CHAPTER IV
PROBLEMS OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION

In most countries of the world, there are races within each nation which, because of their difference in capability, numerical strength and extent of control over the state power tend to have an inequitable share in the rights and benefits of the entire community in relation to their proportionate responsibilities and duties to it. The competition and rivalry stemming from these differences of the races have taken the form of Racism as seen in South Africa or racial discrimination as seen in Britain, USA and in many other countries of the world. But, in case of Sri Lanka, it is racial discrimination and not racism which threatens to tear apart the fabric of the nation. Racism is a systematic ideology of racial supremacy which claims of being scientific and is based on a fallacy that one race or a group is culturally superior because of its biological characteristics which are transmitted only to its own succeeding generations whereas racial discrimination refers to the unequal treatment by the state of various ethnic groups and owes its strength not so much to a doctrine as such but to the practice of it. One could even say that racial discrimination is a cultural trait, most often fastened by an exploitative economic system devised and maintained by the dominant race for political gains.

The Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority of contemporary Sri Lanka assert their respective identities on the basis of language, religion, ancestral territory and cultural attributes, although "the Tamil identity does not have a specific religious or Hindu dimension". It is not known whether the members of the ethnic communities were conscious of their separate identities when they came into contact with each other during the early days of settlement of the island. The Sri Lankan Tamils, who are mainly Saivite Hindus, have never expressed any anxiety about the
desire of the Sinhalese people to revive Buddhism, since they perceive Buddhism as an integral part of Hinduism and which expounds the same theme on the view of life. Moreover, their most revered god Murugan, the son of Siva, is an important figure in the pantheon of Sinhalese Buddhism. Both communities participate in the pilgrimage to Kataragama in the Moneragala district. Bruce Mathews, "The Situation in Jaffna - And How it Came About".¹ There is nothing inimical about the traditional cultures of the Tamil and Sinhalese people of Sri Lanka that prevent them from living in amity or harmonious co-existence.

Far from living in isolation in pre-colonial times, the Tamil and Sinhalese people of Sri Lanka were in fairly close communication to have deeply influenced each others' languages, the minutiae of their strikingly similar kinship classification systems, the structure and organization of their caste systems, and the details of village rituals. To be sure, the two groups dwelt in separate territories, as Cleghorn observed: the Sinhalese in the South and West, and the Tamils in the east and north. But it was precisely because the two groups dwelt in amity for so long that their cultures bore some remarkable similarities to one another, similarities that are lost on the likes of Cleghorn - no less than to the extremists of today - but obvious to an anthropologist. The truth is that viewed anthropologically, the Tamil and Sinhalese peoples of Sri Lanka are much more similar to each other than either group is to any of the ethnic groups of India, northern or southern. The similarities between the Tamil and Sinhalese peoples of Sri Lanka, unappreciated today, were not lost on previous generations of Sri Lankans, nor even on the Tamils of seventy years ago. S. Rasanayagam, in his Ancient Jaffna (1926), cheerfully propounded the notion that the Sri Lanka Tamils were more like the Sinhalese than south Indians, a view recently

castigated by LTTE hardliners.²

In Sri Lanka, there existed till the seventeenth century, at least three regional sovereignties; one of these was the independent Tamil Kingdom centred around Jaffna, the main city of the northern peninsula of the same name. The two other kingdoms were ruled by Sinhalese monarchs. One of these had as its capital the city of Kandy in south-central Ceylon. The other was based in Kotte, which roughly corresponds to the Greater Colombo region of today, and is located on the western coast to the south of Kandy. The northern Tamil Kingdom had been in existence since the early thirteenth century, but had enjoyed its heydays during the mid-fourteenth century. when in addition to the Jaffna peninsula and other northern areas, it had, according to K.M. de Silva, ‘effective control of the north-west coast up to Puttalam, of the east coast up to Trincomalee, and seemed poised for the establishment of Tamil supremacy over Sri Lanka.³ The only period during the medieval epoch when the whole island was, more or less, under a single sovereign authority was during the reign of the Sinhalese ruler Parakramabahu VI (1412-57), who took the advantage of a period of relative decline of the Jaffna Kingdom to subjugate it. However, this was a temporary phase, for the Tamil Kingdom soon regained its sovereignty and, far from generating murderous conflict, this particular occupation seems to have marked the high point in the development of cultural contact between the Sinhalese and Tamil linguistic communities.⁴

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One must point out that the Sinhalese and the Tamils of Sri Lanka are by no means homogeneous collectivities of people: a vast degree of internal differentiation is to be found among both groups. Nor are the Sinhalese and Tamil languages mutually exclusive categories. In 1918, a renowned Sinhalese linguist, W.F. Gunawardhana, stated that ‘in grammatical structure Sinhalese was Dravidian (south Indian), though its vocabulary was mainly Aryan (north Indian).’ He further reiterated that the Sinhala were ‘a Dravidian race slightly modified by a Mongoloid strain and Aryan wash. His views provoked a lengthy refutation by C.A. Wijesingha, who quoted Muller, Kunte and Havel to conclude that the Sinhala have hitherto been classified as an Aryan race, and will, therefore, continue to be classified as Aryan. Finally, it has been conclusively established by recent scholarship that the notion that the Sinhalese are of ‘Aryan’ racial stock, and therefore somehow superior to the ‘Dravidian’ Tamils, is a racist myth that made its first appearance during the second half of the nineteenth century. First, as the famous German Indologist Max Muller himself pointed out, the term ‘Aryan’, in scientific language, is utterly inapplicable to race... it means language and nothing but language’ and that, therefore, an anthropologist who speaks of Aryan race, Aryan blood, Aryan hair, and Aryan eyes, is as great a sinner as a linguist who speaks of a dolichocephalic dictionary or a brochycephalic grammar. In the Early History of Ceylon 1932, G.C. Mendis reiterated that Aryan and Dravidian were not racial categories but merely ‘large groups of people who speak languages that have a common origin. Second, as the distinguished Sinhalese anthropologist Gananath Obeysekera has noted ‘the racial connotations of ‘Aryan’ were introduced in the 19th century by Sri Lankan Sinhalese

6. Ibid., p.81
nationalists to differentiate themselves from the Tamils. They were aided by 19th century European Indologists, who spoke of Aryan subjugation of dark-skinned peoples, a hypothesis no longer acceptable to serious historians. In reality, there is little difference in the ethnic background of Sinhalese and Tamils.7

Out of the three erstwhile sovereign kingdoms, the Tamil kingdom was among the first to fall to European colonial powers, first to Portuguese in 1619, then to the Dutch and the British. The Portuguese, and the Dutch were mercantile capitalists, who were interested primarily in trade and concentrated their resources on maintaining secure control of strategic maritime points on the coastline of Ceylon. The task of bringing the island under a single centralized administration was to be left to the British, who displaced the Dutch in the last years of the eighteenth century. By 1815, the British had subdued the sole remaining indigenous kingdom, the Kandyan kingdom, and imposed a colonial administration on the entire island...

By 1833, the recommendations of the Colebrook-Cameron Report of 1831, which had advised the administrative unification of the entire island, and the vesting of sovereign authority in the person of the British Governor, were put into effect. The origins of the highly centralized, unitary state, that was to create vast political problems in the second half of the twentieth century are, therefore, to be sought in the imperatives of British colonial administration in the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1833, the British established a centralized form of government, developed roads and railroads connecting the Tamil and Sinhalese areas, and created opportunities for English-educated Tamils to seek employment in the south, all of which brought the two communities into direct contact with each other in the

the nineteenth century.

So, one goes on to imagine that Sri Lanka could only be an artificial nation, whose boundaries emerged at the convenience of the European colonial powers, and whose constituent ethnic groups had little or nothing to do with each other prior to their forced colonial unification. In an attempt to trace the origins and development of apparent polarisation between the ‘Sinhalese’ and the ‘Tamils’. One finds such a development crystallising in late twentieth-century Sri Lanka. The purpose of this Chapter is to trace the origins and development of this, a classic illustration of Rupert Emerson’s. "we" versus "they" antagonism, that over the past decade, has engulfed the island in a bloodbath, has few parallels even in the violent annals of the contemporary developing world. This analysis tend to support Stanley Tambiah’s broad conclusion that “Sinhalese-Tamil tensions and conflicts in the form to us today are of relatively recent manufacture - a truly twentieth-century phenomenon”, though of course, 'the post independence phase in Sri Lanka is necessarily a continuation and transformation of processes set in motion during the critical period of the British Raj.'

The Growth of Conflict

It is true that Sinhalese Buddhist texts, most notably the Mahavamsa and Culavamsa, recount a legacy of ancient hatred and struggle between the Sinhalese and conquering Damilas (south Indian Tamils), who repeatedly contested the Sinhalese for control of Rajarata, the north-central "Land of Kings". But it has only been in the last century that the Sinhalese started to draw a connection between the detested ‘Damilas’


of the texts and the Tamils dwelling peaceably in the north and east. As against those who would read these texts to infer a deep-seated Sinhalese hatred of all Tamils, it is apparent from recent scholarship - admirably summarized by S.J. Tambiah that, the connection between the Damilas of the text and the Tamils of the north had to be deliberately and repeatedly constructed, and this took place within the last century. Indeed, the history of Sri Lanka throughout the Colonial period is remarkable for the absence of ethnic conflict with the notable exception of the 1915 Buddhist-Muslim conflict, in which, to testify to the newly-constituted character of Sinhalese-Tamil conflict, the Tamil leadership took the side of the Sinhalese. As outrageous as it may seem to those who, whether Sri Lankan or not, have taken sides in this conflict, it is reading history backwards to suppose that today's problems stem from yesterday's divisions. They are of recent origin.

This Chapter attempts to trace the historical origins and development of the present Sinhalese-Tamil conflict. Stressing that the conflict was in no way 'pre-ordained', nor rooted in 'objective' factors, the role that the actions and policies of the Sri Lankan state played in creating two nations within the confines of the island country, and in bringing about the current confrontation between the Sinhalese and Tamil peoples has been indeed decisive. It is argued that, the process whereby an 'ethnic group' attains the consciousness of a distinct, historically-constituted nation is a gradual evolutionary and open ended one; and that the motives, imperatives, policies and actions of those at the helm of the state-building enterprise are of fundamental and

decisive importance to understanding and explaining the unfolding of that process. Sinhalese-Tamil polarization, far from being the continuation of an ancient conflict rooted in 'primordial' ties, is in fact a development more markedly manifest in the second half of the twentieth century - earlier patterns of conflict falling within different social boundaries. This Chapter in particular and project in general, has posited the state as a central explanatory variable in accounting for identity-formulation and nationality formation, and analysed the rise of mass Tamil nationalism as a process occurring within a complex historical dialectic of the Sinhalese-Buddhist state and Tamil society - a dialectic which is nonetheless one of domination and resistance.

British Administration and Communal Divide

After the British conquered Ceylon, Christian missionaries entered the island. The British missionaries established themselves in the South of Ceylon, the American Missionary Society, when it arrived, was relegated to the arid Jaffna Peninsula, in the far north. The Americans proved unusually adept at setting up English-medium schools all over Jaffna. Later, as clerical jobs opened up in the colonial government, Ceylon Tamils, more often literate in English, moved south to take up a disproportionate number of them. So it paved the way for the emergence of English educated elite in Sri Lanka.

By 1833, the recommendations of the Colebrook-Cameron Report were put to practice and the British chose to organize political representation on a racial basis. A common administration for the whole of the Island was set up, with the Governor at

the head of the government and the Legislative and Executive Councils to assist him in the discharge of his functions. Three unofficial members of the Legislative Council were to be natives nominated by the Governor, who chose one low-country Sinhala, one Burgher and one Tamil. In 1889, two more unofficial members were added to represent Kandyan and the moor communities. Thus from the beginning, political representation at national level was instituted by the British on a communal basis.14 A handful of Sri Lankans who belonged to the rising middle class of the English educated elite were nominated to the Legislative Council to represent various communities hitherto unrepresented. At this stage of political evolution in Sri Lanka, national issues were placed in the forefront and sectarianism was discouraged. In fact, national consciousness was limited to a section of the westernized elite, but every one extended full cooperation to the British authorities in governing the country.

The constitution of the Legislative Council was altered several times in the next few decades, but the principle of some degree of communal representation remained. In 1910, provision was made for the election of four unofficial members, two of whom were to be Europeans, one Burgher, and one ‘educated Ceylonese’ from whatever community. Six more unofficial members were nominated on a racial basis, two Tamil members, two low-country Sinhala, one Kandyan and one Muslim. Electoral principles were made substantially broadbased in 1920, when 16 out of 24 unofficial members were to be elected. In 1923, the composition of the Council was again revised, and a territorial principle of representation was introduced. Out of 37 unofficial members, 23 were to be elected to represent territorial constituencies, while 11 would be elected to represent specially created communal electorates. The rest three were to be nominated. This practice continued till 1931, when a new

Constitution based on the recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission was brought into being which abolished communal representation in favour of territorial electorates. Although the Commissioners suggested means by which communal interests might be protected, these recommendations were ignored by the colonial authorities.15

Even as late as 1912, there was no visible evidence of conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamil elites in the Council. It was fortunate that Ramanathan Ponnambalam was elected because he, in the wake of the Sinhalese-Muslim riots of 1915, played an effective role in condemning the way the government mishandled the riots as well as in convincing the government that Buddhist leaders had not incited them. There is no doubt that Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan’s success in persuading the government to lift martial law and to release Sinhalese leaders went a long way in strengthening the political unity between the Sinhalese and Tamils and contributing to the establishment of Ceylon National Congress (CNC) in 1919. Although communal bitterness had been aroused as early as 1910 when Ramanathan was elected to the Educated Ceylonese seat in the Legislative Council, his role in championing the Sinhalese cause during the 1915 disturbances helped to ease tensions. However, communal fears were revived as plans for constitutional reforms involving the allocation of seats in the council were discussed.

Constitutional reforms were introduced in 1920 in response to agitation by the CNC, which sought provisions to enlarge the number of unofficial members nominated on a territorial basis to the Legislative Council. Hitherto, the number of Sinhalese and Tamil unofficial members of the Council had been nearly equal, but

after 1921 there were more Sinhalese than Tamils because of the greater emphasis placed on territorial representation. The Sinhalese members of the CNC wanted control of the Council by limiting its membership to only those elected on a territorial basis and objected to the existing arrangement, to the surprise of the minorities. They demanded that the franchise should be widened so that more Sinhalese could be elected.

Most of the Tamil elites were not prepared to accept the weakened position of Tamils in the Legislative Council under the system of territorial representation. At this stage, the minorities, led by the Tamils, "were anxious for self-government, but did not wish to exchange British domination for Sinhalese domination." So, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam one of the founding members of the CNC resigned. The Tamil leadership became increasingly aware that many Sinhalese political activists, including constitutional reformists and Buddhist revivalists, "possessed a streak of Sinhalese national consciousness" and were inclined to sacrifice Tamil interests. This became clear when the Sinhalese Buddhist activist Angarika Dharmapala began a campaign for the revival of Sinhala national consciousness at the turn of the century. In the Buddhist Revivalist Movement of this period, "the older forms of identity were given a new lease of life, resulting in communalism, casteism, a distortion of history, a revival of myths of origin and hero-myths, along with visions of a past 'golden age'."


Angarika Dharmapala’s Buddhist Revivalist Movement, the establishment of the Sinhala Mahajana Sabha in 1919, and the CNC’s demand to do away with communal electorates aroused the suspicions of Tamil leaders and compelled them to adopt new strategies in order to safeguard Tamil interests. In their view, the Goyigama elite was determined to minimize the power of the Tamils by demanding the abolition of communal representation. Tamil political leaders realized, for the first time since 1833, that they represented a minority community and that they should demand adequate constitutional safeguards from the colonial rulers to defend Tamil rights in the face of the rising tide of Sinhalese nationalism.

Of crucial importance to the transfer of power in Ceylon was the role of two Commissions appointed by the British Government to oversee and supervise the process. These were the “Donoughmore Commission”, which framed a constitution which remained effective between 1931 and the British withdrawal in 1948, and the Soulbury Commission, which devised a constitution which lasted from 1948 to 1972. Both Commissions came to be named after the British peers who headed them.\(^2\)\(^0\) The principal achievement of the Donoughmore Commission was the grant of universal adult franchise to the people of Ceylon. But, while conceding both universal franchise and territorial representation, the Donoughmore Commissioners remarked that ‘the primitive character of the provincial government, as against the advanced system of the central government, is very noteworthy....the great gulf between the rural worker and the educated and Westernised classes of Colombo forms a dramatic contrast.’\(^2\)\(^0\)

\(^{19}\) The details have been discussed in the previous Chapter.

In order to mitigate the excessively centralised nature of the island's polity, the Commission proposed two significant measures. The first was the establishment of a network of Provincial Councils, "to which certain administrative functions of the Central Government could be delegated." The Commission recommended that such Councils be granted wide-ranging powers and advised that while the Central Government should provide finances to the Provincial Council from its general revenue, the Councils should also be given the power to raise a substantial part of their own revenue through direct taxation.

The second measure proposed was that sessions of the Central Legislature should be held not just in Colombo, but periodically also in Kandy and Jaffna. In retrospect, it is a great misfortune of history that these two federalising proposals were never seriously implemented. That they were proposed at all is probably due to the fact that strong pressure for the creation of a quasi-federal order in Sri Lanka was exerted on the Donoughmore Commissioners by the political leaders of the Kandyan Sinhalese, who pressed for the creation of three autonomous regions within the framework of a federal polity. The first comprising the Ceylon Tamil-dominated North and East, the second consisting of the Kandyan Sinhalese highlands and adjacent areas, and the third the low-country Sinhalese areas of the West and deep south. As the Kandyan Sinhalese leaders correctly noted in a memorandum submitted to the Donoughmore Commission: "The fundamental error of British statesmanship has been to treat the subject of political advancement of the people of Ceylon as one of a homogeneous Ceylonese race." 21

The dire predictions of Tamil politicians that elections based on territorial representation would lead to Sinhalese political hegemony proved to be accurate. The Board of Ministers (a sort of pre-independence shadow cabinet) formed after the 1936 elections was all Sinhalese, an early indication of what the composition of post-independence governments would turn out to be. The Tamil reaction was not slow to come. In 1944, the first exclusively Tamil Political Party of Sri Lanka, the All-Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTS) was formed under the leadership of G.G. Ponnambalam, and began immediately to agitate for equal representation for the Sinhalese and the minorities in the legislature of post-independence Sri Lanka. The formula proposed by the ACTS, which envisaged that one-half of the seats would go to Sinhalese members and the other half to representatives of the various minority communities combined (i.e. the Ceylon Tamils, the Indian Tamils of the Plantation areas, the Muslims etc.), soon came to be known in popular parlance as 'fifty-fifty'. It was also decisively rejected by the Soulbury Commission, which came up instead with a scheme of weighted representation intended to safeguard minority rights. In Sri Lanka, the British had already decided to transfer power, in due time, to the politician of their choice, a Sinhalese and loyal collaborator named Don Stephen Senanayake, and the fulminations of G.G. Ponnambalam seemed to them to be little more than a nuisance, an unnecessary obstruction to their smooth, speedy and orderly withdrawal from the colony.22

Nonetheless, the Soulbury Commissioners were not entirely insensitive to the Tamil campaign for balanced representation. They worked out a complex scheme of weighted representation for the minorities, whereby, they claimed, of the 95 elective seats (in the post independence parliament), Sinhalese would be allotted 58 seats.

Ceylon Tamils 15, Indian Tamils 14, Muslims 8, along with the 6 nominated seats making for a total minority representation of 43 in a House of 101. They also incorporated an important safeguard for the minorities in Section 29(2) of the Constitution, which stipulated that Parliament could not enact discriminatory legislation against a particular ethnic group. They further expressed optimism that the Sinhalese Prime Minister would choose to appoint persons from among the non-Sinhalese groups to the nominate seats in Parliament and would offer ministerial berths to them, if they are not adequately represented. They were also hopeful that the rise of leftist and socialist parties would mitigate the growth of any significant inter-community tensions.

As the post-colonial development of Sri Lanka’s polity progressed, the calculations of the Soulbury Commissioners on all of the above counts were fated to go completely awry. Upon assuming power, the Senanayake Government, almost immediately enacted, and successfully passed in Parliament, two pieces of legislation, the Citizenship Act (1948), and the Indian and Pakistani Residents (Citizenship) Act (1949). Taken in conjunction, the two disenfranchised and rendered stateless the entire ‘Indian Tamil’ population of the plantations, who were estimated to number in excess of one million at that time. The motives behind this action might be an expression of virulent prejudice of elements of the ruling Sinhalese elite towards the plantation workers, long perceived to be alien intruders in Sri Lankan soil. In terms of political calculations, this decision and its successful passage through Parliament served to cut the troublesome Tamils down to size, by depriving almost half their number of both citizenship and franchise. It also served the purpose of emasculating a

strong electoral challenge from left-wing parties as "Indian Tamils" voted in favour of pro-Communist nominees. As a merit, the seats vacated as a result of the disenfranchisement of the Indian Tamils were used to accommodate additional representatives of the Kandyan Sinhalese. Consequently, in every Parliament from 1952 onwards, the Kandyan Sinhalese came to be disproportionately over-represented relative to their share of the population. Successive Sinhalese governments, whether formed by United National Party (UNP), or its arch-rival, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), took great care to ensure that the Kandyan Sinhalese MPs received more than an adequate share of ministerial portfolios, including important Cabinet posts. Nothing more about federalism was ever heard again from the Kandyan Sinhalese. Needless to state, this co-option had an immensely positive impact on the consolidation of a pan-Sinhalese identity. As Tambiah notes, low country and Kandyan Sinhalese are inextricably mixed-up today and it has enabled the Sinhalese in general to increase their share of elected seats in Parliament close to 80 per cent of the total. From 1952 onwards, the Sri Lankan Parliament would be more like an assembly of Sinhalese notables than anything else.25

Thus, the Sinhalese-Tamil relations during the colonial period clearly betrayed a combination of both co-operation and distrust. The issues on which both the group adopted an antagonistic stance referred mainly to the question of representation in the councils. Since the colonial masters were the ultimate authority to decide on these constitutional questions, the Tamils' hostility towards the Sinhalese remained within limits and the contentious issues did rarely lead to actual situation of confrontations. It only helped in the process of transfer of power in Sri Lanka very smoothly and peacefully without any armed struggle or violence. The Sinhalese-Tamil co-operation

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in political affairs even continued after the independence. The post-independence ethnic cooperation derived its strength from the "political compromise" which was based on the principles of secularism, minority protection, replacement of English by Sinhala and Tamil etc. But it did not last for a long time. Conflicts soon developed over the question of citizenship, language, decentralization and internal colonization. Among all, the question of the voting rights to the Indian Tamils and the demand for the parity of official language status to Tamil, considerably weakened the Sinhalese-Tamil relationship in the beginning. Though the problems of decentralization and colonization got their place on the Tamil political agenda along with language issue, they indeed acquired crucial dimensions only at the end of 1960s.

However, given the demographic concentration of the Sri Lankan Tamil population in the north and east, it was obviously merely a matter of time before such a demand for autonomy could come to be framed explicitly in regional terms. The battle lines for the future had been drawn. The dialectic of the unitary Sri Lankan state and Tamil society had resulted in the formulation of a Tamil political charter that, for the first time, claimed the attribute of nationhood for the Sri Lankan Tamils, and advanced a demand for 'autonomy' and a 'federal union' on the basis of that self-definition of a collective Tamil identity. However, these were but the beginnings of the historical process that was to culminate in total Sinhalese-Tamil polarization, and the rise of a powerful armed struggle to achieve a sovereign state of Tamil Eelam, some three decades later.

**Main Conflict Areas after Independence**

While the roots of the tensions between the Sinhalese and the Tamils could be noticed in good old times, the present conflict is, however, a twentieth century
phenomenon. Along with the nation-building processes, which started during the last phase of the British rule but got a follow-up only after independence, manifestation of ethnic mobilization came to assume marked proportions during the post-independence period. The present polarization is primarily a consequence of contemporary nationalist ideologies and dynamics of electoral politics. The post-colonial Sri Lankan state advanced the idea of a monolithic, unitary sovereignty, but failed to ensure equality of opportunity in the context of the citizens' rights and non-discrimination on the grounds of religion or community. Therein lie the roots of the Sri Lankan tragedy. Those who went about the task of building the Sri Lankan nation succeeded enormously in alienating the Tamils from the national mainstream and in reality ended up creating not one, but two nations.

The transfer of power on 4 February 1948 was smooth and peaceful compared to other states in South Asia. The elections in 1947 to the House of Representatives, on the basis of single member constituencies brought the United National Party, which had emerged from the Ceylon National Congress, to power. The new constitution, providing for a unitary, secular state, along the lines of the Westminster model, introduced a 'Parliamentary Executive'. The Cabinet was headed by D.S. Senanayake. Although G.G. Ponnambalam, the leader of the Tamil Congress, a party of the Sri Lankan Tamils, had expressed strong reservations about the new constitution, he agreed to serve as a minister under D.S. Senanayake. The Marxists, including the LSSP and the Ceylon Communist Party together with the Ceylon Indian Congress, the political party-cum-trade union of the Indian Tamils, forming the left bloc, provided the only effective opposition to the UNP and its ally, the Tamil Congress.

The political strength of the left bloc was, however, substantially reduced by the disfranchisement of the Indian Tamils, through a legislation enacted in 1948-49.
Protests among the Tamils led to a split in the Tamil Congress, and the subsequent creation of the Federal Party in 1948, which by 1956 emerged as the most influential of the Tamil Parties. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike resigned from the UNP in 1951, and formed the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) which emerged as a Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist party, with a strong popular appeal. In 1956, the SLFP won a landslide victory over the UNP. In the 1960s, Sri Lanka developed into a two-party system, with the UNP and the SLFP locked in fierce electoral competitions and alternatively being in power.\(^2\)\(^6\)

In general, however, the country was ruled between 1948 and 1956 by a government which continued the policies formulated during the colonial rule. The official language of the government was still English and the Parliament was controlled by western-educated, western-oriented members of the governing elite. Between them and the common electorate a growing gap developed. Thus Nithiyanandan has rightly commented that the conflict that manifested itself in the run-up to the 1956 polls was 'not so much between ethnic communities such as Tamils and Sinhalese, as between two classes of society. The over-privileged pseudo-westernised English-speaking comprador class, almost exclusively concentrated in Colombo, contained within its ranks both Tamils and Sinhalese. Ironically, however, the language issue fostered, instead, a polarization of sorts between large sections of the Sinhalese, and Sri Lankan Tamils. Amongst the Tamils these people tended to be among the most politically aware and organized. Among the Sinhalese, only the very wealthy aspired to an education in English. Therefore, 'the class distinction between the English-educated and the vernacular-educated which was evidently clear among the Sinhalese was not as easily visible at this stage among

Tamils.' Anti-English, therefore, quickly turned into anti-Tamil' among Sinhalese, helped by the fact that almost the only opposition to 'Sinhala only' came from Sri Lankan Tamil politicians, especially those belonging to the F.P.27

Language Policy - An Area of Discrimination

Language probably is the most important single attribute delimiting each community. Language has been both a source of emotional identification within each community and a communications barrier between communities. The language difference has formed an obvious obstacle to integration by hindering communications and tending to compartmentalize the two communities. Since independence, the most critical problem that has pitted the Sinhalese against the Tamils and raised unambiguous communal issues has been the official language question. This issue has come to symbolize to the Sinhalese their aspirations to retrieve their ancestral heritage and reassert their position and prerogatives as the majority, which they felt were denied to them under colonial rule. To the Tamils, the language issue has symbolized the dreadful domination of the Sinhalese majority and threatened their existence as a separate ethnic group. The official language policy precipitated the most serious confrontation of communities in modern times.28

The language policy of the Sri Lankan Government was treated by the Tamils as an instrument of ethnic discrimination. Under the British colonial rule, English had been the official language or the language of administration. English had then also been the language of profession, commerce, higher education, and until into the

1930s, even politics. For obvious reasons, those literate in English enjoyed a privileged social status and singular occupational opportunities. Needless to say, such a status and such opportunities then favoured the educationally advanced Tamils who learnt English in missionary institutions, opened in the Tamil dominated north, while the Sinhalese who were denied the same facilities for learning English, remained educationally backward, compared with the Tamils, and consequently lagged behind them. The Sinhalese, who constituted the highest percentage of their country’s population found the climate intolerable and turned towards taking steps for changing the status quo in the existing educational policy.29

The demand for "Swabhasha" (Vernacular) as the official language of the country gathered momentum in 1920s. Before J.R. Jayawardene moved a resolution on 24 May 1944 in the State Council to introduce the vernacular language for official purpose, Sinhalese leaders like K.W. Perera in 1932 and Phillip Gunawardena in 1937 had tabled similar resolutions to that effect. However, none of these resolutions had achieved its objective. Even during the later colonial period, there was a confrontation between the Sinhalese and the Tamils followed by the passage of a resolution moved by Jayawardene seeking to make Sinhala as the only medium of instruction in all schools, a compulsory subject in public examinations and the medium to conduct business of the House within a reasonable number of years. It disappointed the Tamil politicians who requested the Sinhalese leaders to amend the resolution so as to include Tamil on an equal footing with the Sinhala. Many a Tamil politicians criticised the resolution vehemently. G.G. Ponnambalam stated: "It is merely one of the first steps that one would take to advance the theory of one race, one religion and

Amidst criticism, a Tamil member V. Nalliah moved an amendment to add the words 'and Tamils' after the word 'Sinhala' whenever the word Sinhala occurred. This amendment was accepted by the majority of the members in the State Council. Accepting the amendment to include "Tamil also an official language of the country". J.R. Jayawardene said: "I always envisaged that Tamil should be the official language in the Tamil speaking provinces.... But the great fear I had was that Sinhala would suffer if Tamil also is placed on an equal footing with it in this country." Jayawardene's willingness to recognise "Tamil also" got widespread approval from his fellow Sinhalese too. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike said:

I don't see that there would be any harm at all in recognising the Tamil language also as an official language -- I have no personal objection to both these languages being considered official languages, nor do I see any particular harm or danger on real difficulty arising from it. So, I feel it would be ungracious on our part as Sinhalese not to give due recognition to the Tamil language."

Eventually, the amended resolution embodying the principles "Sinhala and Tamil as the official languages" was passed. It paved the way for Sinhalese-Tamil unity in the independence struggle which had helped them to form a "united Ceylon" in 1948. From that day onwards, all the political groups were committed to gradual replacement of English by Sinhala and Tamil. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, an advocate

of the right of Sinhalese Buddhism, reaffirmed his dedication to the cause of bilingual policy when he left the UNP to form the SLFP in 1951. His ardent support for bilingualism continued with the same spirit until as late as 1954.  

At Independence in 1948, the political leadership of Ceylon was committed to the gradual transition to Sinhalese and Tamil as official languages. The post-Independence United National Party Government was essentially a continuation of the State Council leadership. D.S. Senanayake, formerly leader of the State Council, became Prime Minister. The Cabinet included Dudley Senanayake, J.R. Jayewardene, and S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, all of whom had been prominently associated with the 'Swabhasha' policy. An official Language Commission was created in 1951 and laboured until late 1953 at the task of determining the procedure to be followed in adopting Sinhalese and Tamil as official languages. In 1952, D.S. Senanayake died and was succeeded as Prime Minister by his son, Dudley Senanayake. In the election campaign later in the year 'Swabhasha' received the endorsement of all the major parties although it did not become the predominant campaign issue. After the elections, which produced a solid UNP triumph, Dudley Senanayake stressed the continued commitment to Swabhasha and the necessity of gradualism. Gradually suspicions developed that the UNP Government's enthusiasm for a rapid shift from English to Sinhalese and Tamil had waned, particularly after Dudley Senanayake resigned as Prime Minister and was succeeded by his cousin, Sir John Kotelawala in 1953.  

34. When SLFP was inaugurated on 2 Sept., 1951, Bandaranaike said that "he would like to see both Sinhala and Tamil be taught in all the schools in Ceylon". Dept. of Broadcasting and Information, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike Speeches and writings, Colombo, 1963, p.148.

35. R.N. Kearney, op.cit., 1967, p.64.
S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike had earlier resigned from the UNP in 1951, basically because of the struggle for succession in UNP leadership. The immediate cause of the break was a Sabha resolution charging the UNP government of delay and inaction on the official language question. Immediately after his departure from the UNP, Bandaranaike disbanded the "Sinhala Maha Sabha" and founded the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP).

After forming his own party in 1951, Bandaranaike accused the UNP for delaying the language question and deplored the conditions of those educated in Sinhalese and Tamil condemned to the lowest walks of life. During the years 1953-56, a swift change took place from the progressive claim for the use of both languages to the chauvinistic demand for Sinhalese to be the only official language. The "Sinhala only" cry passing over the country was fulled with arguments of the risk of being "swamped" linguistically (by the Tamil language spoken in a large part of South India). The Campaign was part of the Buddhist resurgence taking place during these years, and connected with the celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha's death, originating from the Sinhalese myths, religion and language interwoven in the consciousness of the Sinhalese people. Besides, Sinhalese was the linguistic medium for the "reproduction of Buddhism."

So, in the year 1955, Sri Lanka witnessed a great upheaval of Sinhalese Buddhist Chauvinism. It was a significant period during which religion was introduced to politics. It was the year the Buddhist monks started influencing the

36. On the formation of the UNP in 1947, Bandaranaike's Sinhala Maha Sabha had entered the new party in a body and Bandaranaike had become a Cabinet Minister and UNP Officer.

country's decision making machinery through their active involvement in politics. The all pervading spirit of religion and the movement for Sinhala as the official language gathered momentum in the country. The connotation of the term 'Swabhasha' or mother tongue had originally meant to replacing English with the national languages, Sinhala and Tamil. Even in many resolutions, it was suggested that "both Sinhala and Tamil" would replace English. But, following the year 1954, this term 'Swabhasha' was differently interpreted by the politicians to suit their own political convenience. Whenever they used the term on political platforms in Sinhalese dominated areas, they would harp upon the theme that 'Sinhala' alone would become the official language. In Tamil areas they meant that Tamil along with Sinhala would get the official language status, and this opportunistic trend continued throughout the year 1955. It created a sense of suspicion in the minds of the Tamils who considered it as against the original pledges given by the Sinhalese. Soon a cry for parity of Tamil with Sinhala began to gather great strength and the issue turned to a communally divisive controversy between the Sinhalese and the Tamils.

In the face of rising tempo of agitation for 'Sinhala only' in 1955, Sir John Kotelawala promised the Tamils that the UNP had accepted the principle that both Sinhalese and Tamil would be the languages of this country. This provoked a strong opposition from the Sinhalese areas. In the meantime, Bandaranaike's SLFP changed its policy of parity of status for both Sinhala and Tamil and affirmed its commitment to the Sinhala only policy. To justify the change of SLFP's stand on language policy, Bandaranaike said that.

"Although our party had mentioned these words 'Sinhala and Tamil', we felt at that time that a clarification of this was necessary. We decided to appoint a committee to go into the whole matter and report. But the Committee recommended the Sinhala alone should be the official language of the country while giving due recognition to the use of
About his pre-colonial language policy, he admitted that "our minds were really fixed at that time on the question of English versus Swabhasha. We did not bring our minds to bear. may be it was a fault on our part. on the question of Sinhalese versus Tamil." \(^{38}\) Bandaranaike changed his language policy mainly after his secret understanding with the Bhikkhus for their support in the forthcoming general election. The landslide victory of SLFP in the 1956 Elections was a clear cut evidence to prove this.

To strengthen the 'Sinhala only' campaign SLFP formed a coalition called MEP (Mahajana Eksath Peramuna or Peoples United Front) with the association of smaller Sinhalese parties. Because of Bandaranaike's growing popularity among the Sinhalese due to his language policy, Kotelawalla and UNP compelled to abandon their policy of parity for the two languages and advocated the Sinhalese only. Due to these opportunistic and selfish postures and shifting stands the Tamils lost their confidence in the Sinhalese leaders and they started their non-violent agitation to achieve their 'Parity' goal. So the language problem was the main issue for both the Sinhalese and Tamil political parties in the 1956 Elections. Pledges and counter pledges were put forward by both the major Sinhalese parties in the Sinhalese dominated areas. Bandaranaike promised the Sinhalese that he would make Sinhala the "official language" within 24 hours of his assumption of office. Similarly, he made promise to the Tamil minority for "the reasonable use of their language in Tamil Provinces". \(^{39}\)

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38. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, 'Towards a New Era', op.cit., p.338
Thus, most political parties and leaders of the Sinhalese majority played a great political game by using 'language coin'. Instead of dedicating themselves for the national unity by integrating all the diverse communities under a national banner, they were actually led by the prejudice of the majority community to woo voters. To recognise the Sinhalese majority's prerogative in deciding the country's policy, the 1956 Elections favoured the Sinhalese who gained a majority in parliament while the FP swept the polls in the Tamil dominated north and east.

The first legislative enactment of the new MEP Government following the election was an Official Language Act declaring "the Sinhala language shall be the one official language of Ceylon". The bill was introduced on 5 June, and passed by the House of Representatives on 14 June 1956, with the MEP and UNP Members of Parliament voting for the bill and the LSSP and Communist MP's and the representatives of the Tamil areas opposing it. The Act did little more than declare Sinhala to be the sole official language and conferred authority for implementation on the Prime Minister. To the Tamils, the rapid mobilisation of Sinhalese only sentiment in the south, climaxed by the unqualified declaration of Sinhalese as the sole official language of Ceylon appeared to be the realization of their worst fears regarding the intentions of the Sinhalese majority. The fact that for the first time since independence not a single Tamil was included in the Cabinet heightened their apprehension. The adoption of Sinhalese as the official language without recognition of Tamil appeared to the members of the Tamil community reducing them to a state of inferiority as a definite step towards which cast doubt on their full membership in the polity. If Tamils were relegated to an inferior position, it was feared, the language would decline in Ceylon and with it would start the process of decay of the distinctive culture of the Ceylon Tamil. During the debate on the official language bill, Ponnambalam argued: "The imposition of Sinhalese as the sole official language
of this country must inevitably and inexorably put an end, even if that is not your real
goal today, to the Tamil nation and the Tamil people as such.” Another Tamil
political leader later charged that “the moment the Sinhala only Act was passed in this
country, the country was divided into two groups. The country was divided into the
Sinhalese speaking people and the Tamil-speaking people.” 41

K. Jayawardena, points to the significant fact that the two major parties of the
bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie voted for a policy which was contradictory to the
interests of the minority. By alluding to the historic grievances among the Sinhalese
and claiming to cater to the needs of the Sinhalese masses, a democratic demand was
transformed into an anti-democratic attack on the minority rights. The Sinhalese
people were mislead to believe that a progressive decision had been taken. In lieu
serious ethnic violence broke out in various parts of the country, following
‘Satyagraha’ (peaceful protest) staged by the Federal Party in protest to the passing of
the Bill. 41 Since the Federal Party continued its resistance, Bandaranaike, true to his
cosmopolitan background, attempted to reach a compromise with increasingly
alienated and hostile Tamil Public opinion. The great step in this direction was a
historic agreement, concluded on 26 July 1957, between him and F.P. leader
Chelvanayakam known as (B-C) Pact. The Pact envisaged wide-ranging
decentralisation of administration and devolution of powers to the Tamil areas of the
north and east. It was proposed that the overwhelmingly Tamil dominated northern
province would constitute a single regional authority, while the predominantly Tamil
but demographically more complex eastern province would be divided into two or
more such units. However, all these units would be free to amalgamate, if they so

op.cit. pp. 82-83.

desired. It was agreed that Parliament would devolve all powers to the regional bodies on the various subjects. The regional councils were to be given full powers of taxation and borrowing to fund projects in their fields of responsibility. and in addition, the Central Government was charged with providing certain minimum finances from the States general revenue. It is clearly evident from this account that the B-C Pact represented a very comprehensive federal solution to burgeoning Sinhalese-Tamil tensions. The Pact further stipulated that Tamil should be used as the official language for all administrative work in the northern and eastern provinces. Bandaranaike was particularly defensive and conciliatory on this issue.42

Tragically, considering the subsequent fate of Sri Lanka, the B-C Pact was unilaterally abrogated by Bandaranaike in April 1958. This was not the result of any intentional bad faith on his part. On the contrary, according to the testimony of a reliable eye-witness, the 'Prime Minister was in tears' that he had been compelled to break his word.43 What had happened was that the pact had fallen prey to the very forces that Bandaranaike had himself unleashed and exploited in order to capture state power. The Pact was declared a betrayal of Sinhalese interests, particularly by the militant bhikkus. The dynamics of 'competitive chauvinism' in Sinhalese party politics had swung into action. The UNP saw the Pact as a golden opportunity to retrieve some of its lost popularity with the Sinhalese. A senior UNP Politician, Junius Richard Jayewardene (later to become Sri Lanka's President between 1977 and 1988, the period during which the Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict escalated to an all-out Civil War), led a self-styled 'Long march' through the Sinhalese heartland.

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mobilizing mass opinion along the way against Bandaranaike's 'capitulation' to the Tamils. The Prime Minister's erstwhile patrons, the Buddhist clergy, were outraged at their protege's doings. Severe rioting broke out in many parts of the country, including Colombo, where Tamils were attacked and killed, shops looted and set on fire. Several hundreds of them besieged the house of Bandaranaike in the heart of Colombo till he signed the official order abrogating the pact. The well-intentioned Bandaranaike had been reduced to the status of a captive as a result of the fall-out of his own politics. The rules of competition for the spoils of state power dictated that he could not settle the issues hampering amicable relations between the Sinhalese and the Tamils once and for all. Instead, he paid his life for his folly. In 1959, a fanatical Buddhist monk murdered him for attempting to sell out 'the glory of his Aryan ancestors to the Tamils.'

After the abrogation of B-C Pact, communal tensions swiftly exploded into brutal rioting. In May-June 1958, there was a major anti-Tamil program throughout the island, but it was especially severe in the Sinhalese-majority areas. Hundreds of Tamils died, over 12,000 were made homeless. Thousands of Tamils were evacuated to the north and Sinhalese to the south. As the FP's civil disobedience campaign continued unabated, the entire north and east was brought under emergency regulations, and the army was sent to assist the police in restoring 'Law and Order' in the Jaffna peninsula.

Shortly after the rioting subsided, a Tamil Language bill intended to define at least the 'reasonable use' of Tamil was passed. The Bill came before the House of Representatives while the Federal Party MP's were still under detention, and almost

the entire opposition walked out of the chamber in protest against consideration enactment of the Bill in the absence of the Tamil Representatives. The Act provided for the use of Tamil in education, public service, entrance examinations, and "prescribed administrative purposes" in the northern and eastern provinces. The Prime Minister was authorized to make regulations to implement the Act. More than seven years were to pass, however, before the first regulation necessary for the Act to have effect was promulgated. Following passage of the Act, Bandaranaike explained his formula for restoring communal amity and assert that the official language dispute had been resolved.46

The persistence of the Sinhalese Buddhist consciousness implying the primacy of the Sinhalese people had once more been ascertained through the success of the 'Sinhala only' campaign. The concept and feelings proved strong enough to instigate people to violence against the Tamils. For the petty bourgeoisie, the 'Sinhala only' according to Jayawardena meant a deceptive hope for better employment possibilities and opportunities to acquire the prestigious posts held by the English-speaking elite. Also the Urban poor and landless peasants, colonists and lumpen elements joined in this ethnic strife. The bourgeoisie political leadership was forced to champion the demand for 'Sinhala only' in order to retain its electoral base. Similar patterns of concepts and behaviour are regrettablly still prevailing, forty years later, with a large part of the Sinhalese people persisting in their efforts to resist any devolution of powers to Tamil dominated provinces.

The resurgence of the Sinhalese-Buddhist populism implied an analogous regression of the Marxist movement. The Marxists enlightened advocacy of a

multi-ethnic secular polity had to give way for a linguistic nationalism, which cut across class interests. From being a viable alternative to the UNP Government, their status over the years was degraded to a subsidiary of the populist Sri Lanka Freedom Party. As the minorities, and the Sri Lanka Tamils in particular, repelled the notion of Sinhalese nationalism equating Sri Lanka nationalism years of ethnic tension and occasional strifes were to follow.

K.M. de Silva, characterises the outcome of the political strife in Sri Lanka of the 1950s and the following period as the triumph of linguistic nationalism. The development is comparable to the nationalist movements of nineteenth century Europe, and post-independence manifestations nationalism in other South Asian countries, such as India and Pakistan. The concept of a poly-ethnic society based on territorial nationalism championed by D.S. Senanayake, had to give way to the national dominance of the Sinhalese-Buddhist majority. The concept of Sri Lanka as the land of the Sinhalese had massive popular support which an abstract notion of a multi-ethnic polity could never match. The righteousness of the Sinhalese dominance was further based upon the Western tradition of the rule of the majority. 48

To the members of the Federal Party who were under house detention when the Tamil Language Act was passed and to others in the Tamil Community, the "special provisions" reduced Tamil speaking people to second-class citizens because their language was not recognized as a 'national language' along with Sinhala. The FP emphasized that the "special provisions" did not satisfy the minimum provisions of the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact with regard to the devolution of political power to regional councils and procedures for selecting colonists for state-sponsored

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colonization schemes. The FP did not give up hopes of securing language rights and political concessions similar to those provided for in the B-C Pact. It waited for an opportunity to strike a political alliance with any party that promised to deliver substantial concessions to the Tamils.

The opportunity came when neither the UNP nor the SLFP had a clear majority to form a government after the March 1960 General Elections. At the outset, the FP tried to strike an alliance with the UNP. The UNP was called to form a government as the party with the largest number of seats in Parliament, though not with a clear majority. The UNP rejected the alliance because the proposals submitted by the FP for its support were close to the provisions of the B-C Pact. When the UNP rejected the Federalist demands, the SLFP, under the leadership of Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the former Prime Minister’s widow, solicited the support of the FP to form an alternative government, with an understanding between the two parties that the B-C Pact would be enacted into law. Instead of calling upon the SLFP and FP to form the government, however, the Governor General dissolved the Parliament and called for a new election. The Federal Party’s hopes evaporated when the SLFP won a landslide victory and formed a government without FP support. The SLFP was instead obligated to the Sinhalese masses who returned it to power and thus reneged on its agreement with the FP.49

After the 1960 Elections, Tamils hopes for relaxation of the Sinhalese-only policy appeared to be further from realization than ever before. The SLFP Government implemented its original language policy making Sinhala the only official language and ignored the provisions of the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act.

of 1958. The Government even failed to recognize Tamil as a regional language and declared that Sinhala should be the language of administration even of Tamil areas. Legislation was also introduced making Sinhala the only language of the courts. The Tamil Language Act remained inoperative, as regulations necessary to give effect to its provisions were not promulgated. The 1962 Speech from the Throne promised: "A Vigorous Policy of implementation of the Official Language Act will be adopted in Public Administration and in the Courts of Law"; without mentioning the Tamil Language Act. The use of Sinhalese in the bureaucracy was being promoted with increasing energy. Incentive bonus and the withholding of periodic salary increases and promotions were used to encourage government employees to study Sinhalese. A number of Sinhalese public servants were transferred to the Jaffna Kachcheri -- to complete a change to the use of Sinhalese.\textsuperscript{50}

The Federal Party responded by embarking on a major civil disobedience (Satyagraha) campaign that brought the activities of the Government to a halt in the Tamil areas. It also defied the government by establishing a separate postal system to serve the Tamil areas. The government, in turn, responded by arresting Tamil leaders, banning the Federal Party, restoring its administrative control over the Tamil areas through a state of emergency, and dispatching army units to Jaffna. Some members of the army assaulted peaceful demonstrators and innocent bystanders in Jaffna. The state of emergency, which was imposed on 17 April 1961 was lifted after 743 days. During the state of Emergency the government's attention was directed towards improving the economic conditions of the nation and "Sinhalization" of Sri Lanka. Many Tamil public servants, who were unable to become proficient in the Sinhala language, were denied annual salary increments or forced to retire during

this period. An SLFP minister, a nephew of S.W.R.D.Bandaranaike asserted in response to public protest and said, "we have been returned with an absolute mandate to govern the country according to the policy laid down in our manifesto."

The Federal Party was prepared to renew its civil disobedience campaign in August 1964 but called it off when Sirimavo Bandaranaike's Government decided to take steps to implement the provisions of the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act of 1958. The Government also intended to introduce legislation for establishing district councils that would facilitate administrative decentralization and transaction of business in the language prevailing in the area. Unfortunately, those proposals were not enacted into law because Bandaranaike's coalition government collapsed in December 1964 and an election was called for March 1965.

**Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact**

Immediately after the dissolution of Parliament in December 1964, a series of meetings were held between Dudley Senanayake and Chelvanayakam, at the former's request. Dudley wanted the support of the FP if he formed a government, as all the omens seemed to indicate. Because of its isolation by Bandaranaike and the pressure of the Tamil people for an immediate solution to their problems, the FP presented a minimum set of demands along the lines of the abortive "B-C Pact" of 1957, as a quid pro quo for its support. After discussions, Senanayake agreed to a somewhat modified package. Like its predecessor, the Central feature of the "Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact" of 1965, from the FP's standpoint, was the establishment of district councils with delegated powers, which were to be agreed later. On the use of the Tamil language, since the 1958 Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act of 1958 was not enacted into law because Bandaranaike's coalition government collapsed in December 1964 and an election was called for March 1965.

Provisions) Act remained a dead letter and no regulations had been framed under it. Senanayake agreed to frame new regulations, making Tamil Language the language of administration and record in the northern and eastern provinces. It was also agreed that provision would be made in the regulations for Tamil-speaking people to transact official and other business in Tamil throughout the country. Senanayake also agreed to amend the 1961 Language of the Court Act, which had substituted Sinhala for English in court proceedings in the northern and eastern provinces. As to colonization and resettlement, it was agreed that lands in the northern and eastern provinces would, in the first instance, be granted to landless residents within the districts of the two provinces, then to Tamil-speaking residents in the two provinces, and finally to other citizens, preference being given to Tamil citizens, resident in the rest of the island.52

The provisions of the pact reveal, on the face of it, a retreat by the FP out of anxiety to find a face-saving formula. The FP's many reversals at the hands of Bandaranaike were also clearly imprinted in the terms of the pact. The Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact substituted district councils for the regional councils of the "B-C Pact". The term "regional" clearly implied autonomy and so was unacceptable to Dudley Senanayake. Hence "district", the prevailing unit of local governmental administration, was substituted. The Tamil language provisions in the new pact were no more than any Sinhalese Government would concede from sheer expediency. The colonization and resettlement provisions merely blunted the rough edges of current practice. FP also agreed to the introduction of D.S.Senayake's nebulous citizenship qualification for land entitlement, thereby denying the Indian Tamils the right to obtain land from the government in the Tamil homelands.53

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53. Ibid, p.137.
However, Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact represented a significant compromise with reference to an issue on which both sides had previously refused to budge an inch. The state had claimed that it was merely trying to give landless Sinhalese from the south plots of land in sparsely populated zones in the north and east, while the FP had consistently maintained that this was but a pretext to overwhelm large tracts of the two provinces with waves of Sinhalese settlers, with the intention of ultimately reducing the Sri Lankan Tamils to a minority in areas where they had historically constituted the majority of the population. Sadly, the Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact also failed to see the light of the day. The reason why it had been drawn up in the first place was that the UNP had failed to win an outright parliamentary majority in the elections of 1965, and depended on the support of 14 Federal Party MPs, all elected from the north and east, for the stability of its government.54

Donald Horowitz has cogently outlined the reasons behind the breakdown of the agreement the most important of which were the UNP electoral concerns. Following the 1965 Elections, the SLFP had moved back to an anti-Tamil line, portraying the UNP as a Party manipulated by the Federalists. The district councils issue provided a focus for such attacks, spurned by Buddhist monks. Some UNP backbenchers, fearful of the consequences - for the government would have to go to the polls by 1970 - were on the verge of revolt. In the end, the UNP leadership withdrew the bill, for, as a very close observer noted, the party had not yet faced an election with the Federal Party millstone around its neck and did not know how much it weighed. So, the imperatives of electoral politics, and especially its essential

component, the 'competitive chauvinism' of the two major Sinhalese parties, had thwarted yet another attempt at Sinhalese-Tamil reconciliation. There is no escaping the fact that the competitive wooing for the Sinhalese vote by the two major parties made Sri Lanka's moderately serious ethnic conflict far more severe than it would otherwise have been.\textsuperscript{55}

\textbf{The National Government and the Opposition's "Communal Line"}

A sharp reversal of Tamil political fortunes and brightened prospects for an enduring settlement of the official language issue was followed by Parliamentary Elections on 22 March, 1965. The election verdict was inconclusive, in that, no single party obtained a working majority. Out of 145 seats, the UNP won 66, the SLFP 41, the LSSP 10, the CP 4, the SLFSP 5 and the MEP 1. In the Tamil areas, the FP won 14, and the Tamil Congress of G.G.Ponnambalam 3 seats.\textsuperscript{56} The 1965 Elections followed the defeat of the SLFP-LSSP Coalition Government in Parliament on a confidence motion when more than a dozen SLFP MPs deserted the party and crossed over to the opposition. Since the formation of the Coalition in June 1964, through the election campaign, communal questions were overshadowed by controversy concerning the coalition's socialist aims, alleged dictatorial actions and designs, and attitude towards the Buddhism. The elections were bitterly contested. Supporters of the SLFP-LSSP coalition, with which the Communist Party was allied, claimed they were combating the final effort of class privilege to maintain itself, and opponents argued that the island faced its last opportunity to preserve democracy and the rule of law. With most Sinhalese politicians concentrating on other matters.


\textsuperscript{56} Ponnambalam S., \textit{op.cit.}, P.134.
communal issues appeared to play a smaller role in 1965 than in any of the preceding three elections.\(^{37}\)

By force of circumstances, Dudley Senanayake formed what he called a "national government with the support of C.P. de Silva, Phillip Gunawardena, Dahanayake, Iriyagolle, et. al. The FP and the Tamil Congress (T.C) lent him their support, the FP in accordance with its secret pact and the TC according to its tradition. To enhance the government’s truely bourgeois national complexion, Dudley Senanayake co-opted S. Thondaman, the leader of the one million Indian Tamils, by making him a nominated MP. The co-opting of bourgeois leaders was Dudley Senanayake’s strategy for assuming power without conceding equal citizenship to the Tamils. He offered Cabinet portfolios to the FP but Chelvanayakam politely declined. Consequently, he nominated an FP stalwart, M. Tiruchelvam, who was not an MP but entered the Cabinet through the Senate.\(^{58}\) This created a precedent in Ceylon’s parliamentary history as a non-elected Tamil member of the FP was appointed to the Cabinet for the first time since 1956.

The Federalists, who had been continuously in opposition since the party was formed in 1949, were intent on obtaining a language settlement by use of their parliamentary strength and position and were not committed to the policies of either the UNP or the parties forming the coalition. In December 1964, and again immediately after the election, their support had been solicited by coalition leaders, and this led them to believe that they could obtain the settlement of this vexed issue from the coalition. Deep bitterness over what they felt to be the SLFP betrayal in 1960 and the insensitivity of the Sirimavo Bandaranaike Government to Tamil

\(^{37}\) Kearney, R.N., \textit{op.cit.}, pp.128-29.

\(^{58}\) Ponnambalam, \textit{op.cit.}, p.135.
interests apparently led them to opt for an alliance with the UNP.

It was apparent from the outset that the UNP was anxious to negotiate a political settlement to the Tamil problem in return for the support it had received from the FP to defeat the SLFP-Marxist coalition. The National Government moved cautiously on the language question and did not announce its intended measures until early 1966, although it was universally recognized that an accord had been reached between the UNP and the Federal Party leaders. The arrangements seemed clearly designed to blunt opposition criticism. The speech from the throne announcing the policies of the new government said, all regulations would be drafted to conform to Bandaranaike’s Tamil Language Act of 1958 and the SLFP-Marxist Coalition of 1965. The anticipated regulations would be drafted so as to be acceptable to both communities.

In 1966, Dudley Senanayake’s National Government formulated and published the regulations under the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act 28 of 1958. The regulations, approved by Parliament on 11 January 1966, provided for the use of Tamil in government business in the northern and eastern provinces and for the maintenance of public records there. They also allowed official correspondence, and the conduct of affairs of local bodies, in these areas to be in Tamil. Finally, they provided for all legislation, subordinate rules and orders, and official publications to be issued in Tamil as well as Sinhala. Incorporated in the regulations was the assertion that the use of Tamil for the specified purposes was to be “without prejudice to the operation of the official language Act No.22 of 1956, which declared the Sinhala language to be the one official language of Ceylon.”

59. Kearney, R.N., op.cit. p.130.
These 1966 language regulations, which were approved by Parliament in January 1966, are still in force. They provide for the use of the Tamil language in the Northern and Eastern provinces for the "transaction of all government and public business and for the maintenance of public records." Official government communications are both in Tamil and Sinhala, and Tamil can be used in correspondence between Tamil speaking persons living anywhere in the country and government officials and for correspondence between the local government bodies of Northern and Eastern provinces and the Central Government.\(^60\)

These provisions were acceptable to the Federal Party and the Tamil masses as long as they represented only the first step towards redressing the legitimate grievances of the Tamil. A leading UNP Minister while assuring the opposition said, "our Government has no intention to undo the official language Act at all". For the first time the Federalists had accepted the principle of Sinhala only and Sinhala would be the official language from one end of the Island to the other." The Federalists, however, clearly indicated that they considered the settlement only a temporary solution and were not abandoning their ultimate aims of federalism and parity of languages.\(^61\)

From the day of the forging of the "Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact", the SLFP-LSSP-CP trio had waited to see what form its provisions would take. They were confident that, if Dudley sought to give effect to the provisions, they could cause his precarious "national government" to fall. When the Tamil language regulations (1966) were passed in Parliament, the coalition parties in the opposition and the Eksath Bhikkhu Peramuna accused the UNP of granting "parity status" to the Tamil

\(^60\) Manogaran, C., 1987, \textit{op.cit.}, p.53.

language and thus permitting the Tamils to exploit the wealth of the country. They claimed that the removal of restrictions imposed on Tamils seeking public service jobs paved the way for the eventual takeover of the country by the Tamils. The regulations were actually similar to ones proposed by Sirimavo Bandaranaike’s coalition government the previous years. Nevertheless, the opposition alliance declared that the regulations were a sell-out to win Tamil support and were ultra-vires of the main 1958 Act.

The opposition organised a leader less procession, led by some bhikkhus, along Dharmapala road to Parliament building, as the first offensive. The demonstrators resorted to violence on the way by stoning and breaking shops, the police opened fire and one bhikkhu was killed. The opposition the attacked government for its betrayal of the Sinhalese Buddhist cause and a concession to the Tamils. Despite these anti-Tamil demonstrations, the Tamils remained calm and even assisted the government in implementing the Tamil Language Act and the “Sinhala only” Legislation. But being afraid of the long term consequences, Dudley Senanayake refused to implement the regulations. In this way, the 1958 Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act, and the regulations framed under it eight years later, remained dead letters from the beginning. 62

The FP became aware that nothing could be obtained from the Sinhalese political parties. Yet, it continued to be part of the government, hoping that promised district councils would provide a face-saving formula to end its political predicament. To satisfy the FP, in 1968, Senanayake laid before Parliament a District Councils Bill, designed to group together the primary local bodies, with no powers other than those they already possessed. Even these powerless district councils were attacked by

the opposition as yet another concession to win Tamil support. Dudley panicked and in his utter anxiety to avoid running into a storm that might affect his precarious power base, quickly abandoned the bill. The FP was left high and dry. The Tamils had once more reached a blind alley. A feeling of hopelessness engulfed them.\footnote{63}{Ibid. p.147.}

About the same time as the District Councils Bill was aborted, the FP urged the UNP Government to declare the precincts of Koneswaram, one of the four ancient `iswarams' (famous Hindu temples) of Sri Lanka, situated at Trincomalee in Tamil Eastern Province, as `a protected area', like the Buddhist shrine areas. This aroused strong objections from the Sinhala-Buddhists, who were not prepared to concede that the Tamils had their own exclusive language, land or temples. If temples were to be protected, it must be only Buddhist shrines. If Hindu temples were to be protected, then the Buddha image must first be placed in the temple, so that it became Buddhist place of worship as well, as had happened in Kathinkamam. No place of worship should be exclusively for the Tamils. This was the thrust of Sinhala-Buddhist ethnocentrism. Hence in disgust the FP nominee, Tiruchelvam, a devout Hindu resigned from the Cabinet. The FP joined the ranks of the opposition. But the new Sinhala-Buddhist consensus rendered FP politically ineffectual within parliament. Nothing of importance happened until the dissolution of parliament in late March 1970, with the general election fixed for May 1970.\footnote{64}{Ibid. p.147.}

**Language Provisions in the 1972 Constitution**

By the dawn of 1970s, Sinhalese rule and Buddhist hegemony had been asserted and successfully established. The state machinery and national finances

\begin{center}
63. Ibid. p.147.
64. Ibid. p.147.
\end{center}
(including foreign aid) had been used to benefit the Sinhalese and had been denied to the Tamils. They had been symbolically affirmed the use of lion and the pipal leaves in the national flag, by the Sinhalese national anthem, by the Sinhalese national emblem, by the declaration of Anuradhapura, as a 'sacred city' and by the conversion of the ancient Hindu Karthikamam temple, in the south, into a Buddhist shrine, while the Hindu request that the Koneswsaram temple precincts be made a "protected area" had been turned down. The Tamils had been reduced to a subject nation. Their future had been tied to Sinhalese power politics and to the chariot-wheels of Sinhalese imperialism. From the deprivation of citizenship in 1948 to the "Sinhala only" Act and beyond, they had suffered reversal after reversal. In the 1970 election campaign, there was nothing left for Sinhalese chauvinist forces and their leaders but the drum of Sinhala-Buddhism.65

By the May 1970 general election, the opposition parties SLFP-LSSP-CP which since their defeat in 1965 had been collaborating closely, formed the United Front (UF) alliance with a common programme and a joint election manifesto. Nobody said anything about Tamil national question, but made the framing of a new constitution and "further advance towards a socialist society", their priorities. They declared that, on coming to power, the UF would set up a Constituent Assembly to frame a Republican Constitution but made no mention of what the essentials of the new constitution would be.

After the election of May 1970, Sirimavo Bandaranaike as the leader of the United Front came out victorious and formed the new government. In July 1970, on the invitation of the Prime Minister Bandaranaike, the Parliament constituted itself into a Constituent Assembly to draft a new Republican Constitution for the

government and people of the country. Bandaranaike was obliged to satisfy the communal aspirations of her pro-Sinhala supporters who were made to believe that the 'Sinhala only' Act had been compromised by the previous government in order to meet the Tamil demands. Since Bandaranaike and her coalition government did not owe any political favours to the Federal Party, she was not in a hurry to introduce legislation to establish District Councils, which she had proposed in 1964.

A new constitution was adopted in 1972 reaffirming the position of Sinhala as the only official language and conferring special status on Buddhism. An important clause in the constitution declared that "it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster Buddhism". The new constitution also eliminated a clause that read: "parliament has no right to enact legislation which would confer an undue advantage to a race, religion or community". This clause had provided the basis for the only legal recourse the Tamils had against the government. Henceforth, law passed by the National State Assembly could restrict the fundamental rights and freedoms incorporated in the new Constitution. Therefore, the Tamils, whose leaders had pioneered the constitutional reform movement and had made significant contributions to the political and economic development of the country, were relegated to the status of second class citizens by the Constitution.66

The Chapter Third of the 1972 Republican Constitution deals extensively the provisions relating to the official language, language of the courts and legislation. To give constitutional guarantees to the "Sinhala Only" Act, the Constitution proclaimed that the Sinhala shall be the only official language of the country.67 The use of the Tamil Language shall be in accordance with the Tamil Language (Special Provisions)

Act No.28 of 1958 It specified that any regulation made under the same Act should be deemed to be subordinate legislation which should not in any manner be interpreted as being a provision of the Constitution. With regard to the use of language for the legislature, the Constitution declared that all laws shall be enacted in Sinhala, but there shall be a Tamil translation of each law so enacted or made. It also emphasized that the language of the courts and tribunals shall be Sinhala throughout Sri Lanka and accordingly their records shall be in Sinhala provided that the National State Assembly may under its law provide otherwise in case of judicial institutions exercising original jurisdiction in the Northern and Eastern provinces. But it yielded legally to the persons and applicants in the Northern and Eastern provinces to submit their pleadings, applications, motions and petitions in Tamil before any courts, tribunals or any other judicial institutions. In that case a Sinhala translation shall be caused to be made by such Courts, tribunals and so on to enable others to understand and participate in the proceedings.

The language provisions embodied in the 1972 Constitution was a step forward to derogate even the elementary protection which the Tamils had enjoyed under the previous constitution without even offering a satisfactory language concession to the minorities either based on the provisions of B-C Pact or prescribing new provision in the constitution regarding the regulation passed under the Tamil Language Act of 1958 as subordinate legislation, discriminated openly against the Tamil language in

68. Ibid - Article 8(1).
69. Ibid. - Article 8(2).
70. Ibid - Article 9(1).
71. Ibid- Article 11(1).
72. Ibid, Article 11(3) (a) and (b).
providing constitutional assurance.

For the first time, the Tamils out of the Northern and Eastern provinces, including the government officials in the capital, felt their disadvantageous position when the language declaration in the constitution meant the necessity for them to learn 'Sinhala'. On the other hand, the Constitution's much about the foremost place for Buddhism which made it a duty of the state "to protect and foster Buddhism". It clearly shows that the provision under Chapter II of the Constitution declared Sri Lanka a "Buddhist Nation" but not officially or legally. It not only dismayed the Hindu minority Tamils but also created distaste among Christian and Muslim minorities to the Constitution.

Moreover, the provision which guaranteed the use of Tamil in the courts of Northern and Eastern provinces, made as a subordinate legislation, not as a provision of the Constitution had added to the disillusionment of Tamils. They viewed it as a mere discrimination against them by giving fullest guarantee to the Sinhala in the Constitution. Above all, the elimination of Clause 29 of the old constitution which laid down that Parliament could not confer privileges or impose disabilities on one community caused serious insecurity in the minds of minority Tamils.

Therefore, since 1972, Tamil leaders adopted new strategies to clamour for the establishment of a federal state, a solution they had refrained from advocating as long as the UNP assured them of their language rights and a degree of regional autonomy, for the Tamil provinces. The official language controversy in the 1950s drove a deep wedge between the communities, but no major Tamil Parties proposed a total


74. The details about Art 29 of 1947 Constitution have been discussed in the previous Chapter.
separation prior to the 1970s. The beginning of concerted action by Tamil leaders to resist Sinhalese domination can be traced to the formation of the Tamil United Front (TUF) in 1972. The Tamil Congress and Federal Party United, and, for the first time since 1949, the Ceylon Workers Congress, which represents the Tamils of Indian origin, agreed to coordinate its political activities with Tamils of Sri Lankan Origin. The formation of the TUF was precipitated by many factors, including the adoption of the 1972 Constitution. Tamil leaders were convinced that it was the lack of unity among the Tamils that had encouraged Sinhalese parties to ignore their demands in the past and for the SLFP and the UNP to manipulate the ethnic issue for their own political gains. They could no longer overlook the fact that the Sinhala Government had, on several occasions, reneged on their promises to enact appropriate laws to redress Tamil grievances, and they realized they had to change their strategy in order to secure political and linguistic rights for their community. Tamil leaders believed that without regional autonomy the Tamils could not improve economic conditions in their homeland, which have deteriorated to a state of widespread unemployment, under-employment, and general despair among people.

When the 1972 Constitution was passed in Parliament in Feb. 1972, the Tamil members of the opposition under the banner of the Tamil United Front (TUF) rejected the constitution by walking out when it was put to vote. The reasons for the rejection were as follows:-

1. The draft constitution was not evolved through wide discussion and national consensus.

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75. The Formation of TUF, its factors, activities are to be discussed in detail in the next Chapter.
2. There was no chapter on citizenship.

3. Fundamental Rights remained incomplete. The brief chapter of Fundamental Rights was not comprehensive; nor did it regard Rights as universal or inviolable.

4. Unequal language rights, giving primacy to Sinhala in public administration was feared have the unfortunate effect of making citizens unequal and the nation divided. It was apprehended to bring about two classes of citizens Class I Sinhala-speaking; Class-II Tamil speaking. It would, therefore, be a denial of the democratic principle and the concept of one nation.

5. The selection of state officers and school teachers on the recommendations of MPs and partymen and their promotions through political patronage was bound to affect the integrity and efficiency of the service.

6. It did not make provision for the people to participate directly in the process of decision-making, which is a sine qua non in a Democratic and socialist society.

7. The President was to be the nominee of the Prime Minister in lieu of being the choice of the Nation.¹²

So, it can be argued that the manipulation of the constitution encouraged those Tamils who were beginning to demand complete autonomy to press their claims; it demonstrated that the constitution was not immutable, that it could be manipulated for political ends.

1978 Constitution and the Language Issue:-

The Parliament constituted after the May 1970 Election was to last for five years, however, the Republican Constitution adopted in May 1972, extended its life

by two years. Article 42(5) provided that the parliament "shall continue for a period of five years commencing from the date of the adoption of the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly". Accordingly, this parliament continued until 18 May 1977, when it was dissolved and a general election was fixed for 21 July 1977. Earlier, in September 1975, the LSSP, one of the partners in the UF Coalition, had been dismissed from the Government by Bandaranaike, and in early 1977 the CP, the other UF Partner had defected from the Government ranks. On account of the prolonged tenure of parliament and the expectation that it could avoid a general election, the ruling SLFP found itself in complete disarray when parliament was dissolved.

The Sinhalese parties realised the problems confronting the Tamil minority and their escalation of discomfort during the 1977 Election. An impending threat to national integration unnerved the Sinhalese leaders who suddenly woke up to the grievances of the Tamils. They admitted their failure in the evading the basic demands of Tamils in the past decades. J.R.Jayewardene, the veteran campaigner of so many elections, had, on Dudley’s death, taken over the leadership of the UNP. In its election manifesto of 1977, the UNP recognized that there were numerous problems confronting the Tamil speaking people. The lack of a solution to their problems has made them to support even a movement for the creation of a separate state...The Party promise that on coming to power, it would summon an all-Party conference and take all possible steps for the remedy of their grievances in such fields as education, colonization, use of Tamil Language and employment. The SLFP manifesto stated that 'a state advisory council would be set up representing all nationalities to advise the government to discuss essential factors and to take steps including institutional reforms on cultural, social, economic, national and all language
problems of the people of all minorities. 78

Making this kind of promises were not a new phenomenon in Sri Lankan politics. Even the SLFP which had a key role in aggravating the language controversy since 1956 and of ethnic discord from 1970, held out empty assurances to fulfill the Tamils aspirations and agreed to redress their grievances. However, these electoral tricks resorted to by the dominant Singhalese parties to win over the minority votes could hardly satisfy the deepseated grievances of the TULF which sought a mandate from its voters for the creation of a separate state.

In the parliamentary elections of 1977, the United National Party was returned to power and TULF candidates swept all the fourteen seats in the Northern Province, capturing 70 per cent of the total vote in the province, and received a simple majority in the Eastern Province. This victory gave a clear cut signal to the government that sizeable numbers of Sri Lankan Tamils were generally behind their leaders in their demand for the creation of a separate state. The UNP formed the government and TULF became the official opposition.

After assumption of office following UNP’s victory, a Select Committee was appointed to draft a new constitution. All recognized political parties represented in Parliament were invited. But the TULF declined to take part in the deliberations of the Committee on the ground of the UNP’s refusal to convene an All Party Conference. In the Select Committee, the SLFP which once insisted to incorporate a provision regarding the Tamil language by ordinary legislation in 1972 constitution, drastically changed its mind now clamouring for grant of “national status” to the Tamil. On its memorandum to the Select Committee, the SLFP stated.

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we recommend that Sinhala and Tamil be declared the national languages of Sri Lanka while Sinhala remains as the official language. We also recommend that all the existing laws, regulations and rules relating to the use of the Tamil Language be accorded constitutional status by being incorporated in the Constitution. 79

It could be viewed that the SLFP was unwilling to adopt this language policy earlier mainly because of its fear that any concession to the minorities at the cost of the goodwill of majority would spoil the political future of the SLFP. But the election outcome of 1977 compelled the SLFP to change its policy towards the minorities. Now the UNP adopted the same attitude of the SLFP which worried much about the criticism and competition from its arch rival SLFP.

The constitutional Select Committee arrived at a remarkable extent of consensus on the language rights of the Tamil people. The second Republican Constitution, promulgated on 7 September 1978, after retaining the Sinhala as the only official language 80 of the Island has elevated the status of Tamil along with Sinhala to a status of National Language. 81 It provided a constitutional guarantee to use either of the National Languages in the Parliament and by local authorities 82 and assured the right of a person to be educated prior to the university education and examination for the admission to the government employment through either Sinhala or Tamil. 83 While recognizing the Sinhala as the language of administration

81. Ibid. Article 19.
82. Ibid. Article 20.
83. Ibid. Article 22(5).
throughout Sri Lanka, the Constitution declared that Tamil shall also be used for administrative purposes in north and east of Sri Lanka. By recognizing the necessity of the Tamil speaking people out of the two Tamil majority provinces, the Constitution confirmed the entitlement of a person to communicate and receive in either of the national languages. Provisions were also made to enact all laws and subordinate legislations in both national languages together with a translation in English. But the constitution asserted the "prevailing of Sinhala" in the event of any inconsistency between two texts.

As far as the language of court is concerned, the official language was declared to be so throughout the country, subject to the provision that the language of the courts exercising original jurisdiction in the Northern and Eastern provinces shall also be Tamil and their records and proceedings shall be in Tamil Language. Also, the Constitution affirmed the right of a person or party to initiate and participate in proceedings and submit documents to courts in either Sinhala or Tamil.

Language rights sanctioned to the Tamils was undoubtedly a step forward to improve the status of the Tamil language. But on closer examination one could find that the 1978 Constitution simply restored the privileges accorded to the Tamil language under the Tamil Language Act of 1958 and its regulation of 1966, that had been rejected by the 1972 Constitution; so the problem which had to be settled in

84. Ibid. Article 22(1).
85. Ibid. Article 22(2).
86. Ibid. Article 23(1).
87. Ibid. Article 24(1).
88. Ibid. Article 24(2).
89. Special Provisions in the Constitution.
1957 was prolonged mainly because of the chauvinistic attitude of both the UNP and the SLFP which had finally been more or less settled, after the transformation of Tamil ethnic politics from 'partnership' to 'secession'.

The language privileges bestowed upon the Tamils under the new Constitution was a reconciliatory step aimed to arrest the growing state of Sinhalese-Tamil tension. If, on the one hand, it paved the way to promote the right of reasonable use of Tamil, the Constitution, on the other, extended due consideration for the preservation of Sinhalese interests too. Indeed the concessions conferred on the Tamils definitely were not at the cost of majority community. Apart from a few notable exceptions, the Tamil language, in practice, was relegated to an inferior status because the whole exercise was limited to governing the Tamil speaking people through translation from the official Sinhalese version. It is also argued that the concept of 'national language' is not defined and how this provision can be reconciled with the proceedings dealing with official language (Sect.18) is not very clear. 

Despite this limitations, the Tamils in general accorded their approval to and expressed satisfaction over the constitutional provision on the language issue. Moreover, certain segments of the Tamil Community considered the language rights accorded to the Tamils "as a step in the direction of communal amity". They expressed that the national language status to Tamil has been interpreted as an acceptance of the 'Tamil Community as a distinct nationality with its own language and culture'. But, the so-called guardians of the Tamil interests, while accepting the language provision of the Constitution complained about its inadequacy in dealing with the implementation of the new language rights.

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The TULF leader Amrithalingam pointed out that "the language rights conceded in the new Constitution had without doubt gone further than any previous constitution, but there is no certainty, no guarantee of their being implemented". But he agitated against the other discriminatory provisions dealing with the Tamils’ rights and the government’s failure to eradicate their longstanding grievances.

As usual, in the process of implementation of the Tamil language constitutional provisions, the government did not show any interest. An unsatisfactory implementation of the language provisions, once again, dismayed the Tamils who always brought it to the notice of the parliament. Notwithstanding the constitutional provisions of using Tamil Language for communication with the Government anywhere in Sri Lanka, it falls short of being universally applicable. More critical is the fact that "the framers of 1978 Constitution still find it advisable to elevate ‘Sinhala’ as the only official language of Sri Lanka". A final result was, the non-settlement of other problems confronting the Tamils and periodically institutionalized violence forced the TULF to raise the language issue once again.

Discrimination in Education

From early times, the Tamils took to education not so much as a means of gaining knowledge but to acquire a qualification for a job, mainly in the government service, because the Tamil dominated North and East Zones come under the dry zones of the State. The land is not fertile and agriculture is not lucrative. In the system of meritocracy instituted by the colonial government, the Tamils entered the higher Civil Service and the lower General clerical service in substantial numbers through open competitions. This has been possible because, opportunities to acquire proficiency in

the English language had been made available to Tamil youths by Christian missionaries, who established a large number of schools in the Jaffna region. This does not imply that the number of Tamils attending schools in the North was greater than that in other provinces, but the number of Tamils employed in the public service was proportionately greater in relation to the actual size of the population it represented. To the Tamil people, education was the central artery of life and "nothing arouses deeper despair among the Tamils than the feeling that they are systematically squeezed out of higher education."

The Tamils due to their early missionary education and higher proficiency in English language could be able to gain a high proportion of seats in the universities before 1970. While they occupied 29.4 per cent and 33.7 per cent of university seats in 1946 and 1953 respectively Sinhalese gained only 61.7 per cent in 1946 and 60.2 per cent in 1953 which though greater in absolute numbers was quite less in proportion to their population. But, following the expansion of secondary education and transition to vernacular teaching from English, the higher education became competitive which altered the preponderance of Tamils whose share had fallen to 19 per cent in 1965 and 16 per cent in 1966-70. Also at the same time, the Sinhalese registered a marked increase claiming 78.1 per cent in 1965 and 80.6 per cent in 1970. Also the percentage of the Burgher Community was drastically reduced from 4.9 per cent and 3.2 per cent in 1946 and 1953 respectively to 0.4 per cent in 1965.93 A marked increase in Sinhalese representation in the universities was caused by many factors such as extension of more educational facilities to the under-developed

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Sinhalese areas and teaching in the Sinhalese language. But the Tamils maintained their ratio before 1965 mainly because of their scientific education which had been imported by the missionary schools in the northern provinces and lost their position gradually following their sudden change to the Tamil medium. after the government decreed a change to 'Swabhasha' with either Sinhala or Tamil as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges.

Education became a major area of ethnic confrontation between the Sinhalese and the Tamils since 1970. Prior to the politicization of higher education, merit was considered a sole criterion for university admission. But the UF Government in 1970 after placing the Sinhala language in vulnerable position focused its attention on the sphere of higher education and devised pro-Sinhalese admission policies very often. An outcome was the alteration of ethnic ratio in the universities.

The introduction of Sinhala as the official language, the change in the medium of instruction in schools, and the establishment of a number of regional and Buddhist universities enabled a large number of Sinhalese to gain admission to universities and qualify for jobs in the public service. On the other hand, the introduction of Sinhala as the official language drastically reduced the number of Tamils employed in the public service and increased the number of unemployed Tamil high school graduates. Moreover, these unemployed youths with high school diplomas found that admission to certain faculties in the universities was closed to them because of government imposed restrictions. This policy negated the very purpose of education and served to shut out Tamils from their traditional avenue of employment. Simply by requiring a knowledge of the "official language", it became possible not only to eliminate Tamils but also to open the door for the employment of Sinhalese without any competition. The requirement that Tamil students should study Tamil, their mother tongue, exposed the futility and the basic contradiction of "Sinhala Only" as the official
language. For Sri Lanka became the only country in the world where the official language was not taught to all students in all schools.\textsuperscript{94}

Until 1969, admissions to universities were based on the results of the final examination at the high school level (General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Class). Both Sinhalese and Tamil students were required to take the GCE Advanced Level Examination, but Sinhalese and Tamil students took the examination in the medium in which they were educated. The medium of instruction for those seeking admission to the arts faculty changed from English to Sinhala and Tamil in the 1960s. It was only in 1970 that the first batch of students seeking admission to science faculties were permitted to take the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) Examination in Sinhala and Tamil. Students do not automatically qualify for admission to the university even if they perform well in the examination. Since the number of places available for admission to different fields of study is limited due to the lack of facilities, the final selection is based on open competition, whereby only those students scoring above a certain percentile rank in a combination of subjects are selected.\textsuperscript{95} The United Front came to power in 1970 and SLFP's concern to promote the welfare of Sinhalese policies laid down after 1970 aimed at benefiting the Sinhalese than others. For instance, it fostered the status of Buddhism and Sinhala language and now realised the need to improve their position in higher education.

A major question that irritated the minds of the Sinhalese was that the Sri Lankan Tamils who constituted slightly more than a tenth of the island's population had been enjoying for years, a high proportionate position in university education.

\textsuperscript{94} Ponnambalam, S., 1983, \textit{op.cit.}, p.173.

\textsuperscript{95} Manogaran, C., 1987, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.119-20.
The Tamil dominance made the Sinhalese to perceive it as an injustice to them. In this context, political pressures began to mount up in 1970s to correct the imbalance in higher education. Further, replacing English by Sinhala and Tamil in university entrance examination caused nepotism and favoritism among the examiners. So long as English was the national language, there was no way to identify the ethnic label of a student. But after 1970, candidates' ethnic origin was considered as a criterion while evaluating their answer scripts.

The Department of Education undertook various steps since 1972 for easing the admission processes so as to enable majority of the Sinhalese to get access into higher education, with the early expansion of school facilities in the outlying areas and the Ministry deciding to abolish the science practical test at the G.C.E. (Advance Level) Examination (Grade XII). According to it, the students were graded on the basis of their performance in written theory papers. Above all the curriculum reforms implemented after 1972 made an effort to gradually ensure that science would be taught to all students from Grades VI to IX. When the government policy of increasing the number of schools in the educationally backward areas are concerned, needs for setting up Tamil Schools had been totally ignored by the Government. The Tamils accused the Education Department for its failure to provide English teachers to all Tamil schools and condemned its attempt to appoint Sinhala teachers to Tamil schools in the North. So most of the Tamil and Muslim schools were functioning without teachers in 1972 even though more than 2000 English teachers were enrolled during the period 1970-72. The same was the case with the appointment of science teachers. The Tamil parliamentarians often raised their voice against the dual policy
So, it is clear that the Government while restructuring the educational system for the benefit of the Sinhalese, it attempted to thwart the science subject acquisition by the Tamil students. Its policies were mainly directed to restrain considerably the pupils from minority schools to avail the facility of superior laboratory facilities. It not only created a barrier to develop a standard in education, but also became an instrument to cause imbalance between communities in the realm of education. In a sense, the basic motive of the government to eradicate educational disparities had been defeated.

In 1970, when the United Front came to power, many prominent Sinhalese claimed that the two language policy was not effective enough in increasing the number of Sinhalese students admitted to Science programmes in universities. As long as university admissions were based strictly on merit, they argued, the Tamils would have the advantage and a vast majority of Sinhalese students would be excluded from availing university education. The United Front Government of Bandaranaike decided that it was difficult to evaluate the relative performance of students who were educated in the Sinhala medium with those educated in Tamil medium, especially when the Tamil students were performing exceptionally well in the science discipline compared to the Sinhalese students. The Sinhalese students had also sought admission in large numbers to science faculties, but many of them could not compete successfully with the Tamil students in open competitive examinations, even when the medium of instruction was English. In order to admit more Sinhalese students to the science faculties, the government reduced the minimum requirements necessary for

them to secure admission to these faculties (See Table). In defence of this line argument, they decided to identify different sets of minimum marks that students educated in different media would have to score to be admitted to different fields of study in the university. Since Tamil students have traditionally sought admission to the science faculties because employment opportunities are limited for those graduating in arts disciplines, the government decided that a greater number of Tamil students could be admitted by lowering the minimum standards for admission to arts faculty.

Table: University admissions Based on Minimum Marks 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course of Study</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Minimum Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Sinhalese</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamils</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Sinhalese</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamils</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine and Dentistry</td>
<td>Sinhalese</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamils</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio-Science</td>
<td>Sinhalese</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamils</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td>Sinhalese</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamils</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This departure from the earlier form of selection to the universities had earned the criticism of both academicians and minority Tamil leaders. The Federal Party cautioned the government that "discrimination between one section and the other

97. Manogaran. C., 1987, op.cit. p.120.
would lead them to remain as enemy of society, so all the young of whatever political party, race or religion they may belong, must be dealt with fair and just. But appreciating the outcome of the formula, the minister stated that this scheme not only benefited Muslim students but also had helped the Sinhalese students much. It apparently shows the sinister designs behind the policy of the government to act against the interests of particular community. However, mounting reaction and protests by the Tamils influenced the Ministry to abrogate the scheme and there was no admission in 1972.

In 1972, the government devised a new scheme called "Standardization" as a mechanism for adjusting the ethnic balance in university admissions. This is a statistical method of adjusting marks scored by various candidates with a reference to the mean (on average marks) and the standard deviation on the average difference of all marks from the mean.\textsuperscript{98} In effect, the system meant that Tamil students appearing at the examinations in Tamil needed to score higher marks in aggregate than their Sinhalese counterparts to be eligible for admission to the medical, science and engineering courses at the country's different universities. The pre-1970 method of selecting candidates, Sinhalese and Tamils alike, on the basis of actual marks obtained by them at the open competitive examinations was no longer adopted. Instead, the selection of the Tamil students came to be determined by their ability to score higher marks than the Sinhalese.

This new scheme drastically reversed the ratio of Tamil medium students in

\textsuperscript{98} Ratnam in National State Assembly Debates, Vol.14(ii) No.8, 28 December 1972, col.2189.

the universities. Despite the drastic change in the physical science and engineering, the overall percentage of the Tamil students in the science faculties as a whole remained adjusted from 33.6 per cent in 1971-72 to 29.5 per cent under standardisation. When percentage of Tamils was declining everywhere the proportion of Sinhalese was increasing sharply (see Table).

The admission statistics created widespread resentment among the Tamils and they opposed the system of admission vehemently. Once again, the Tamil MPs viewed it as an undoubted outcome of the communal and political motivation to "blockade the change of the Tamil children to proceed to the higher education". A FP member said that "it is the most uncivilized and naked discrimination that has been perpetrated on the Tamil community in the country because it was put into operation not for any academic purpose but to appease the communal and political demands of the majority community". Another Tamil MP remarked that by this method the government had in fact fought the way the minority whites in South Africa and Rhodesia did - a new concept of discrimination. Further, he said that the government practising the worst form of apartheid in the higher seats of learning in the country.

Replying to the criticism, the Education Minister, a Muslim said that, "the Muslim students only suffered under the standardization not the Tamils. We never said anything against it because it was the Government policy and we accepted it". But these words minister could not convince the Tamils who were denied justice and fairplay in the admission criteria for university education and only

escalated their frustration and discontent.

In 1974, the Kandyan lobby and Muslim interest groups persuaded the Kandyan aristocratic Prime Minister and the Muslim Education Minister to devise a new scheme for their convenience. Eventually the government came out with a new procedure called district quota for the admission 1974. Under this system, the admission of students from a district to the universities was determined by the quota fixed according to the population of the district. For different districts, separate quotas were sanctioned for each course such as Surgery, Engineering, Applied Sciences, Physical Sciences, Biological Science and Arts. The district to which a student was considered to belong was determined by his school record. While the government defended the scheme on the ground that it would ensure equality of opportunity for university admission to the students residing in rural areas, the Tamils of Jaffna interpreted it as an attempt to deprive them of their primacy in scientific and technological education by unfair weightage. Like the standardization method, the Quota System placed the Tamil students at a greater disadvantage in respect of their admission to the universities. The Quota System, in fact, discriminated between one district and another in respect of the number of students to be admitted to the universities. Some students of a district in excess of the quota fixed for it, for instance, might find the door of a university closed to them in spite of their securing higher percentage of marks at the examinations, while all the students with a lower percentage of marks from another district get the opportunity to be admitted if the quota is higher in the latter district than in the former. Obviously higher quotas were granted in favour of the Sinhalese-dominated districts. For example, for 1974, 398 students from Jaffna qualified to enter medicine’ Bio-science course and 575 to enter Engineering/Physical sciences courses. However, The places open to them according to the district quota were only 34 and 37 respectively. In contrast, in Ratnapura, 16
students who qualified for Medicine/Bio-science had 30 places open to them and the
19 who qualified for Engineering/Physical sciences had 32 places. Thus, while
Ratnapura district fell short of 27 candidates to fill the reserved quota of all 62 seats,
Jaffna had a surplus of 702 qualified candidates.

The quota system and the standardization method, both caused a fall in the
percentage of Tamil admissions from 24.4 per cent in 1973 to 16.3 per cent in 1974 to
Engineering course and from 36.9 per cent in 1973 to 25.9 per cent in 1974 to the
course of Medicine. The system had also adversely affected some low country
Sinhalese areas. The Western province which provided 45.6 per cent of students to
science courses in 1973 fell down to 35.7 per cent in 1974. But, in all other
provinces especially the central province where the Kandyans were in majority this
system enabled them to promote their strength from 7.6 per cent in 1973 to 15.5 per
cent in 1974 thereby making them the largest beneficiary by the present admission
system.

Despite the expansion in the total intake to Science courses (1177 in 1973 to
1403 in 1974), for the first time, Tamil proportion to such courses fell down
considerably both in absolute number and percentage, in all their favourite science
departments. The Tamil lost their hold over Physical Sciences and Bio-science
courses. In the Colombo campus there was not even a single Tamil medium student
selected and 80 per cent of those admitted were mainly from the Sinhala medium.
Similarly the Tamils did not have a single seat for any course in the Vidhyalankara

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campus and Vidhyodya campus. At the same time, the proportion of Sinhalese increased remarkably in all the campuses.

Some scholars and politicians in the majority community justified the change of procedure for university admission by the United Front Government on the grounds that Sinhalese students could not compete with Tamil students in professional fields as long as the Tamil districts had more schools, better educational opportunities and smaller class size. They also claimed that the ability of Tamil students to score better marks than Sinhalese students in Science subjects was attributable to the availability of better laboratory facilities in Tamil districts. On the contrary, a regional analysis of available data on the percentage of the population enrolled in schools and colleges for the 1978-79 academic year demonstrates the following: (1) Over 21 per cent of the illiterate population of Tamil districts have no schooling compared to 23 per cent for the Island as a whole. (2) The highest literacy rate on the island are found in the wet zone districts with predominantly Sinhalese populations, and include Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara and Matara districts. (3) The percentage of population attending primary and secondary schools in the Tamil districts was below the national average. Only 6.67 per cent of the estate population had secondary schooling. Despite this low level, the government adopted no measures to develop special ethnic quotas for Indian Tamils. (4) A higher percentage of the population of the Tamil districts had passed the General Certificate Education (GCE) ordinary level examination, relative to other areas, but the figure for High School Certificate or GCE Advanced Level examination for Tamil district was below the national average. Finally, contrary to popular belief, the percentage of the Population with under-graduate degrees for Tamil districts was less than one-half of the national average. Moreover, both urban and rural areas of

Sinhalese districts tended to fare better than the Tamil districts in the size of the undergraduate population and in the number of persons who had passed degree examinations. In fact, except for the category of those who had passed the GCE (OL), the rest of the figures for Tamil districts are below the national average. Thus it can be seen that Tamil districts did not offer more educational opportunities, relative to those of Sinhalese districts. Moreover, the percentage of the Tamil population in Tamil districts did not have greater access to university education compared to Sinhalese districts. The level of educational attainment among the Tamils was less than that of the low-country Sinhalese, but slightly better than that of the Kandyan Sinhalese.\footnote{107}

The standardization scheme was modified in 1976, when it was decided that 70 per cent of students would be chosen on the basis of their marks and 30 per cent on the basis of district quotas. The government eventually abolished the system of standardization of marks for admission to universities, but a comparison of the figures for 1974 and 1983 suggests that the percentage of Tamils admitted to the Engineering faculty has improved while the percentage of students selected to the faculty of Medicine continues to decline. The number of Sinhalese students entering the faculties of Engineering and Medicine has increased since the middle 1970s when additional campuses were established. C.R. de Silva, commenting on the impact of standardization and district quota system on the comparative strength of ethnic communities in universities, states that "ethnically there is little doubt that the major blow fell on Ceylon Tamils". The Indian Tamils have not gained by standardization even though "they have the poorest schooling facilities on the island." The percentage of Tamils entering Engineering courses fell from 48.3 per cent in 1970 to 16.3 per

cent in 1974 (see Table). Likewise, the percentage of Tamils admitted to the faculty of Medicine declined from 48 per cent in 1970 to 26.2 per cent during the same period. On the whole, admission of Tamil students to science-oriented courses dropped from 35.5 per cent in 1970 to less than 21 per cent in 1973. De Silva also noted that, on the other hand, "the Sinhalese emerged as the main beneficiaries. Their share of admissions to science-based faculties rose from 75.4 per cent in 1974, to over 80 per cent (estimate) in 1975." On the other hand, Tamil students' share of admissions to the science based faculties fell from 35 per cent in 1970 to 19.3 per cent in 1983, whereas the total share of Sinhalese in admissions stood at 75 per cent the same year. The Sinhalese share of admissions in the field of Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Engineering Medicine, and Law was 73.4, 70.3, 66.4, 72.8 and 75 per cent, respectively in 1983. Thus the popularly held notion that the Tamils on the average account for 50 per cent of all students admitted to the faculties of Science, Engineering, Medicine and Law is not true: the Sinhalese have always had at least 60 per cent of the university admissions in these fields and in recent years, their representation in these fields has approached and even surpassed their proportion of the population at large in Sri Lanka.108

Moreover, "the damage done by discriminatory measures against the minorities is considerable and suspicion between the Sinhalese and the Tamils is unlikely to die away even if the university admissions issue is resolved to the satisfaction of both parties." The system of standardization with its district quotas is considered by the Tamils to be one of the most discriminatory of the regulations designed to restrict the educational opportunities of the Tamil community, a community that places a high premium on education. It was the issue of university

admissions, more than any other factor, that compelled the unemployed and educated Tamil youths to clamour for the establishment of a separate Tamil state.109

DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

Similar to that of education, the question of employment turned out to be an explosive issue for the ethnic rivalry between Sinhalese and Tamils. During the colonial rule, the Tamils along with the Burghers could get access to public services, with the help of their early education. The Sinhalese were under-represented as their educational attainment was not high enough to compete with the Tamils and Burghers. In contrast to it, the Tamils indispensable position in government services helped their generations to secure employment easily that continued till the dawn of independence.110 An unduly high dominance of Tamils in government services made the Sinhalese realise their position. Painfully aware of their inferior status the Sinhalese identified the necessity of legislative and administrative measures to redress this imbalance. This was sought to be implemented through the spread of vernacular education and changes in the university admission procedure in favour of Sinhalese who now aspired for better prospects through public services. Whenever the competition became acute, the public service used to become a public issue in Sri Lanka.

James Jupp visualised three major forms of patronage in independent Sri Lanka - communal, partisan and nepotism.111

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109. Ibid. p. 497.
Communal patronage, unlike in other countries, is not on the consideration of caste preference but in terms of ethnicity. The Sinhalese Buddhist Chauvinists after their success in getting official status for the "Sinhalese language put pressure on the policy makers to secure an overwhelming place for them in public service. Indeed, the motive behind the 'Sinhala only' official language demand was to correct the colonial bias and hopefully to restrain Tamil entrants into the services by seeking the Sinhalese and the Tamil proficiency through which they were allowed to sit for examination in any one of the two languages. It benefited the Sinhalese as the Tamils found it difficult in answering questions in Tamil since they were experienced in English till now. The favouritism and nepotism was institutionalised following political competition between the SLFP and the UNP. Both the parties adopted the instrument of assigning public posts to their partymen purely for political gain. In the matter of filling up of posts in the internal services as well as foreign services including positions of Ambassadors and others, the words of the politicians were final.112

In the implementation of 'Sinhala only' as the language of administration, the government progressively phased out Tamil recruitment which was eventually no more than a tickle in public services, teaching, defence and other areas. At independence, employees in the service of the government numbered 82,000 of whom 30 per cent were Tamils. Although government recruitment then expanded rapidly to 225,000 by 1970, the proportion of Tamils declined to 6 per cent in the same year. In 1973, of 100 persons selected for higher administrative services through examination, 92 were Sinhalese, four were Tamils and four were Muslims. The steady decline in Tamil recruitment to government service over the years from 1956 to 1970 was as

112. Ibid. p.240.
follows:


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<td>Ceylon Administrative Service</td>
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<td>Clerical Service (incl. postal)</td>
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<td>Railway, Hospital and Customs</td>
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<td>Professionals (Engineers, Doctors, Lecturers)</td>
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<td>Armed Forces</td>
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But these figures do not tell the whole story. After 1956 the biggest creators of jobs were the State Industrial and Commercial Corporations that were established, and from these too the Tamils were shut out because of "Sinhala only" policy. Between 1956 and 1970, 189,000 persons were recruited by the public sector corporations and 99 per cent of them were Sinhalese.\(^\text{113}\) In 1966 a World Bank Report stated that "the public enterprises and corporations are grossly overstaffed as a result of political patronage". (See The Foreign Exchange Problem of Ceylon, Colombo, 1966.) The Ceylon Transport Board the biggest employer in South Asia, recruited 52,000 employees upto 1970, of whom more than 98 per cent were Sinhalese.

The Ceylon Institute for National and Tamil Affairs, in a memorandum to the International Commission of Jurists, stated that in the private sector "the chance of a Tamil securing employment is negligible, if he is not Sinhala educated. In government managed corporations recruitment is at the discretion of the Minister and not by open competition. The chances of a Tamil securing employment are very rare."

Of 22,374 teachers recruited between 1971 and 1974, when Badiuddin Mahmud was Minister of Education, 18,000 were Sinhalese, 2,507 were Muslims and only 1,807 were Tamils. During these four years, 3,500 Tamil teachers retired and hence there was no net addition but an actual decline in the number of Tamil teachers. In the police and defence services, Tamil recruitment after 1970 was virtually nil. The unemployment rate among Tamil males who had successfully passed the GCE Advanced level was as high as 41 per cent, while it was only 29 per cent for Sinhalese males in 1983, according to the Labour Force and Socio-Economic Survey published by the Ministry of Plan Implementation and the Department of Census and Statistics.

Since independence it had been the policy of the Ceylonese Government to favour the Sinhalese as against the Tamils in respect of employment opportunities. This was indirectly admitted by the United National Party in its election manifesto of 1977. According to the manifesto, the UNP believed that numerous problems confronted the Tamil-speaking people and assured that after coming to power it would take all possible steps to remedy their grievances in such fields as employment in

115. Editorial Notes, "Notes and Documents", p.149.
public sector and semi-public corporations. But it is found that the number of Tamils recruited to the police department, the Army, and Naval forces also declined precipitously: of a total of 10,000 persons who became members of the armed forces between 1977 and 1980, only 220 were Tamils. According to many Tamils, the Government has systematically excluded Tamils from the armed forces in order to be able to impose its will on the Tamil people. Atrocities committed by the security forces in the Tamil areas, under the pretext of maintaining law and order, could have been avoided if a substantial number of the Army personnel were Tamils. Tamils dominated certain sections of the public sector jobs in the past, particularly in the fields of Accountancy and Engineering, but this situation had changed by the turn of 1980s.

The figures released by the Department of Census and Statistics and the Ministry of Plan Implementation indicate that the percentage of the Sinhalese in all categories of employment in the state sector in 1980 was as high as 84 per cent compared to 12 per cent for the Tamils. The Sinhalese comprise 74 per cent of the population but holds 82 per cent of the jobs in professional and technical fields and 83 per cent of the jobs in the administrative and managerial categories in the state and public sectors. The Sri Lankan Tamils, who comprise 12.6 per cent of the population, had 13 per cent of professional and technical positions and 14 per cent of administrative and managerial positions in 1980. The 1983 estimates of public sector employment reveal that while the Sinhalese share of employment in this sector was 85 per cent, the Tamil share was only 11 per cent. This figure of 11 per cent has been drastically reduced since the anti-Tamil riots of 1983.116

A comparative analysis of the employment and capital investment figures on government-run industries for 1965-1966 and 1982 demonstrates that Tamil areas have been discriminated against in the allocation of resources for industrial development. Of the approximately 13,000 people who were employed in state industrial enterprises in 1965-1966, more than 3,000 or 23 per cent were employed in the five industries located in the predominantly Tamil areas. Between 1965-66 and 1982, the number of people employed in state-run enterprises located in the predominantly Tamil areas increased from 3,000 to only 8,800 or less than 12.8 per cent of the employees in twenty-eight major industries throughout the country. During the same period, the total number of people employed in state-run industries rose from approximately 13,000 to 65,835, a whopping increase of 429 per cent. This increase was accomplished through an investment of Rs.5.6 billion between 1965-66 and 1981, with most of the capital investment designated for improving economic conditions in the Sinhalese districts. Not a single labour-intensive industry was ever planned for the Tamil districts, even though the Jaffna district has the highest level of unemployment in the country. 117

Moreover, capital investment to improve the productive capacities of existing industries has been limited to those industries located in the Sinhalese districts. Even when the advantages for locating an industry in a Tamil district were ideal, the government was not necessarily interested in proceeding with the project. In addition, whenever new industries were established in Tamil districts, the local population was not exclusively selected to work in such enterprise.

Opportunities for the Tamils to find employment in the private sector are also limited, since industrial enterprises sponsored by foreign aid have not been established

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Government regulations prohibit the establishment of certain categories of industries outside the "Free Trade Zone", which is located around the city of Colombo. Many successful labour intensive industries were financed and operated on the Free Trade Zone by the Tamils before they were destroyed by mob violence in 1983. There is no reason why these people, with Free Trade Zone regulation, could not establish similar enterprises in the Tamil districts. Tamils were, however, successful in trade and business that were established outside the Northern and Eastern provinces. Because of this fact, there is a widely held opinion among the Sinhalese that a handful of Tamils dominate the private sector of the economy. While this may not be true, many Tamils from the North had to seek employment in the private sector, particularly in retail trade, business, and industries, because of limited opportunities at home. Of course, Tamils would not have been successful in business and trade if they had not possessed entrepreneurial skills and the willingness to take risks. Tamil retailers had conducted business with the Sinhalese villagers for more than a century. In the past, they had provided basic necessities to isolated villages but in recent years, they found themselves branded as exploiters. Many of these Tamil retailers, businessmen and industrialists have been forced, under tragic circumstances to flee to the North. The predominantly Tamil areas, however, can no longer absorb the influx of more people because economic development of these areas has been deliberately neglected by the government.

Colonization

The resettlement of Sinhalese peasants from densely populated South West to the sparsely populated North Central and Eastern dry zone has created a bone of contention between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The Government showed active

118. Ibid, pp. 135-37.
interest after 1948 to phase population pressure in the congested areas by transferring them to the newly created uplands. Many colonization schemes and projects were devised mainly for the clearing of the jungle lands for the purpose of cultivation through which the settlements were carried out.

It is the general fact that the population in all the districts during 1946-1981 increased considerably but the rate of increase in the sparsely populated districts of the dry zone had been much higher than that of the densely populated district in the west zone. This is because of the settlement of population in the sparsely populated districts. The planned colonization programme in the traditional homeland of the Tamils as they regard, has caused the alteration of the ethnic composition in their own areas. The much affected province of the Tamils is the Eastern province where the rate of the increase of the Sinhalese population went up in 1981 because of the filling up of the places of repatriated Indian Tamils to India by the Sinhalese. The Jaffna district is a less preferred district for Sinhalese settlement as there is no security to the life of the settlers due to predominance of the Tamils. Vavuniya provided a high place to the Indian Tamils in 1981 solely at the cost of the Sri Lankan Tamils. This increase of Indian Tamils was an outcome of the outbreak of violence since 1956 in the plantation areas where they used to inhabit mostly. Among other reasons, their influx into these areas had occurred mainly due to the lack of adequate employment opportunities, uprooting of estate workers from certain estates in the wake of nationalization of estates and poverty during the food crisis of 1973-74.

The worst affected was the Tamil province because of colonization in Eastern province in general and Trincomalee district in particular. There has been a corresponding increase in the Sinhalese population since 1953 in this province while all other ethnic groups have lost their strength considerably. Yet another result of the government sponsored settlement of the Sinhalese was the creation of a new district
Amparai in 1960 after bifurcating the Batticaloa district in which the Tamils were the dominant community since 1946. The new district as a separate entity came into being in 1963 and then onwards there has been a sharp increase in the Sinhalese strength while the Ceylon Tamils and Moors have gradually lost their numerical majority. Except for new the districts such as Vavuniya and Galle where there has been a slight increase of Indian Tamils in recent years, in all other districts the population of Indian Tamils have declined. This is the direct result of the implementation of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreements of 1964 and 1974 which had led to an increase of Sinhalese population in these districts.

The colonization programme benefited the landless Sinhalese peasants from densely populated areas who, after their settlement, could be able to satisfy their needs for survival. Secondly, it brought out a significant political motivation. the Amparai district was created from the Tamil dominated Batticaloa district. As a later distribution of electoral constituencies, the Amparai district was allotted two constituencies by the Delimitation Commission and both these constituencies returned the Sinhalese MPs and Sinhalese representation in the legislature increased to 80 per cent although they represented only 71.9 per cent of the population according to the 1971 Census.119 A Tamil member pointed out “in Trincomalee district many new divisional AGAs divisions are being created and the traditional Tamil villages are being annexed to these divisions. They are unable to transact business with the Divisional A.G.A.s office because all the work is being done in Sinhala there. “Further”, he said, “Tamils do not object to new division and the people are compelled to transact their business and correspondence in Sinhala.”120

120. Thangadhraj in National State Assembly Debate Vol.20, no.7.

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On 3 July 1979, the government sought through a simple resolution in Parliament the merger of certain parts of medunchachya (almost 100 per cent Sinhalese electorate) with the Vavuniya district (a predominant Tamil district). The TULF opposed this move and even SLFP voted against the resolution saying that the move would create inconvenience for the Sinhalese who were represented in the Parliament through a SLFP MP. This attempt was designed openly to convert the Tamil majority Vavuniya district into a Sinhalese majority district and the SLFP’s opposition was solely to keep their hold in fact in that Sinhalese dominated area. A Tamil MP viewed that through this planned colonization “the Tamils were being made a slave race by the conversion of their traditional areas into Sinhalese and their denial of right to vote.” Displeasure of the Tamils in this regard created both political and ethnic tension who led to violence on many occasions.

The change in the ethnic composition due to colonization schemes gave rise to suspicion and fears among the Tamils. The Tamil politicians often expressed their concern over the alternation of ethnic ratio and viewed it as a threat to their very existence in the age-old Tamil areas. When B-C pact was signed, one of the main demands of the Tamils was to restrain the deliberate selection of the Sinhalese colonists by the government. But Sinhalese Buddhist chauvinistic forces stood against the pact which resulted in its abrogation later.

In fact Tamils were not against the colonization by clearing jungle lands and irrigating them. They were very much aware that the economic development could be achieved only through it. But what they sought quite often was that the justifiable places should be allotted to the local Tamil landless inhabitants while selecting

121. Ibid., vol.12, no.12, 22 Nov. 1974, col.1721
colonists in Northern and Eastern provinces. The government justified the Sinhalese migration from the West Zone to North and East on the basis that this is a fundamental right of the Sri Lankan citizens granted in the constitution.  But Article 14(1) of the 1978 constitution authorises the Parliament to resist the exercise of this right through a Parliamentary Act whenever the exigencies of national economy so demand. A.J. Wilson challenged the practical validity of this provision asking that "a government could not for instance argue that the new colonization schemes it organizes in the dry zone areas of Eastern province be not settled with the Tamil speaking people in the interest of national economy" as they might otherwise enter into ethnic clashes which might retard the economic productivity of the area involved. On the contrary, J.A.L. Cooray who was advisor and observer on the inclusion of this article, said, this right is a protection against provincialism and a guarantee against unfair discrimination in the matter of free movement and residence of citizens throughout the country.

Bitter discord over the government sponsored colonization in Tamil provinces heightened the ethnic tensions between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in those areas. The new settlers were the worst victims of the violence after the escalation of Tamil militancy. As a consequence, there were repercussions in the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese majority areas where the former's life was threatened on many occasions. This threat led to the outbreak of violence periodically from 1956, that attained its climax in 1983. Later on deterioration of law and order in Sri Lanka forced the

President to come to an understanding with the TULF on the issue. It was expected
that he would endeavour to devise a way that will not disturb the demographic
composition of the territories. This whole picture was changed after the historic
violence of 1983 in which the total lives lost could not be calculated. To make things
worse, the government finalized a plan in 1985 to settle 30,000 Sinhalese families in
the Tamil North with the ultimate aim of creating parity in the population of the
communities there. Athulathmudali announcing the proposed plan stated that "the
only way to root out terrorism was to remove the concept of 'traditional homeland
and create parity between different communities. He added that the new settlers
would be given military and agricultural training by some of the 20,000 people whom
the government intended to send as armed settlers into the country’s north. The
proposal said the prospective settlers would be 75 per cent ethnic Sinhalese in line
with the overall population breakdown of the country and that most of them would be
single males. With this military mixed programme, the government proved that it
stood for the protection of the people.

The original motive of this plan was to accelerate the agricultural production
by utilizing all the barren lands with adequate facilities for irrigation. It was intended
that the self-sufficiency in agricultural production would reduce the expenditure of Sri
Lanka in importing food stuffs from abroad. Again to minimize the mounting
population pressure in densely populated provinces and to reduce unemployment
among all the ethnic groups, the government used colonization as a viable instrument.
But political motivation permeated in whole exercise in the colonization programmes
since 1960s. After the outbreak of 1960 language discord everything was decided on

125. The Times of India (New Delhi), 10 Feb. 1985.
126. The Times of India (New Delhi), 25 May. 1985.

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the basis of ethnic consideration. Many a time the major Sinhalese parties the SLFP and UNP realized the political importance of minority political parties while proving their majority to form government. The overthrow of the UNP ministry led by Dudley Senanayake in March 1960 due to its inability to secure the support of the FP made the successive Sinhalese governments to find a way out for progressive restriction of the Tamil political significance. As a result the settlement schemes in Tamil areas were intensified with an expectation that the colonization would alter the ethnic ratio in favour of the Sinhalese which ultimately would help the Sinhalese parties to win the election easily. Bandaranaike admitted this general objective and stated that this government would not utilize the instrument of colonization to convert the majority Tamil speaking population in the two provinces into a minority. Lastly since 1970, the settlement schemes were adopted with pure intention to demolish a "traditional homeland concept of the Tamils. Separatist movements and the escalation of militancy among Tamil youths encouraged much of this programme.127 The districts with less proportion of Tamil population were given primary importance in the colonization process so as to enable the government to convert them into the Sinhalese majority districts without much hardship.

**Discrimination in Resource Allocation**

There is a lot of political intervention in allocation of funds to various districts and subsequent investment in different sectors in a district. Always there have been tussles between the DPA and local district MPs if their party affiliation differs, since the developmental activities are carried out under the supervision of the district authorities. As a central government agent to the district, the members of each electorate turns to districts. The members of electorate participate in it and decide the

priorities of work. But on many occasions the DPA functions in accordance with its own claims and fancies.

The allocation of funds for capital work is intended to generate production and employment. It is also to enlist the participation of the local people in the planning and implementation of development projects at the local levels. While allocating finance to each districts the government has to take into account the factors such as population, rate of development, the potential for development and the unemployment situation in the area. But these theoretical propositions are not always used by the government when it releases fund to the district under the decentralized budget. What shapes the policy practically is the political consideration at the prima facie and the ethnic consideration. Since the Tamils of Northern and Eastern provinces largely support the Tamil parties, the Sinhalese parties (UNP and SLFP) are less concerned with the development of these provinces. At the same time, they undertake constructive programmes in the Sinhalese areas mainly to protect their political interests. Whenever any debates takes place in the Parliament relating to financial matters, Tamils never fail to express their dissatisfaction with the government's policy of resource allocation, the Jaffna district always gets a lesser amount than any other district with same number of population and degree of development. The same is the case of implementation of central schemes through DPA at the district level.

A Tamil MP complained in 1976 that the DPA of Batticaloa district ignored the decision taken at the meeting and gave money to the place he thought it should be given, even after starting work on the basis of district budgetary decision. If somebody went and whispered something into his ear, he used to cancel the entire
project. It so happens in some districts where the Sinhalese are in minority as the representatives of such districts belong to the opposition parties. In some districts the DPAs behave authoritatively, since they control the whole district’s administration. A DPA can get the officials and the local government around to do whatever he wants and wishes. Often the Tamil MPs accused the DPAs for their non-consultation of the members of the District Development Council while taking decision on development priorities.

Since 1977, the UNP Government started following the same policy of its predecessor in allocating funds to the Tamil districts. Under the central budget of 1981, the total government capital expenditure in the Jaffna district was only 2.6 per cent of the national expenditure, which was Rs.313 per capita expenditure in Jaffna district, while the national per capita expenditure was Rs.656. Similarly, in 1983, the national per capita figure which represented an index of investment in the 24 districts was Rs.666. But the Jaffna district had a per capita investment of Rs.313 and Batticaloa had Rs.185. These figures show a glaring disparity in the allocation of capital investment between the various districts.

Political motivations and intervention made the Tamils perceive that foreign projects and investments in Sri Lanka were made only for the benefit of the Sinhalese districts. New industries have been exclusively set up in Sinhalese districts. Of the irrigation projects, dam construction and industrial developments funded by the UK, the USA, Canada and other European governments, not a single one has been established in Tamil areas which left untouched by the new developments. Between 1970 and 1975 the UF Government spent Rs.10.908 million as capital investment in

state industrial ventures which were exclusively concentrated in the Sinhalese areas.\textsuperscript{130} With regard to the investment through the foreign aid, the utilization in Jaffna district for the period 1977-82 was completely nil. Out of the total national per capita foreign aid utilization figure of Rs.510, the Jaffna district’s share was nil. In the Batticaloa district, the figure was 60 and 9 in Mullaitivu and Mannar respectively. Similarly two water supply projects funded by US Aid during this year were also not utilised.\textsuperscript{131}

A USSR petroleum prospecting company, after a seismic survey in Sri Lanka, recommended Jaffna and Mannar as ideal places for oil exploration. But Bandaranaike selected Mannar first and abandoned her plan to explore in Jaffna saying that there was no oil found there in Jaffna. Likewise, a US Government offer to develop the port of Kankesanthurai was not accepted while millions were spent in an attempt to turn the uneconomic port of Galle in the south into a second port.\textsuperscript{132} This kind of discriminatory policy not only remained a source for ethnic antagonism but also an obstacle for the economic self-sufficiency of the country.

In the field of agricultural development, the Tamil dominated areas have been willfully neglected. The case in point is the Mahavelli Ganga irrigation scheme. One of the main programmes of the government since 1930 was to accelerate the agricultural production in Sri Lanka. Many projects were undertaken to reclaim the abandoned dry zone areas. Of all these projects, Mahavelli Ganga irrigation scheme


was of paramount importance for the betterment of farm and irrigated lands. This project irrigated more of dry lands in the Sinhalese areas than the Tamil areas. The rivers were diverted in such a way that most of the heavily populated Tamil districts were untouched though a portion of it was diverted at Kandy. When the diverted water was utilized for cultivation in the North Central provinces, there would not be a drop of water for Northern districts of Jaffna, Vavuniya and Mannar. As a result, the dry zone Tamil areas lag behind and appear to have been neglected. An estimated 85 per cent of Sinhalese lands were irrigated by the Mahavelli project while the Tamil areas had much scantier irrigation facilities. An outcome of inadequate water supply for cultivation is the unutilization of lands more in the Tamil predominant areas despite the fact that the average size of land holding is smaller in the Tamil areas than the Sinhalese areas. Similarly the exclusion of Tamil districts from the subsequent irrigation and other development projects too drew the concern of Tamils who pronounced it as an attempt to thwart the Tamils from becoming economically prosperous. Amrithalingam stated, "we are not complaining that Mahavalli development is not on the Northern Province... But what about other schemes? Not one in the North or East?"  

The Grievances of Indian Tamils

The Indian Tamils, most of whom were originally immigrant plantation workers were the worst sufferers among the racial groups in Ceylon during the British colonial epoch. They were then the most economically depressed on the island. Their condition has known no material improvement since independence of Sri Lanka. The

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impact of the inflationary pressures of the 1970s upon them had been devastating. Their economic condition deteriorated from a bare subsistence level to grinding poverty. Deaths by starvation had been a frequent occurrence among the plantation workers in 1973 and 1974. According to the Ceylonese historian, K.M. de Silva.

"Government lack of concern in the face of this appalling fall in living standards of the plantation workers is explicable only in terms of powerful anti-Indian sentiment, so deeply rooted among influential cabinet ministers that it is proof against appeals to conscience and humanitarianism."

The planters did not care for the health of the plantation workers, their ill health being the consequence of a poor diet.

Successive Sri Lankan governments discriminated against the Indian Tamils in different ways. The Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948, already referred in this work, left the Indian Tamils disenfranchised. The Shastri-Sirimavo Bandaranaike Agreement of 1964 and the Joint Communiqué of 1974 between Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, and Bandaranaike, her Sri Lankan counterpart, both relating to the admission of a certain percentage of Indian Tamils to Sri Lankan citizenship and the repatriation of the balance to India, as agreed upon, are yet to be implemented in full, with the result that many of the Indian Tamils have been still in Sri Lanka as stateless persons, without any citizenship status of their own. The bulk of them being, in other words, without any voting right are at a great disadvantage in their search for employment outside plantation 'since no politicians other than the plantation leadership itself are interested in their cause.' Even those endowed with franchise 'do not have the same access to land or irrigation projects, much less to state owned land, in the vicinity of plantations, as Sinhalese have. Female plantation workers are among the lowest paid in Sri Lanka. They have also to work long hours
than other categories of workers including small employees on plantation estates.

The over representation of the Sinhalese on the legislature is due partly to the disenfranchisement of Tamils of Indian origin. The Indian Tamils elected seven representatives to the House of Representatives in 1946, but since 1949 only one has been elected to represent them in the legislature. They were not represented in the legislature between 1956 and 1976. In 1977, Indian Tamils constituted more than 6 percent of the total population but had only one elected representative in Parliament. Indians have lived and worked in the hill country for nearly two centuries, but they have been deprived of their political rights. Yet, thousands of disenfranchised Indians are counted for purposes of electoral delimitations, so that more Sinhalese are elected from the hill country to Parliament. Since these Members of Parliament are elected by a Sinhalese electorate they do not have to represent the interests of the Srilankan Indians. The Srilankan Tamils and the Tamils of Indian origin, as one group, constituted 18.1 percent of the total population, but had only 12.5 percent representation in the 1981 legislature. Therefore, while the Sinhalese comprised 73.98 percent of the total population in 1981, they enjoyed more than 81.5 percent representation. By denying voting rights to Indian Tamils, more seats have been created for members of the Sinhalese community than their population would warrant. Therefore, it is not surprising as one observer commenting on the problems facing the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka stated, that, "Ceylon, perhaps, is the only country in the world which has given weightage in representation to the majority community in the legislature at the expense of the minority." Indeed, with the weightage favouring the majority group, it is now possible for one of the major Sinhalese political parties to ignore the Tamil minority and still win an absolute majority in parliament.

With all their grievances, most of the Indian Tamils were initially not supporters of the Ceylon Tamils in their fight for Eelam. In the 1977 election, the
Indian Tamil gave the UNP a massive support by voting for it, which enabled it to come back to official saddle with a landslide victory. And yet, the Indian Tamils’ sufferings during the riot-torn period in the regime of the UNP knew no bounds. The majority of the victims of the race-riots of 1983, for instance, were the Indian Tamils. Hence, they ultimately moved closer to the Ceylon Tamils in opposition to the government.

Sri Lanka’s post-independence period set off with a constitution implying majority rule. The Tamils who had claimed a balanced representation, in the end gave in and accepted a gentlemen’s agreement. D.S. Senanayake’s vision of a multiethnic, secular state, embracing and catering for all groups did, however, soon vanish. His own UNP-Government introduced in 1948-49 enactments, depriving the Indian Tamils of their citizenship and franchise rights. The SLFP followed it up in 1956 with the ‘Sinhala only’ Act. In the subsequent years the minorities experienced further infringements of their rights and possibilities. The continued dominance of the majority, setting the rules, led to a claim for a separate Tamil state, military resistance by the Tamil youth, and finally a civil war. The Sri Lankan recent history, thus, exposes a sad sequence of deteriorating inter communal relations, threatening the system itself.

However, given the demographic concentration of the Sri Lankan Tamil population in the North and East, it was obviously merely a matter of time before such a demand for autonomy would come to be framed explicitly in regional terms. The dialectic of the unitary Sri Lankan state and Tamil society had resulted in the formulation of a Tamil political charter that, for the first time, claimed the attribute of nationhood for the Sri Lankan Tamils, and advanced a demand for ‘autonomy’ and a ‘federal union’ on the basis of that self definition of a collective Tamil identity. However, these were but the beginnings of a historical process that was to culminate
in total Sinhalese-Tamil polarization, and the rise of a powerful armed struggle to achieve a sovereign state of Tamil Eelam.

A systematic neglect and deliberate decimation of the Tamil political, cultural and linguistic aspirations by the national leadership of Sri Lanka, which remained exclusively in the hands of the Singhalese owing to the simple reason of numerical preponderance has, no doubt, resulted in this unfortunate polarization and a state of unceasing armed struggle. Any genuine attempt at a political settlement involving devolution of power and real autonomy to the Tamil dominated provinces under a truely federal set up even at this late stage may go a long way in saving Sri Lanka from further disintegration. To achieve this end, what is needed is sagacious national leadership capable of rising above the boundaries of narrow racial chauvinism and displaying a political will to act with a vision for promoting the island nation’s broad national interests.

Table to follow
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>(as % of total Population in District)</th>
<th>1946</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1981</th>
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<td>Estate Tamils (ET) Decrease</td>
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<td>Kandy</td>
<td>S(Sinhalese)</td>
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<td>58</td>
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<td>75</td>
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<td>ET(Estate Tamils)</td>
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<td>S</td>
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<td>68</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ET</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Other minorities' decrease</td>
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<td>Mannar</td>
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<td>Group 4:</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
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</table>

* Significance is taken as change of 5% or more

Source: Census of Population (Sri Lanka) for the years 1946, 1971, 1981


TABLE 2

Changes in the Ethnic Composition of Candidates Admitted to the Different Faculties in Sri Lankan Universities between 1970 and 1983

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Physical Arts</th>
<th>Biological Agriculture</th>
<th>Medicine Dental</th>
<th>Veterinary</th>
<th>Law</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sinhalese and Tamils(^a) (percentages)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>89.1 (6.9)</td>
<td>69.7 (27.6)</td>
<td>51.7 (48.3)</td>
<td>49.2 (48.0)</td>
<td>39.2 (53.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>89.7 (7.0)</td>
<td>68.0 (28.6)</td>
<td>55.9 (40.8)</td>
<td>51.7 (43.0)</td>
<td>59.4 (34.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>92.7 (4.7)</td>
<td>67.0 (31.2)</td>
<td>62.4 (34.7)</td>
<td>53.7 (41.8)</td>
<td>59.6 (38.5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>91.8 (5.9)</td>
<td>73.1 (23.6)</td>
<td>73.1 (24.4)</td>
<td>57.5 (38.4)</td>
<td>54.9 (42.2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>86.0 (10.0)</td>
<td>75.1 (22.0)</td>
<td>78.8 (16.3)</td>
<td>69.9 (26.2)</td>
<td>80.9 (15.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>82.8 (13.3)</td>
<td>63.5(^c) (31.8)</td>
<td>67.2 (28.1)</td>
<td>72.7(^d) (23.1)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>77.1 (16.4)</td>
<td>73.4(^c) (23.1)</td>
<td>66.4 (28.1)</td>
<td>72.8(^d) (22.1)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^a\) Percentage of Tamils in each category presented within parentheses.
\(^b\) The values for law and art are combined.
\(^c\) This only applies to physical sciences.
\(^d\) This only applies to medicine.