ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF
TAMIL MILITANCY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Ethnic discrimination and violence have marked the politics of Sri Lanka since the 1950's. By the early 1970's the demand for a separate Tamil state began to appear, primarily in the Northern and Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. The ethnic riots in 1977, 1981 and 1983 undoubtedly widened the gulf between the communities and heightened sense of grievance and victimization of the Tamils, which later became the immediate cause of Tamil insurgency. It can be therefore stated that it is rooted in the ethnic division of the country.

Since the 1970's a separatist underground clique had been engaging in sporadic acts of violence, including murder of policemen and of Tamil politicians, who co-operated with the Sri Lanka government. The underground guerrilla movement composed of Tamil youths, was known as the ‘Tiger Movement’. By 1984, there were as many as 31 different groups identified as being active at some point in insurgency methods and techniques. Out of these grew the ‘Big Five’, viz., Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), People’s Liberation Organisation Tamil Eelam (PLOT), Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO), Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and Eelam
Revolutionary Organisation (EROS). These five later became the premier insurgent bodies.

The growth of these organisations sprang from a single source. Their leaders have studied and worked hand-in-hand at one time or other in those two nurseries of Tamil Eelam Manavar Peravai (Tamil Eelam Students Federation) and Ilaigna Peravai (variously called the Tamil Youth League or youth Federation) (TUF). While the LTTE led by Prabhakaran calls itself a "Politico - military organisation", the EPRLF led by its Secretary General Padmanabha calls itself a "party". Uma Maheswaran leads the PLOTE as its secretary-general, while Sri Sabarathinam and Balakumar are leaders of the TELO and EROS respectively.

These federations were formed as a consequence of the effects of the "Citizenship Act of 1948", the Ceylon (Parliamentary election) Amendment Act of 1949, the Sinhala Only Act of 1956 and a highly discriminatory and selective device called "Standardisation Act" of 1979. Sinhala Only Act and Standardisation Act together, more than anything else, put a clear stopper on the higher education and employment of the Tamils. By shutting the prospects of the Tamil young men, these two acts played a notorious-role in alienating them from main stream of society.

4.2 LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM (LTTE)

The Tiger Movement was born in 1972. The movement was activated by its present leader and military commander Prabhakaran. At
the time of its birth, the movement called itself 'The Tamil New Tigers' (TNT). 

Until 1975, the Tigers did not receive much attention. TNT's diary of combat begins on twenty seventh July 1975 with the assassination of Alfred Duraiappa, the SLFP - mayor of Jaffna. He allegedly betrayed the Tamil cause by not granting the use of the Town Hall for the final function of the World Tamil Conference, held in Jaffna in January 1974. From then on the actions of TNT have become increasingly more frequent and more violent.

On fifth May 1976, the TNT changed its name to Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Its members were and are bound by a strict code of conduct, which includes strict personal and social behaviour. The movement expanded rapidly as its cadres swelled and it acquired a political ideology.

LTTE has two basic political objectives. Firstly, the total liberation of the homeland, securing political independence for oppressed Tamil people and the establishment of an Independent Sovereign Socialist State of Tamil Eelam; secondly, the socialist transformation and creation of a radically new society free from all structures of oppression and exploitation.

The fundamental political objectives of LTTE - national liberation and social revolution - integrate both the national struggle
transformation of social formation into a revolutionary project aimed at liberating people both from national oppression and social tyranny.

4.3 EELAM PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY LIBERATION FRONT (EPRLF)

The EPRLF was formed in fourth October 1981,\(^3\) when a conference was held to chalk out a political programme and an appropriate organisational structure was devised. Padmanabha was elected as its secretary general. He was re-elected to the same post in the party's first congress in June 1984\(^4\).

Though young in years, perhaps no other organisation is as broadly mass-based among every section of the Sri Lankan Tamil society, including plantation workers and Moors (Tamil Muslims) as the EPRLF.

The EPRLF is one of the more active insurgent groups, particularly in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, EPRLF vaulted into the limelight in July 1984 when it kidnapped an American couple, Stanley and Mahy Elizabeth Allen, who were working in Jaffna on a water project for USAID\(^5\). It has since regularly executed ambushes through front organisations abroad, such as the General Union of Eelam Students (GUES) to promote the cause of insurgents. GUES was initially a students wing of EROS, rejected the leadership of EROS and affiliated itself to EPRLF. There are other organisations under EPRLF such as Rural Worker's and Peasant's Front (RWPF), Eelam Youth Front (EYF),
Plantation Proletarian Front (PPF), Eelam Women’s Liberation Front (EWLF) and Fisher Worker’s Front (FWF).

The EPRLF had the department of propaganda, department of masses Eelam People’s Liberation Front - (EPLF) and the department of military People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The movement had six regional leaders representing Jaffna, Vavuniya, Mulaitivu, kilinochchi, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Mannar.

The most daring exploit of PLA, which constituted the most outstanding jail-break "in the world" is when it rescued sixty Eelam fighters, including thirty members of the EPRLR from The Batticaloa Jail, who were transferred there from Welikade prison in the aftermath of the Massacre.

EPRLF stressed the need to apply Marxist-Leninst thinking and dielectrical materialism to the concrete socio-economic and political situation prevailing in the island.

4.4 TAMIL EELAM LIBERATION ORGANISATION (TELO)

The oldest organisation among five of the groups, is the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) founded by late Thangathurai in the mid 1970’s. It can justifiably claim to be the forerunner for the militants armed struggle. It, however, suffered its worst blow when three of its top leaders - Thangathurai, Kuttimani and Jegan - and others were killed in the most horrendous of circumstances in the
infamous Welikade prison massacre of Tamil prisoners during the July 1983 riots. Subsequently Sri Sabarathinam took on the leadership of TELO.

The history of TELO is marked by the arrest of top leaders, who had served long prison terms of sentences. It had endured a tortuous course facing innumerable trials and tribulations.

TELO, which was in dire financial straits, pulled off the sensational Neerveli bank robbery in April 1983, led by Thangathurai. However, a few days later Kuttimani, Thangathurai and Thevan were arrested. Jegan and twenty-seven others were taken into custody. Sri Sabarathinam took on the leadership of the organisation as it prepared for the legal battle to obtain the release of its top leaders. However, a death sentence was passed on Kuttimani. Under these circumstances, TELO accepted the proposal from TULF for nominating Kuttimani as a Member of Parliament, when a seat fell vacant, although it neither believed in, nor advocated the parliamentary system (it believes in forming a Socialist Tamil Eelam). But even his nomination for a membership in Parliament could not save him nor the other leaders, as they were murdered by fellow Sinhalese in the Welikade prison. Their eyes were gouged out, their tongues cut and they were clubbed to death.

TELO is remembered for the following major raids and attacks. In November 1984 Chavakacheri Police Station was attacked, in which
fifty three policemen and sixty eight soldiers were killed. A train carrying soldiers at Murugandy was attacked and two hundred and ninety eight soldiers were killed. On May nineth, 1985 there was a raid on Kokkavil army camp.

4.5 PEOPLES LIBERATION ORGANISATION OF TAMIL EELAM (PLOTE)

Uma Maheswaran, when he was one among the active member in Tamil Youth League (TYL), had met Prabhakaran, an active member in the underground activities of the TNT later renamed as LTTE. While Uma Maheswaran became its Chairman, he came out of LTTE and formed PLOTE because of differences of opinion he had with Prabhakaran on the questions of District Development Councils (DDC) and TULF. Uma Maheswaran strongly opposed the DDC since development is possible only after liberation. He strongly believed that there is no point in bringing about development without political freedom. Secondly he wanted to concentrate on the masses and also train them underground independently from TULF. Due to these controversies, Uma Maheswaran left the LTTE and Tamil Youth League.

PLOTE was conceived in 1979. The growth of Uma Maheswaran alias Muhundan, Secretary General of the PLOTE, from an active member of the Tamil Federal Party to the present position as leader of the PLOTE, spans the whole gamut of Eelam politics. He established contacts with George Habash's - Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP),
through Tamil Eelam Student Organisation (TESO) and few of his cadres were sent to Lebanon for training in Palestinian resistance camps. And Uma Maheswaran was suspected of having contacts with the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) too.

Initially, PLOTE attacked individuals, burnt buses, attacked Police Stations. After the first attack on Anaikottai Police Station in 1981, they concentrated on building up its army and colonising the North and East with Tamil Plantation Labour.

PLOTE's other raids included attacks on Kilinochchi army camp in 1982, participation in Batticaloa prison rescues and attacks on Nickkavaratiya Police Station near Colombo in 1985, which was the first Police Station to be attacked outside the Tamil areas.

4.6 EELAM REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION (EROS)

Another Tamil resistance group was born on November twenty-third, 1975, in London by Eliyathamby Ratnasabapathy namely Eelam Revolutionary Organisation, (EROS) led by Balakumar. EROS members are politically very well developed and ideologically sophisticated. They leaned more towards Marxist thought than other groups. EROS, is the only movement which had clearly recognised the need for integration of the plantation workers as a part of the Tamil struggle and had successfully built strong organisational structures in the plantations.
EROS too had its ups and downs. "Rivalry in leadership, operational crises and differences of opinion about policies" all had created a dissension in the organisation. Moreover, General Union of Eelam Students (CUES), the student's wing of EROS, rejected the leadership of EROS and decided to affiliate itself to EPRLF.

EROS consists of functional organisations like Eelam Research Organisation, (which is an active body of academicians, having published some authoritative books on the ethnic problem), Eelam Repartriate Organisation and the Economic Rehabilitation Organisation, and the General Union of Youth and Students (GUYS). Its military cadre has received training abroad.

4.7 EELAM NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (ENLF)

The four major Tamil Militant groups based in Madras, announced on eleventh April 1985, the formation of Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF).\textsuperscript{10} This came to be known as the April Alliance - the alliance between Sabarathnam of the TELO, Padmanbha of the EPRL, Balakumar of the EROS and Prabhakaran of the LTTE. PLOTE was excluded since Uma Maheswaran and Prabhakaran had long standing personal differences, that had resulted in armed encounters between PLOTE and the LTTE, in Madras and Sri Lanka. Gunaratna described about the ENLF, as the outcome of efforts of Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India to bring all the militant groups together as a coalition for greater control.
ENLF fell apart in the winter of 1986, partly because the State Government of Tamil Nadu resented its role in local politics. The ruling All-India Anna Dravida Munetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), was strongly identified with the LTTE, while the main opposition party Dravida Munetra Kazhagam (DMK) came forward to support the TELO.

The enmity between the various groups of militants was nothing new. Dissent within a group was contained only by killing the dissenters. Many of them were published in periodical bulletins, with the ostensible purpose of propagating the cause of Eelam, the separate Tamil State.

4.8 OTHER MILITANT GROUPS

Apart from these there are several small groups involved in working towards Tamil Eelam. They are rather small, in terms of numbers and are not involved in military actions, but they gave moral support to the guerrilla activity. For example, Tamil Eelam Liberation Front (TELF) under Ealavanthan, which split from the TULF in 1981 and the General Union of Eelam Students (GUES) which has its headquarters in Madras, is a student association of EROS and which later affiliated into EPRIF, were involved in support structures of guerrilla activities. Many of the groups laid claim to their names through hand written poster, propaganda books, selling tickets, attacks and assassinations.

4.8.1 List of the Tamil Militant Groups

Following is the description of Guerrilla groups and their front
organisations for achieving Tamil Eelam.12.

i) Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
   - V. Prabhakaran
   wing org: nil

ii) Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF)
   - K. Padmanabha
   wing org:
   a. Eelam People Liberation Front (EPLF)
   b. Plantation Proletariat Front (PPF)
   c. Rural worker’s and Peasant’s Front (RWPF)
   d. Fisher Worker’s Front (FWF)
   e. General Union of Eelam Students (GUES) - M. Davidsan
   f. Eelam Women Liberation Front (EWLF)
   g. Eelam Youth Front (EYF)
   h. People’s Liberation Army (PLA)
   i) People’s Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE)
      - Uma Maheswaran
      wing org: Tamil Eelam Student Organisation (TESO)
   iv) Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO)
      - Sri Sabaratnam
      wing org: nil
   v) Tamil Youth Front (TYF)
      - S. Sendirajah and Mavai Senadirajah
      wing org: Tamil Eelam National Army (TENA).
      - A. Baheeradan
   vi) Tamil Eelam Army (TEA)
vii) Tamil Eelam Revolutionary People Liberation Army (TERPLA)
    - C. Nagarajah
    wing org : nil

viii) Tamil Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (TERO)
    - Sudan Ramesh
    wing org : nil

ix) Lanka Freedom Tamil Army (LFTA)
    - E. Saravanabavanandan
    wing org : nil

x) Solidarity of Revolutionary Socialist Liberation (SRSL)
    - P.K. Balasubramaniam
    wing org : Tamil Eelam Guerrillas (TEG)
    - Lenin Jayanandan

xi) Eagles Movement (EM)
    - Gnanavel
    wing org : nil

xii) Tamil Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of students (EROS)
    - Balakumar
    wing org : nil

xiii) Tamil Eelam Liberation Army (TELA)
    wing org : nil

xiv) Red Front of Tamil Eelam (RFTE)
    wing org : nil

xv) Tamil Eelam Liberation Guerrillas (TELG)
    wing org : nil

xvi) National Liberation Front of Tamil Eelam (NLFT)
    wing org : nil

xvii) Tamil Liberation Defence Front (TLDF)
xviii) Tamil Eelam Commandos (TEC)  
wing org : nil

xix) Tamil Eelam Liberation Extremists (TELE)  
wing org : nil

xx) Tamil Eelam Liberation Fighters (TELF)  
wing org : nil

xxi) Tamil Eelam Eagle Front (TEEF)  
wing org : nil

xxii) Guerrilla’s Aspiring for Tamil Eelam (GATE)  
wing org : nil

xxiii) Red Crescent Guerrilla’s (RCG)  
wing org : nil

xxiv) Tamil Eelam Blood Movement (TEBM)  
wing org : nil

xxv) Tamil People’s Security Organisation (TPSO)  
wing org : nil

xxvi) Tamil People’s Security Front (TPSF)  
wing org : nil

xxvii) Tamil Speaking Command Unit (TSCU)  
wing org : nil

xxviii) Eelam Liberation Tigers (ELT)  
wing org : nil

xxix) Tamil Eelam Liberation Congress (TELC)  
wing org : nil

xxx) People’s Liberation Party (PLP)  
wing org : nil
xxx) National Liberation Front of Tamil Eelam (NLFTE) wing org : nil

Tamil People's Security Organisation (TPSO) and the Tamil People's Security Front (TPSF) are militant groups that operate in secrecy. Posters of the Tamil Eelam Commandos (TEC) calling for members, was put up in Vavuniya in 1983.

The Tamil Eelam National Army (TENA), gained recognition and in 1983 one of the wing organisations from members of the Tamil Youth Front (TYF) started that. The Tamil Eelam Liberation Extremists (TELE) also figure in the list of militant groups. The Tamil Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (TERO) disintegrated into a splinter group - TELO headed by Sudan Ramesh. The Tamil Eelam Revolutionary People's Liberation Army (TERPLA), also known as the Thangarasa group was involved in attacking the Chavakachcheri Police Station on September twenty first, 1984. The Three Stars (TS) and Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF) are two groups comprising mostly members of TELO, EPRLF and PLOTE.

In September 1984 there were several active groups. It is claimed that the Tamil Eelam Liberation Guerrillas (TELG) sent a hand-written poster to the Sri Lankan Inspector General of Police (IGP). A propaganda book supporting the cause was issued by the National Liberation Front of Tamil Eelam (NLFTE). The Ilankai Freedom Tamil Army (IFTA), which issued a booklet calling for assistance and finding
for an independent state, was widely distributed in Colombo. The Solidarity Revolutionary Social Revolution (SRSL) too put up posters.

The Red Crescent Guerrillas (RCG) called for Muslim assistance in Kalmunai. The Eagle Movement (EM) leader was Gnanavel who was also known as ‘Blaker’ in Batticaloa. Tamil Eelam Eagles Front (TEEF) was mostly operational in Point-Pedero.

4.9 GROWTH OF SRI LANKAN TAMIL MILITANCY IN INDIA

Tamil militants from Sri Lanka used the Indian soil for training camps and other facilities. The militants, particularly the TELO were trained in the use of modern arms in the camps organised in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, New Delhi and elsewhere. Later on other groups also used these facilities in India. This was a matter of great concern to the Government of India. The former DGP of Tamil Nadu Mohandas had mentioned in his book "MGR - Man and the Myth" that he had written letters to the Directors of Intelligence Bureau (IB) and to the Research And Analysis Wing (RAW) but there was no response. He also mentioned the relationship between the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu M.G. Ramachandran and Prabhakaran, the LTTE supremo.

The militant activities of the Tamils in Tamil Nadu, were carried out in various places. The following incidents took place before the Indo-Sri Lanka accord:

i) Rivalries between Prabhakaran of LTTE and EPRLF leader
Uma Maheswaran on May nineteenth, 1982 in Madras (Thyagaraya Nagar);

ii) Nearly thirty people were killed on second, August 1984, during the Meenambakkam Air port explosion (Madras);

iii) Clash between local residents and armed militants at Vedaranyam in December 1985;

iv) Shooting incident at Saligramam (Madras) in May 1985 and


These activities served as evidence to the Government of India, that Tamil Nadu was allowing armed activities on Indian soil.

The Tamil militant's not only received military training, but also received financial help. The leader of the main opposition party in Tamil Nadu, DMK launched a fund- raising drive for the benefit of Sri Lankan militant groups. A sum of rupees two lakhs and seventy five thousand was collected on the birthday celebrations of Karunanidhi in Kalaivanar Arangam, on third June 1986, at Madras. A sum of rupees twenty five thousand was given to the bereaved family of Sri Sabarathinam of TELO, who had been gunned down by the LTTE, during the clash between the two groups from April twenty nineth to May first, 1986. A sum of rupees fifty thousand was given to each group namely TELO, PLOTE, EPRLF, EROS and LTTE. But LTTE refused this
So Karunanidhi announced that its share would also be given to the TELO. However, the LTTE had good relations with Gopalsamy, DMK party Member of Parliament who visited Jaffna, without the approval of the Government of India, subsequent to the IPKF operations. The issue is still under controversy.

The former DGP of Tamil Nadu Mohandas had claimed the existence of thirty militant camps situated in Madras city and in adjoining districts. This was confirmed in a paper presented by Marks at the second bi-annual conference of the American Federation of Sri Lanka Association held at Los Angeles. In his paper, Marks pointed out that:

"New Delhi's, equivalent of the CIA, the Research Analysis Wing (RAW), took the lead in this effort, assisted by the National Intelligence Bureau (NIB) and various para-military forces. Later, as the national government attempted to distance itself from the insurgents, Tamil Nadu itself greatly increased its financial and material supports. At this juncture New Delhi turned a blind eye to these activities."

India, while accepting the fact that there were Tamil refugees in India from Sri Lanka, denied the existence of militant camps on Indian soil. However, in March 1984, "India Today", a news magazine
published from New Delhi, highlighted the presence of activities of the Tamil militants in Tamil Nadu. The report said, that the Tamil guerrillas had set up training camps along coastal Tamil Nadu. The government of Sri Lanka accused Indian Intelligence Agencies of providing information to the tourist groups and of providing them with arms and ammunition. They declared that it was the greatest obstacle to the peace process in Sri Lanka.

4.9.1 Operation Tigers

The Indian government's denied of the existence of militant camps and their activities in India was proved during the South Asian Association of Regional Co-Operation (SAARC) summit in November 1986 at Bangalore (India). The Government of Tamil Nadu ordered the disarming of the Tamil militants in India. On eighth November 1986 "Operation Tiger" was carried out by the Tamil Nadu Police. In the operation approximately one thousand Tamil militants were disarmed, in a short span of four hours and temporarily taken into police custody.

In Colombo, the press reported the seizure of over five thousand AK 47 assault rifles, surface to air missiles, UZi machine guns, rocket launchers, rocket propelled grenades, land mines, anti-tank guns, RPG7's, G3's etc., along with their ammunitions. Their total worth, according to reliable militant sources, is over rupees forty crores (approximately rupees one hundred and twenty crores in the present international market value).
In 'Operation Tiger', there was confiscation of a large amount of radio equipment from Tamil militants based in and around Madras. The following morning, Prabhakaran went on a fast, in protest against police action of November twenty third, 1986. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu M.G.Ramachandran promptly ordered the return of not only the communication equipment but also the arms and ammunition recovered at the time of Operation Tiger.

4.9.2 Financial Aid

The Tamil Nadu Government generally had a soft-corner for Tamil Militants. On second May, 1987, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu M.G.Ramachandran announced in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, the allocation of rupees forty million (then, about US $ 3.2 million), to the Tamils in Sri Lanka, to be used for food, clothing and medicine. But he gave it to Sri Lankan Tamils in Tamil Nadu, to be distributed in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan Government announced that the offer was a violation of Sri Lankan sovereignty and integrity.

The attitude of the Indian Government towards the Tamil Militants of Sri Lanka was determined by political pressure from Tamil Nadu. During her time Mrs.Gandhi faced agitations in Punjab and Assam. In the 1983 parliamentary election the Tamil Nadu political opinion had become increasingly important to New Delhi. As one writer pointed out, MGR became vitally important to Mrs.Gandhi. So, Mrs.Gandhi ordered a separate programme, quite apart from the training of Tamil guerrillas, to be conducted in major rural and Urban
areas of Tamil Nadu. The program comprised exhibitions and video shows whereby, propaganda was disseminated to the people. The militants would hitherto collect not only funds, and food items, but also get sympathy from the people of Tamil Nadu.21

4.10 STRENGTH AND CASTE

The five main Tamil groups’ strength were: LTTE (7,500), TELO (3,000) EPRLF (1,500), EROS (500) and PLOTE (300). As far as military strength, the LTTE dominates, the actual strength of Tamil militants are not known. They are unwilling to reveal the actual strength of each group. It was measured approximately by O’Ballance. Rajiv Gandhi said that LTTE consisted of only three thousand boys.

The Tamil Militant groups which came up in the 1970-87 period were formed along traditional caste and kinship lines. The TELO consisted of middle-level castes such as the Kaikolar (weaver), Karayar (fisherman) and Nalevan (Toddy Tappers). The EPRLF consisted mainly of lower castes such as Pallan (untouchable agricultural labour caste), Chakkiliyar (untouchable leather workers) and Nalavan. The PLOTE was dominated by Vellalas, and the LTTE consisted mainly of Vellalas and Karayars. However, the Vellalas dominated the leadership of the Tamil militant organisations. Many of the militant leaders such as Sivakumaran, Sathyaseelan, Kasianandan, Santatian, Uma maheswaran, Sundaram Rathinasabathy, Keetheswaran, Balakumar, Yogi, Dileepan, Rahim, Ravi and Sri are all vellalas.
4.11 TAMIL INSURGENT RIVALRIES

The struggle for survived and supremacy led the Tamil Militants to squable between themselves. They tried to show their efficiency through exchange of fire and attempted to eliminate the other groups from the island. The LTTE too, attacked other militant groups such as PLOTE. There was a shoot-out in Madras (Pondy Bazzar) on May 1982, when Tamil Tigers were arrested by the police in the act of trying to kill Uma Maheswaran, PLOTE's leader, who, before defected from the LTTE, had been Prabhakaran’s right-hand man. And also on May nineteenth, 1982, LTTE members attempted to kidnap Jotheswaran, the PLOTE military commander who suffered gunshot wounds during the incident.

4.11.1 Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam Vs Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation

PLOTE had suspended operation on October thirtieth, 1986 after a clash with LTTE. The Tigers were said to have crippled in second largest of the guerrilla fighting force in Sri Lanka from April twenty nineth to May second, 1986. After the PLOTE military wing was subdued, careful plans were made by LTTE against TELO. The main action was based in and around Jaffna. Before fighting with TELO, LTTE had frequently accused the TELO of poor discipline and of taking advantage of the separatist struggle, for criminal activity. On May sixth, 1986, when LTTE guerrillas attacked and destroyed twenty two TELO camps, one hundred to three hundred guerrillas were reportedly killed during the fighting,
among them Mohan and Sri Sabarathnam, the TELO leader\textsuperscript{26}. The LTTE obtained large stocks of TELO arms and ammunition, and on searching the sixteen TELO bases, the LTTE found quantities of goods suspected to have been stolen, including cars, motor-cycles, televisions, radio's, household gadgets, jewelry and other items. These were displayed to the public who were invited to come forward to identify and claim items they had lost.

The Tamil Tigers then demanded that all Tamil insurgents immediately join forces with the LTTE. Notices to this effect appeared in Jaffna and the order was repeated in Madras\textsuperscript{27}. EROS, which was in liaison with LTTE, seemed to be excluded, but the EPRLF was not. However EPRLF members in Jaffna disappeared underground.

\textbf{4.11.2 Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam Vs Eelam People's Revolution Liberation Front}

On December thirteenth, 1986, the LTTE launched a full-scale offensive throughout the Northern and Eastern Provinces against the largest and most hard-line of the rebel EPRLF forces. There were reports that one clash resulted in the death of seventeen EPRLF personal. More than two hundred EPRLF members were captured by the LTTE during the offensive. More than fifty separatists of varying affiliations were killed in related skirmishes.

A report published in the Guardian (London) on fifteenth December 1986 stated that casualties had been sustained by the EPRLF
organisation's civilian wing and that the military wing remained largely intact. Krishnakumar alias Kittu, the LTTE commander for the Jaffna region, said in an interview published in the Hindu on twentieth December 1986, that these actions had been necessitated by the "lawlessness, atrocities and antisocial nature of the EPRLF".

The enmity between the various militant groups was nothing new. Many of them published periodical bulletins, with the ostensible purpose of propagating their perspective of Eelam - the separate Tamil state. But end of 1986 only LTTE dominated the Northern Province.

Since 1983, Government of Tamil Nadu and public opinion have greatly influenced New Delhi, in shaping its relationship with Sri Lanka, over the Tamil problem. The reasons for that are well knowing. Tamil Nadu has close cultural, religious and ethnic ties with the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The Tamil Nadu Government offered refuge to nearly 1,50,000 Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka. The refugees comprise Tamil population from the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka. The refugees fled the country during the violence between Tamil Militants and Sri Lankan armed forces. The Congress(I) Government depended on the ruling AIADMK party in Tamil Nadu and its leader M.G.Ramachandran for electoral and political support and hence the Indian Government was more concerned with the geopolitical fallout of the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka. The need to prevent foreign involvement and security considerations weighed very heavily with it.
India's stance took into consideration not only Tamil Nadu politics but also that of neighbouring countries. The Pakistan-Sri Lanka relationship was commonly determined by the need to counter Indian domination in the region. China, South Africa, Singapore and Malaysia are other countries which supplied arms to Sri Lanka. Thus, while the reluctance of the United States and Britain to get involved in Sri Lanka's conflict was a positive gain for Indian diplomacy, the interference of other powers, Pakistan and Israel in particular, caused some security concern in India. The political situation, internal and external, was utilised by the Tamil Militants for their needs.

Tamil Militants were not only getting training with the support of the Government of India but also getting funds from political parties and the Government of Tamil Nadu. However, the militants were not utilising the funds properly. They were fighting each other in Tamil Nadu and in Sri Lanka (Jaffna), to show their strength. There were personality clashes between leaders. There rivalries created a bad impression about Tamil Militants among the people of Tamil Nadu. Despite this, LTTE has political support from parties such as DMK and from personalities such as Nedumaran (Tamil Desiya Iyakkam). They continued to support the militants in their fight for Eelam, even after the latter was banned by the Government of India subsequent to the assassination of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi in Madras.

Among the major separatist groups of Tamil Militants, LTTE,
EPRLF, EROS, TELO and PLOTE, LTTE was successful in gaining a hold, and still continues to be a dominant force in the Tamil area. It has persisted even after the IPKF operations, and successfully continues to fight against the Sri Lankan armed forces.

The LTTE made its single minded objective very clear in an ‘open letter’ dated April eleventh, 1989 to President Premadasa as follows:

"Mahatma Gandhi’s India and Buddhist Sri Lanka are seeking “shanti” (peace) by oppressing the Tamil people. But this the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam will not permit. Until the apperceive Indian army leaves our land, there will be no such thing as a cease fire. And after they leave, you will come to recognise that in the island of Ceylon there are two nations. And after that we need neither war nor ceasefire”.

The LTTE is one of the most powerful Militant groups that has managed to build up powerful grassroots support and loyalty among the population. There are two reasons that sustain the ideology and organisation of LTTE. All other militant groups lack democratic support and dynamic leadership and thereby have lost the ground in Sri Lanka. Till today the LTTE functions unitedly under the leadership of Prabhakaran, primarily due to his charisma and for his powerful leadership qualities.