INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The term ethnicity, which is now very frequently used in academic discourse, derived its original meaning from the Greek word 'ethnos' which meant a group of individuals with common descent. Currently, Ethnicity is used to denote a sense of identity. A collective identity is formed largely through the process that inducts individuals into membership in a group. Singh says that Ethnicity was used initially as a Bio-cultural concept and is now being used as a socio-psychological concept\(^1\). According to DeVos, Ethnicity consists of the subjective, symbolic or emblematic use by a group of people of aspects of culture in order to differentiate themselves from other groups\(^2\). Brass agrees with this definition but with a minor alteration. For him, ethnicity helps to create internal cohesion and differentiate themselves from other groups\(^3\). Further, an 'ethnic group' is supposed to be a cultural category of which they are said to be of certain continuing behaviours that are passed on from generation to generation\(^4\).

What is inferred here is that, Ethnic groups not only may socialize their respective members differently from each other, but it is the very definition of ethnic groups that they socialize in a particular manner. Thus, ethnicity as a source of culture means a 'Principle' differentiation,
an 'act' of communicative cultural distinctiveness, a 'property' of social formation and an aspect of interaction.

Ethnicity also has a claim to status and recognition either as a superior group or as a peer group at least equal to other groups. The brief description of Phadnis of an ethnic group is: "it can be viewed as a historically defined aggregate of people with shared objective traits and symbolic referents continuing its distinctiveness viz-a-viz similar groups that are regarded to be so by others"."5

Nagi reaches the conclusion regarding the five influential factors for ethnic identity after analyzing many inventories cited by different analysts6. They are: (1) Language, (2) Race, (3) Religion, (4) Shared Cultural values and (5) Territory. Further, he makes an attempt to categorise the nature of collective ethnic identity on general themes, such as, Primordial and Structural.

Geertz who agrees with the first category characterizes these Primordial ties as stemming from the given social existence such as congruities of blood, speech, customs and so on. These have an ineffable and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves, by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself.7 Stack, another primordialist, continues to describe ethnicity as a psychological bond that join a people and differentiate them in the subconscious conviction of its members from all other people in the most vital way8.
While clearly explaining the structuralist position Hechter says that "ethnic identity result from objective inter group differences in the distribution of economic resources and authority".

Weber makes an attempt to define ethnic groups as those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent... their belief must be important for the propagation of group formation, and conversely it doesn't matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists.

Ethnicity also has a claim to status and recognition either as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups. Groups that use ethnicity to make demands in the political area for alteration in their status, in their economic well being, in their civil rights, or in their educational opportunities are enjoined in a form of interest group politics. The ethnic groups in other contexts go further and demand that corporate right to be conceded to the group as a whole, that they be given not just individual educational opportunity on the same basis as others, but that they be given control over the public system of education in their areas of concentration so that they can teach the history, language and culture of their group to their own children. They demand a major say for the group in the political system as a whole or control over a piece of territory within the country or they demand a country of their own with full sovereignty.
The movement from ethnic group to community has been initiated only during the modern times. Ethnic communities are created and transformed by particular elites in modernizing and in post-industrial societies, undergoing dramatic social change. The process invariably involves competition and conflict for political power, economic benefits, and social status amongst competing elites, classes and leadership groups.

Ethnic identity formation, as a process, involves three sets of struggles, one takes place within the ethnic group itself for control over its material and symbolic resources. The second takes place between ethnic groups as a competition for rights, privileges and available resources. The third takes place between the state and the groups that dominate it on the one hand and the population that inhabit its territory on the other. Hence, it is obvious in all the present nation-states, there is a great demand for equality among the various ethnic groups which are co-existing within the territorial boundary. As a social phenomena, ethnicity has evolved from historical and socio-economic specificities which vary from country to country and area to area. Naturally contemporary times witness the rise of ethnic conflicts among the different ethnic groups. In fact, inter-ethnic clashes and conflicts in some countries are persistent, recurrent and even growing. Perhaps they become almost an irremovable category in the body politic of the countries.

While trying to explain the nature and causes of the ethnic problems, P. Palmanabhan describes it as ranging from "inter personal
conflict, communal misunderstanding etc., to rioting and regional warfare". He continues to say that basically ethnic problems arise out of an intensified politization of ethnic consciousness, which remain dormant or active because of considerations of space, time, saliency, intensity, resources etc., of ethnic groups.

Brass assesses that the ethnic nationalism and conflict are most likely to develop when the educational, technological and administrative requirements of an industrializing, centralizing state and the democratic demands of previously disadvantaged mobilizing groups make it increasingly difficult to sustain a system of ethnic stratification or a particular regional or urban and rural distribution of economic resources and political power. Also, Ethnic group conflicts have sometimes erupted due to provocation by the practice of internal colonialism.

1.2 NATIONALISM

The present world consists of a mosaic of Independent nations. In the historical perspective the nation is interpreted as the modern version of the older category of ethnic community. The term nation derived its meaning from the old Latin term 'natio' which insists on the individuals commonness in both the language and historical experiences. Only after fifteenth century onwards the term 'nation' was employed increasingly for political purposes. According to another version, the term nation has its root in the Latin word 'nasci' meaning 'to be born' and imply 'common ancestor' and place of origin. According to Nairn 'Nationalism is the result of the tidal wave of modernisation, that swept
Europe in the nineteenth century. With this beginning, nationalism spread like a wave following uneven development unleashed on the world by modernization. While tracing the ideology of nationalism, Taylor describes: "Nationalism is a doctrine based on the idea that every nation should have its own state. This idea that emerged in the eighteenth century became a major force in world politics, of twentieth century." In the earlier period nation meant those born of a common stock and sharing a common character, but later in the twentieth century nation became a political entity.

The following list shows the propositions of the doctrine of nationalism.

1. The world consists of a mosaic of nations;

2. World order and harmony depends upon expressing this mosaic in a system of free nation-states;

3. Nations are the natural units of world society;

4. Nations have a cultural homogeneity, based upon a common ancestry or history;

5. Every nation requires its own sovereign state for true expression of its culture;

6. All nations (rather than states) have an inalienable right to a territory or homeland;
7. Every individual must belong to a nation;

8. A person's primary loyalty belongs to the nation; and

9. Only through the nation can a person find true freedom.

Nationalism as an ideology has been perceived as both good as well as bad. The 1919 First World War was seen as a consequence of the suppression of nationalism. In 1945 the Second World War was premised on the expression of nationalism. Nationalism makes a simultaneous appeal to both progress and tradition. Smith perceives two forms of nationalism. The first is Independent from a colonial power, where citizens of colonies haven't participated in the governance of the dominant state. The second form is the characteristics of ethnic groups that constitute the integral part of their respective state. Smith says that nationalism is both an ideology and a movement. Usually a minority group aspires to 'nation-hood' for the cohesion of the group and generally the nationhood consists of three basic components, viz., autonomy, self-governance, and a distinctive culture and history of the group projected.

By its nature nationalism touches on different dimensions of thought and life and surely no one approach can hope to tackle more than a few of its many aspects and facets. One can draw five basic types of nationalism from the discussion of Orridge. They are: (1) State nationalism, (2) Unification nationalism, (3) Separate nationalism, (4) Liberation nationalism and (5) Renewal nationalism.
While making an approach to explain the role of modernity in the formation of a nation. Motyl says: Nationalism is not some atavistic, premodern phenomenon that is slated to disappear with the growing modernity of the world quite the contrary. The things called nationalism are likely to intensify under conditions of modernity... modernity promotes nations, states and thus nation-states. We can expect nationalism ... to grow in intensity as modern states become even more modern and unmodern states embark on the road to modernity. In short, modernity breeds nationalism.

1.3 A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One of the acute ethnic crisis of the modern world is to be seen in Sri Lanka. Regarding the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka scholars from various discipline with different perspectives have made attempts to investigate the problem. Ponnambalam presents the historical relationship between the two major ethnic groups of Sri Lanka. Arasaratnam attempts to analyse the interplay of nationalism and communalism in Post-Independence Sri Lanka and says that colonialism was the original cause for the disunity in Sri Lanka. Through analysis in both historical and contemporary perspectives, Tambiah suggests the problem as one mainly due to economic reasons. Narayanasamy details the aspects of the origin and development of the ethnic conflict in the rise and fall of the different militant groups involved in the conflict. Dubey also tries to trace the Tamil - Sinhalese relationship since the British period and touches upon the subject of Indo-Sri Lankan affairs. Muni mainly focuses on India’s responses to the developments in Sri Lanka and its
involvement and in political perspective\textsuperscript{29}. Sardesh Pandey\textsuperscript{30} and Bhaduri and Karim\textsuperscript{31} analysed the endeavours taken by the Indian Government in political, diplomatic and military spheres. Suryanarayana also describes India’s intervention in the crisis\textsuperscript{32}, but Gunaratna narrows down the focus on the role played by India’s External Intelligence Agencies\textsuperscript{33}. Singh has tried to find out the shortcomings in the planning and execution of the India’s military intervention\textsuperscript{34}. The Rayan Hoole and others are concerned about the abuse of power, human right violations by Sri Lankan and Indian forces and also by the different militant groups\textsuperscript{35}. Gunaratna presents the contemporary scenario and also a historical review of the objectives, activities and structure of the Tamil militancy\textsuperscript{36}. A comprehensive account of Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka between 1973 to 1988 is presented by O’Ballance\textsuperscript{37}. However, a holistic perspective is yet to emerge. And there is no work that describes the relationship between political violence and the protracted social conflict in Sri Lanka.

1.4 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim and objectives of the present study are:

The major aim of the thesis is to present the reasons for the protracted ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, especially the political violence involved in the conflict.

a) To trace the geographical setting of Sri Lanka;
b) To provide account of the socio-economic and political background of the conflict, between the two major ethnic groups of the Tamils and Sinhalese:

c) To understand the failure of the moderate political parties, the origin of the ideology of Tamil Nationalism and the genesis and growth of Tamil Militancy.

d) To sketch the political violence and Guerrilla warfare strategy as used by Tamil militants to encounter the Sri Lankan defence forces, and to explain the 'mediatory' role played by the Indian Government, by its direct and indirect interventions in the crisis.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The data for this thesis have been collected both from the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include, mainly the Indian and Sri Lankan Government Publications, BBC reports and also reports of Amnesty International. The secondary sources are Journals, Magazines and Reports. The data collected from these resources cover the different dimensions of the ethnic problem. Apart from these field work was also conducted during the first half of the year 1992. Unstructured interviews were conducted with the officials of Sri Lankan High Commission and Indian officials who have participated in the discussions to elicit the policy perspectives and the official stands of the respective governments. Interviews were also conducted with the leaders of moderate Tamil
Political parties and the migrant Sri Lankans to know about their perceptions, understanding and approaches to resolve the ethnic problem.

1.6 CHAPTERIZATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis is divided into four chapters in addition to an Introduction, Conclusion, References and Appendix. The Introduction gives the conceptual framework, review of relevant literature, objectives of the study and finally the methodology adopted.

Chapter two picturises the geographical profile of Sri Lanka. At the outset the historical background of the island is dealt briefly. Following this, the physical setting is described elaborately and finally the human responses to the physical setting of the Sri Lanka.

In the third chapter an attempt is made to deal the ethnic problem of the country. It starts describing the ethnic distribution and gives the background to the eruption of ethnic violence between the two major ethnic groups and also the different causes for the conflict are analysed. Further developments due to the ethnic conflict and its International dimension forms the end of the chapter.

The fourth chapter focuses on the genesis and growth of the Tamil militancy. It discusses the major Tamil militant groups, their objectives and strategies. An attempt is also made to give an elaborate account of the internecine rivalry and the consequences which took place between the different major militant groups. Finally aspects of financial aids to the militants and other resources are covered.
The fifth chapter aims to discuss the major Guerrilla action by the Tamil militant groups and the counter-Guerrilla actions by the Sinhalese, Government's regular forces between 1984 to 1990. The victories, failures, different strategies adopted by both the sides are then analysed. It details the involvement of India in Sri Lankan ethnic problem.

The final chapter forms the conclusion of the thesis.