Lankan Government had kept lakhs of them in constant insecure position. Even though the problem of statelessness was resolved amicably at the instance of Thondaman, the basic question of safety and security of Indian Tamils still remains unsolved. Bearing the brunt of violence, the Indian Tamils are disliked both by the Sinhalese as well as by the Tamil militants; while the former always questions their patriotism, the latter accuses them for not being radical enough in supporting 'Eelam Movement'. 
The Sri Lankan Tamils who are more vocal in their demand for regional autonomy / Eelam are sore at the post-independent Sinhalese dominated Governments for having denied a share in the political power. The Tamils have complained of post-independence Governments bias against their community deprivation of their right to use meaningfully the Tamil language in schools and in administration, a systematic bias against Tamil economic interests, massive population transfer of the majority Sinhalese community into the Eastern Province and finally an attempt to eliminate the Tamils physically. It has also aggravated rivalries in trade and industry for a higher share in financial assistance from Banks.

Indian Policy on Sri Lanka over the past three decades has nurtured around two cardinal geo-strategic considerations within the framework of non-alignment. Firstly, avoiding any Tamil ethnic situation in Sri Lanka that will have adverse political impact on India, specifically on Tamil Nadu whose Tamil population has close ethnic ties with Sri Lanka's considerable Tamil minority. Secondly, maintaining peace in the region by avoiding any external
interference or presence. India's focus was on evolving a political solution to the problem without affecting the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka.

India has been making persistent efforts to narrow down the differences between the two sides in order to avoid outside intervention. But the Sri Lankan Government's military offensive against the population in Jaffna Peninsula and subsequently the Government of India's air dropping of the relief material to the besieged Tamil people of Jaffna created some bickerings between the two countries. The Sri Lankan Government took a strong exception to the violation of its air space, whereas India defended its action on humanitarian grounds. Certainly the population at large cannot be taken as hostage for what the Tamil Tigers and others had been doing in that Island. At one stage the Sri Lankan Government wanted to internationalise the Issue by raising it in the United Nations Security Council. Sri Lanka also threatened that it would raise the question of India's invasion of air space at its multi-lateral meeting. However, Sri Lanka did not venture to take negative steps. Not only
this, it ultimately accepted Indian relief materials to be sent to Jaffna. This was the background to the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord which the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi signed with President Jayawardene in Colombo in July 29, 1987. Under the Accord, the Indian Government agreed to secure arms surrender from the Tamil militants while the Sri Lankan Government agreed to take steps for meeting the Tamil aspirations for self-government and also tacitly to concede to their demand for establishing Tamil homeland by merging the Northern and Eastern Provinces into a single unit.

However the aftermath situation of the Accord proved to be unconducive to the termination of the conflict between the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamil militants. Notwithstanding the pre-eminent position accorded to the LTTE in the Interim Council, it became evident that it was disinclined to give up its separatist stance and rejected the agreement. Though it was offered lion's share in the proposed Interim Council, it hedged its formation, by changing its original stand on the written agreement negotiated by the Indian High Commission. At the same time
it insisted upon the change of its nominee as the interim administrator-in-council. Further it imposed a number of conditions for the implementation of the Accord. These conditions included among others, the issue of Sinhalese Colonisation in the Tamil areas, the disbandment of the para-military Sinhalese home guards and so on. The LTTE, thus selected areas in which there could hardly be any difference among the Tamils. The fast-into-death of one of the LTTE leaders and other agitational methods adopted by it were indicative of the attitude of the LTTE to pursue an obstructionist role in the implementation of the provisions of the Agreement. Almost simultaneously, it continued its military offensive which resulted in frequent clashes between its cadres and other militant groups. Meanwhile, the LTTE had become increasingly critical of the role of the IPKF in the Island. The crunch was surfaced in October, 1987 when seventeen LTTE men under custody swallowed cyanide capsules as a protest against shifting them from Jaffna to Colombo by the Sri Lankan forces for interrogation. Twelve out of the seventeen LTTE men died on the spot. In retaliation, the LTTE killed eight Sinhalese soldiers whom
they had captured along with several other civilians. These events precipitated another spurt of violence in which the IPKF was pitted against the LTTE. In the pitched battle, particularly in Jaffna and its adjacent areas, the LTTE lost many of its leading cadre. Nevertheless, the implications of this loss made the restoration of peace and normalcy an increasingly difficult task in the strife torn Tamil areas.

The devolution package envisaged by the two acts (promulgated in 1987) provides for the devolution of powers to the Provincial Councils was perceived by the Tamil militant groups as inadequate to alleviate the Tamil aspirations. Similarly, on the Sinhalese side, the SLFP leadership criticised the package as detrimental to the Sinhalese interests. This polarisation was further intensified by the insurgency of anti-systemic and anti-Tamil JVP in the Sinhalese dominated areas.

In a sudden and surprising manner the President Premadasa made a 'marriage of convenience' with the LTTE in 1989-90 which resulted in the 14-months cease-fire. The Sri Lankan Government and the
LTTE leadership decided to come round to negotiations for finding a peaceful settlement to the ethnic problem. There were several rounds of formal talks between Government representatives and the LTTE leaders which were held in Colombo for several months.

However, despite the conciliatory gestures of Sri Lankan Government which included the abrogation of the Sixth Amendment of the Constitution which was enacted in 1983 in the wake of the Ethnic conflict - the amendment requires MPs and other high government officials to take an oath of allegiance, for swearing separatism and pledging for the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, dissolution of the North-East Provincial Council and holding fresh elections. However, the LTTE could not be persuaded to continue the talks until a successful conclusion. The only outcome of these talks was the withdrawal of the IPKF as wished by both Premadasa and LTTE.

After a brief period of lull the LTTE resumed its confrontation with the Sri Lankan armed forces in June, 1992. Since then the hostilities between the two sides continued.
repeated assertion that there was no ethnic problem in the island but only a terrorist problem further strained the ethnic relations in the Island. Given the lack of initiative from the Wijetunga administration, the failure of Select Committee's efforts to find a political solution to the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka leaves little hope that the ethnic conflict will be resolved at the negotiation table.

Viewing all these factors into consideration the Sri Lankan Government has no option but to create a congenial atmosphere, to have any meaningful dialogue with all the Tamil groups including the moderates. Needless to say, that harping only on LTTE may create complications to arrive at any amicable solution. The Tamil militants should also need to take hard look at the future. Those who favour the extreme solution of separate Eelam also must keep in view of the world public opinion. The United Nations is always in favour of the territorial integrity. In the civil war of Zaire and Nigeria the United Nations opposed their disintegration. One should not forget that in other parts of the world the liberation movements which are simply ignored include
Kurds of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, the western Saharas, the Southern Sudanese and the West Papuas. If none of these cases elicit support, the Tamilians in Sri Lanka are unlikely to fare any better. The Tigers simply cannot hope to achieve Tamils self-determination through military means alone. The absence of international recognition ensures that 'Tamil Eelam' will remain a judicial non-entity for the foreseeable future. They cannot even hope to match the resources of the Government.

The militants also must realise that the demand for Eelam is not acceptable to both Sri Lanka as well as India. However, the political and economic viability of the Tamil Eelam is doubtful because of its small size. The leaders of the militant groups would fight among themselves for right to rule Eelam. More important is, the Indian Tamils are averse to the very idea of Eelam. The main reason is the demographic setting of the Indian Tamils and their economic interests in the Sinhala dominated areas.

Further, Muslim community is also against the idea of Tamil Eelam. They believe that Sri Lanka
itself a small country and it cannot be sustained if it is partitioned. Other small minorities like Malays and Burghers in Sri Lanka are also against the Eelam. In fact, they want to continue their good relations with the Sinhalese. Thus, the demand for a separate state is confined to the Sri Lankan Tamils. Even among them, those who have had professional and other vocations in or outside the Northern and Eastern regions one can discern a certain amount of ambivalence. Viewing the mood of the majority of the people the Tamil militants must realise that their demand for Eelam may endanger their own interests and may jeopardise the strategic considerations of the South Asian region.

The need of the hour is that the Sri Lankan Government as well as the Tamil militants have to search for a suitable solution acceptable to all. There are many alternative solutions for Sri Lanka if it carefully studies the constitutional systems of other countries. One should not forget Sri Lanka is not the only nation in the world having multi-ethnic races. In fact, there are many countries having multi-ethnic races such as USA, India, Australia
and Canada which have adopted their own system of Government to suit their own people.

Before taking up any concrete workable solution the Sri Lankan Government has to gain the confidence of Tamils and this is possible only by scrapping all the discriminatory laws passed against them. Wherever the multi-ethnic communities exist one has to harp on de-centralisation in order to extend freedom of choice to the local people.

The fear of Sinhalese that regional autonomy would some day lead to secession is unfounded. But on the other hand where regional autonomy has been denied, separation has ultimately prevailed, the best examples in our times are Pakistan and Cyprus.

Now, it is for Sri Lankan Government to correct the past mistakes made in the political process. In fact, the idea of federalism has been discussed and advocated in Sri Lanka for the last sixty years. As early as in 1926, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike felt that for a multi-ethnic country a federal form of Government in which each federating unit enjoying
substantial autonomy, would be most suitable. Almost concurring with the same idea, the Donoughmore Commission of 1928 recommended for establishment of Federal System to Sri Lanka in which Northern and Eastern Provinces would have formed one of the three self-governing units. However, these recommendations were not given proper thought even after independence.

The idea of provincial councils simply will not help to solve the problem. The Government has to come out with clear concessions to tame the Tamil Tigers. In any workable model there must be inbuilt mechanism whereby, the Tamils must feel that their rights cannot be abridged by the Central Government under one pretext or the other. Such a solution alone can bring peace and tranquility to the island.

However, it cannot be undermined that piece-meal concessions and the like, can never address this problem, especially in the extreme circumstances prevailing in Sri Lanka. But one should not forget the fact that the Tamils will have a future only
in an united, highly decentralised and multi-national state. This would, of course entail a major institutional restructuring of the nation. At the broadest level it would mean the federalism or perhaps even confederation of Sri Lanka. More specifically it necessitates the permanent unification of the Northern and Eastern Provinces to be a part of a federal Sri Lanka with a common citizenship. The concept of homeland is certainly complex, but the practical problems connected with it can be minimised by introducing effective constitutional safeguards to the minorities. Further the partial dismantling of the recent Government sponsored Sinhalese settlements in the north-east region is probably unavoidable.

Under any federal or confederal framework, jurisdiction over foreign policy, defence and currency and communications typically remain with the Central Government. This should be made applicable to Sri Lanka with one important qualification that the paramount concern of the Government is physical safety and security of the Tamils of north-east region from the depredations of the Sinhalese armed forces, police and paramilitary forces.
However, the signs of a peaceful solution to this enduring problem became clearly evident as the newly elected President Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga started sincere efforts to find a political solution for ending this crisis. Lifting the embargo on all kinds of consumption of food items and other things, unconditional discussions with the LTTE and the proposed Rs. 4,000/- crore package for the rehabilitation and reconstruction in the northern region reflect her firm determination in solving the ethnic conflict. It is also clear that she is prepared to 'go very far for peace' but that would not be peace 'without morality'.

The LTTE's initial and positive response to Chandrika's proposals is a welcoming sign. This reflects that the Tamil Tigers have strong faith in Kumaratunga though they seem to be deeply sceptical of the People's Alliance which contain many SLFP and nominally 'leftist elements' with a history of anti-Tamil policies. Speedy continuation of the peace process and persuading the LTTE, to return to negotiation table is the only way out to the
Government in finding out this vexed problem.

Just as the PLO sat down with the Israel, it the LTTE also to sit down with ment and sort out their prob the case with the African South African Government. Palestine and Ireland, now it to adopt this path for promotin A positive outcome of such a congenial atmosphere for of different ethnic groups in t

The need of the hour i the LTTE group V. Prabhakaran Kumaratunga should make all a lasting peaceful solution t in Sri Lanka without relapsing.