

TAMILS IN INDEPENDENT CEYLON



SUPPIRAMANIAM MAKENTHIRAN

TAMILS IN INDEPENDENT CEYLON

A history of Tamil struggle for survival



By

SUPPIRAMANIAM MAKENTHIRAN

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Author: S.Makenthiran
5292 Naskapi Court
Mississauga
Ontario L5R 2P3
Canada



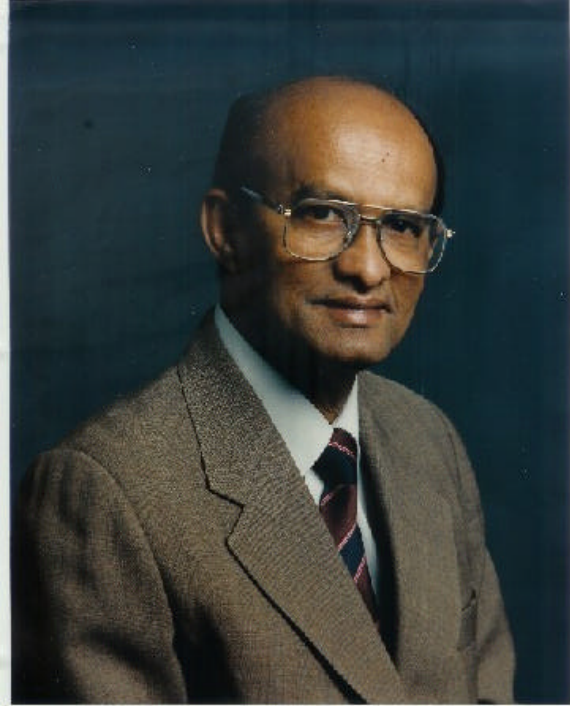
Dedicated to my grandchildren
Saskia Nishkala and Raja Shravan



*A Traditional Tamil Bharatha Natyam Dance
At an Arangetram in Australia*

Arangetram is an ancient custom of the Tamils, meaning 'ascending the stage to establish a dancer's credentials'. Bharatha natyam is said to be the oldest form of dance existing in modern age, originating over 4,000 years ago. After the genocide of 1983, the Sri Lankan Tamils dispersed

all over the world, carrying with them their rich culture, heritage, and customs.



S. Makenthiran is a graduate of the University of Ceylon, Colombo and a Fellow of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants of UK. He served in Ceylon and Africa, and retired as a World Bank Project Finance Officer.

In this book he has traced the struggle of the Tamils from the time Ceylon became independent to the present time. It starts with the non-violent satyagraha led by the Upcountry Tamil leader Thondaman and then by the Northeast Tamil leader Chelvanayagam. After thirty years of futile non-violent

agitation, it culminates in the armed resistance by Tamil militants

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The Last Tamil King of Vanni (1777 – 1811)

PREFACE

Living in retirement, I thought that it would be a good idea to record my impression of our people's history during my life time. Though I am an accountant by profession, history has been my passion. I believe Tamils, particularly the younger generation will be interested in their roots and our kith and kin, whom we have left behind in mother Eelam.

This book is a revised version of the series of articles I wrote for Ceylon Times. I am narrating the history of Tamils in independent Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), including the Upcountry Tamils who arrived in the 19th century, and are ethnically same. I am also including the Tamil speaking Muslims, as they speak the same language and are therefor, strongly bound to the Tamils, but are culturally different and follow a different religion. As far as the Tamil Christians (Catholics and Protestants) are concerned, they are no different from Hindu Tamils, except that they follow Christian religion.

The history of Lanka has been distorted and many facts suppressed by interested parties. I have written using my knowledge and experience, and the information from the meagre sources available to me. I have briefly touched on the history of Ceylon Tamils from the time Lanka was connected to India by land, and the Great Tamil Hindu King Ravanaan, who ruled over all Lanka thousands of years ago. I have covered the struggle of the Tamils after independence up to the cease-fire and peace talks.

S. Makenthiran
Mississauga
Canada

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CHAPTER 1

CEYLON INDEPENDENCE

The dawn of independence

On February 04, 1948, the year following the independence of India, Ceylon (or Sri Lanka as it was renamed in 1972), was granted independence. It was a British colony under a Governor representing the British Crown. The country enjoyed a peaceful transfer of power by the British to the Ceylonese. In India, on the contrary, there was immense bloodshed before independence, and much worse followed after independence and partition of India.

Under the Soulbury constitution based on the British system of government, power in Ceylon was vested in a democratically elected Parliament with a Lower House (House of Representatives) and Upper House (Senate). The Lower House was elected by universal franchise and majority rule prevailed. Consequently, the Sinhalese dominated the government.

At the time of Independence, presumably there was a population of about 8 millions, of which roughly the Sinhalese constituted 66% ,Tamils 26%, Muslims 7% and the balance all other communities of which Burghers descended from Portuguese and Dutch were prominent. The Tamils were of two categories; the indigenous Northeast Tamils who inhabited Ceylon from times immemorial and Upcountry Tamils. The latter were brought by the British into the country from Tamil Nadu from mid-nineteenth

century to work on tea, rubber and coffee estates in Central Ceylon. Each of the two categories of Tamils numbered over one million.

The main religions were Buddhism of the Sinhalese, Hinduism of the Tamils, Islam of the Muslims and Christianity. About 8 % of the people were Christians. They were the converted Sinhalese and Tamils along with Portuguese and Dutch Burghers. Christians are divided into Catholics and Protestants. The Portuguese were Catholics while the Dutch and British were Protestants. Hence they converted the people to their respective religions.

After the independence, as the Sinhalese were in a clear majority, in effect, power passed to them. The Tamils and Muslims accepted the situation and there was peaceful transfer of power. The Tamils were happy to be part of Ceylon. The Northeast Tamils were economically dependent on the South for employment and trade, and had no desire to separate. There was a distinct Ceylonese identity as a result of the Britishers unifying the administration of the island. Ceylon was an island paradise when it became independent.

Paradise gained and lost

In 1948, Ceylon was prosperous with a favourable economy. The main source of income was from tea, rubber and coconut. Paddy, our staple food was widely cultivated. People were contented whether rich or poor. The different communities lived in remarkable amity. Having lived much of my young days in the Sinhala South, it is a pleasure to recall the pleasant atmosphere that prevailed in pre-independent Ceylon. The uncorrupted Sinhala villager, their openness and friendliness, the rustic charm of the damsels and the serene village settings, brings back happy memories of my youth.

As the son of a railwayman, and later as an undergraduate and an officer in a para statal organization, I had the opportunity to see the length and breadth of Ceylon. Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher students studied together in North, South, East and West. Many Sinhalese, Muslim and Burgher students came to study in Jaffna. I can remember the Sinhalese bakeries in Jaffna town, and Muslim and Chinese hawkers going round villages in Jaffna selling their wares. Except for petty personal quarrels, there was perfect racial amity. Little did we realise that the country would go through the racial turmoil and blood bath after independence.

Jaffna, the heartland of the Tamils, is a comparatively arid zone bereft of rivers and natural resources. Their only asset was their intelligence and hard work. The Jaffna Tamils had the benefit of the English missionary schools and dedicated teachers. They advanced in English education, and Tamil parents encouraged their children to pursue studies. Consequently they held good positions in the government and private sector. They also fanned out into the Sinhala villages in the South and established shops all over. By sheer hard work and enterprise, the Jaffna Tamils had secured for themselves a coveted position in the country.

Under the British, those sections of the population that had opportunities and were prepared to work hard progressed without discrimination. To the foreign rulers, all were the same and their only criteria was efficiency. While they did consider themselves the rulers, they showed no distinction between the ruled. None of the communities were hostile to the British. Any impressions created later by self-seeking Sinhalese politicians that the British favoured the Tamils, is totally unfounded and malicious. If the allegation was true they would not have transferred unfettered power to the

Sinhalese when granting independence, without any safeguards for the minorities.

Ceylon was economically stable at the time of independence. All communities were enjoying the benefits of peace and prosperity. Employment was easy. Jobs were seeking the youth even before the results of examinations. Both after my degree and accountancy finals, jobs were for the asking before the results were out. Men at the top who were recruiting candidates for employment had no racial bias.

I recall with gratitude, how I was recruited after completing my Articles, for my first job as an accountant out of 25 candidates by two Sinhalese directors, who did not know me previously. Things changed gradually after independence and the racial venom was poisoning the country. The older generation of top rung Ceylonese were getting replaced by those who were blurred by racism. After Sinhala Only Act, the places of employment for Tamils became a nightmare. Children were separated into Sinhalese and Tamil streams and standardisation discriminated against the Tamil students. Sinhalese started to openly abuse the Tamils. The Tamils became second class citizens in the land of their birth. Legal discrimination and mob violence by the Sinhalese made life impossible for the Tamils. Ultimately it was a case of Paradise lost, probably for ever.

Ceylon Tamils, the original inhabitants

The earliest information about Ceylon (or Lanka as known earlier) are from the Indian epics, Ramayanam and Mahabharatam. These epics refer to the great Tamil Dravidian King Ravana, a devout Hindu who ruled Lanka, more than five thousand years ago. The Buddhist chronicles, Mahavamsa written in 6th Century A.D., and the later Suluvamsa, give information about Ceylon history from 6th century B.C. All these contain some impossible stories, but

contain some useful information about the early inhabitants of Ceylon and their culture and civilisation.

Commonsense dictates that Tamils were the original inhabitants of Sri Lanka . There are at present, three ethnic groups in Sri Lanka - Sinhalese , Tamils, and Muslims. Of these, Islam was founded in Arabia in the 7th Century A.D., and the arrival of Muslims in Sri Lanka commenced later in the 8th century A.D. According to Mahavamsa, the Sinhala chronicle, the Sinhalese race originated in Lanka after the arrival by sea of Prince Vijaya and 600 men companions from North East India in the 6th Century B.C. As they misbehaved, they were banished from the kingdom by Vijaya's father, who was the king, and drifted to Ceylon. There were no women among them, and so they married the local Tamil women including the Yaksha queen Kuveni, to form the Sinhala race. It is obvious, that at the time of the arrival of Vijaya, Sri Lanka could have only been inhabited by Tamils.

From the ancient Indian epics, and other sources, there is information that Tamils were in Sri Lanka, then called Lanka, from pre-historic times. Some of them were known as Yakkas and Nagas, a cultured and civilised people. The Tamils followed the Hindu religion and were in Lanka long before Sinhalese arrived, when India and Lanka was one mass of connected land. Many thousands of years ago, obviously Ceylon was geographically part of the Indian mainland and the sea separated it by gradual erosion. While the main portion of the Tamil population remained in South India, the Tamils then living on the land cut off by the eroding sea, were left behind in Lanka.

This is not to say that Tamils did not come from South India and settle down or go there subsequently. There would no doubt have been constant interaction between India and Ceylon and flow of people between the two countries from

time immemorial, before and after the arrival of Vijaya. India and Ceylon are only a few miles apart, and fishermen from either side would have seen the other lands and people and settled on either side and intermarried.

Not much information is available about the ancient Tamils of Lanka, who lived before the period of the Tamil Hindu King Ravanaan, five thousand years ago, though Tamil existence in Lanka goes far back beyond King Ravanaan. The arrival of Prince Vijaya and his men later in the 6th century B.C., was but one episode, and they found Tamils, with whom they intermarried.



Tamil Hindu King Ravanaan Queen Mandothari sends her son

***Lord of Lanka
to battle***

Prince Indrajithan

King Ravanaan, the first known Tamil king was a powerful ruler, and was also known as Lankeswaran or Lord of Lanka. His son, Crown Prince Indrajithan was a renowned warrior, and his wife was the virtuous Mandothari. Later on there were famous Tamil Kings like Ellalan the Just and Parakramabahu the Great under whom the country prospered. The mighty Tamil Chola kings of South India ruled over the whole of Ceylon during different periods. By a

twist of fate, the Tamils who were occupying all of Ceylon were overwhelmed and assimilated by the more aggressive Sinhalese. Gradually the Tamils were pushed into the Northeast, which now remains their embattled homeland. They are now fighting for their survival.

Immigrants to Ceylon

It can be assumed that Vijaya and his men who arrived from India in the 6th century B.C., and originated the Sinhala race were Hindus. However, Mahinda and Sanghamitta, the son and daughter of King Asoka of India brought Buddhism later, and profoundly influenced the country. The Sinhalese were converted to Buddhism during the reign of King Devanampiyatissa. The Sinhalese are not Aryans as claimed without any basis. They are a mixed ethnic group, largely Dravidians, speaking the Sinhala language, which developed later. Many South Indians who immigrated to Ceylon up to recent times were assimilated by the Sinhalese.

During the mid-nineteenth century, Tamils from South India were brought by the British to work on their estates in the hill country as they were hard working. They constituted a substantial community at the time of independence and were contributing greatly to the economy of the country. They were concentrated mostly in the Central, Uva and Sabaragamuwa provinces and lived under difficult conditions. They are wrongly referred to as Indian Tamils, as the Sinhalese who came from India are not called Indian Sinhalese. These Tamils who immigrated in the nineteenth century should be correctly called Upcountry Tamils.

The other large community, the Muslims were originally Arab traders who came to Ceylon and intermarried with local

women. They were mainly traders and are spread all over the island. Among the Muslims were some Javanese brought by the Britishers as soldiers. All of the Muslims speak the Tamil language at home and those living in Sinhala areas could speak both Tamil and Sinhala well. Presumably, many Muslims immigrated to Ceylon from South India.

The burghers were Eurasians of Portuguese and Dutch origin. They were westernised, well educated and living mostly in the towns. They did well in the professions and many of them served in the police force during British times. One of them, Duncan White, became a national hero when he won the silver medal for hurdles at the Olympics. After independence, most of the burghers in Ceylon, preferred to emigrate to Australia and other Western countries.



Nallur Temple, Jaffna

CHAPTER 2

CEYLON ON THE EVE OF COLONIALISM

Childhood recollections

It was June 1947, the year before independence. To me, it was living in the golden era of our beloved Ceylon. The island was peaceful and economically stable. It was described as a pearl in the Indian ocean. We were enjoying free health, free education, enough food, clothing, and shelter. The shortages resulting from the World War II were disappearing. I was a teen-ager entering the haloed precincts of the seat of learning, the only university in the country at that time. It was the University of Ceylon at Thurstan Road, Colombo, then at the height of glory and international recognition, due in no small measure to the Vice Chancellor Sir Ivor Jennings. He was an educationist and an authority on constitutional law.

I lived my early life in pre-independent Ceylon, as a school student in Jaffna and the South. My memories come back to me as I sit here as a retired accountant in Canada, living the past, having served in five countries. I have come a long way from the village in Jaffna, where I was born in 1928. Three quarter of a century ago, in a conservative village of Kurumpayiddy near Palali, I was born in a family whose ancestors were farmers. My father was the first in the line to break the tradition of farming and joined the Ceylon Government Railways. In the early twenties, when my father as a young man of 22 years, was selected to government service as a railwayman, it was considered an achievement in the village.

Many Tamils of my father's generation went for employment to Malaya and Singapore. Many of my generation went to Africa. Now Tamils are employed all

over the world. There is a saying in Tamil, ‘even if you have to cross the seas, go and acquire wealth’. This, the Tamils did.

The first two years I studied in Tamil in the village school. My father’s uncle was the dreaded headmaster. At the end of each year the school inspector came to test and pass students. They were given VIP treatment, and all of us were dressed up for the occasion. The next one year, I studied in a Tamil school in Bolawatte near Negombo, where my father was working as an Assistant Station Master. The teachers were all Catholic Tamils from the area. The head master was one Fernando and my class teacher’s name was George. These Tamil speaking Catholics have now become Sinhalese.

My father’s transfers took me to Zahira College , Colombo, the leading Muslim school, where I started my English education, and St. Andrews College, Nawalapitiya. Mr. T.B. Jaya, a Malay was Principal of Zahira College. He later became a Minister and also held a diplomatic post. I later settled down in the 5th Standard at St. John’s College Jaffna, from where I passed the university entrance examination. I have an idea of the tranquil life in the island at that time.

My recollection of early politics

Around 1938, as a child of 10 years, I attended a mass political meeting of Tamils in the Nawalapitiya grounds. The young and aspiring politician G.G.Ponnambalam made an eloquent and fiery speech in Tamil emphasising Tamil rights and probably balanced representation. His speech impressed the audience, and someone remarked that he would take the place of Sir P. Ramanathan as Tamil leader. I had heard of Sir P. Ramanathan as a leader from my father and teachers. He had passed away and was no longer in the scene. He had obtained the release from detention of D.S. Senanayake, D. B. Jayatilake and other Sinhalese leaders

after the Sinhala-Muslim riot of 1915. He went personally to London to plead their case with the British government.

I lived to see G.G., as Ponnambalam was popularly called, assume the leadership, but it ended later in an anti-climax. The mantle of Tamil leadership passed to the sagacious S.J.V. Chelvanayagam, who became endearingly referred to as the Father of the Tamil Nation. He founded the Federal Party, and on his death the leadership passed to his fiery lieutenant A. Amirthalingam. It is now history, and as well known, the armed militants led by the indomitable Velupillai Prabaharan emerged as the defenders of the beleaguered Tamils of Northeast.

As a child in the thirties I can remember two Tamil language newspapers. They were the daily Veerakesari and the weekly Eelakesari. 'Eelakesari' Ponniah who hailed from my ancestral village of Kurumpayiddy owned and edited Eelakesari weekly. He was the Village Committee Chairman.

Second World War recollections

I was 11 years old in 1939, when the Second World War broke out in Europe, with the invasion of Poland by Germany. Under a defence agreement with Poland, Britain and France declared war on Germany. The War had tremendous effect on Ceylon too. Young though I was, I followed the course of war closely till it was over in 1945. Italy and Japan joined Germany (Axis Powers), while Russia and USA became involved in the war on the other side (Allied Powers). Ultimately it ended with the defeat of the Axis powers by the Allies with the calamitous atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan by the Americans.

We were thrilled by the news of the Indian National Army formed by Subhas Chandra Bose and the non-violent struggle of the Indians under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership

against the British rule. Ceylon was loyal to the British. My father was a loyal subject of the King of England and willingly joined the Railway Military Service in the rank of Sergeant in uniform, after a short combat training. Ceylon was only bombed once by the Japanese in 1942, and there was pandemonium. There was an influx of Tamils from Colombo to Jaffna. There was serious shortages of food and other goods, and we had the first experience of rationing. We did suffer to some extent due to the World War.

I followed in detail the day to day progress of the war, the lightning advance by the highly mechanised German army into Western Europe. Then came the fatal mistake of Hitler when he attacked the vastland of Russia. German armies in millions advanced deep into Russia only to be bogged down in the Russian winter at the gates of Moscow. New recruits from Siberia inflicted devastating damage on the hapless Germans. The great war hero Marshal Zhukov took command of the Southern Sector, and at Stalingrad crushed the German army of 300,000, turning irretrievably the fortunes of war.

Fifty years later, I followed the exploits of the great military strategist of our times, Velupillai Prabaharan in the country of my birth. Like Zhukov in Stalingrad and Ho Chi Minh in Dien Bien Phu, the Supreme Commander of the Tamil Tigers, Prabaharan, turned the tide of Eelam war by completely destroying the mighty military machine of the Sri Lankan armed forces at Mullaitivu. I will later go into the details of the legendary exploits of the Tamil Tigers in the jungles of Vanni against the IPKF and later the SL armed forces in ‘Operation Unceasing Waves’.

Teen age recollections

When the university results were out in early 1947, it was a great occasion for us. We felt as if we were on top of the

world. I recall that from the whole island, only 232 were admitted to the Arts faculty that year.

Unlike now, life was leisurely. Relatives in our village would drop in casually at any time from morning till night. In the early thirties when I was a kid, an egg cost only 2 or 3 cts. If anyone in the family felt sick, we would have many visitors from our village. We had pure water from the wells. People used twigs from some trees to clean the teeth. All round the houses were palmyra groves. Theft and beggars were rare. In the early thirties, aeroplanes and policemen were rare sights in the village. Age attaining ceremony of girls would be well attended. One of my relatives would take me on the bicycle pillion to the village physician for treatment if I had a minor ailment. Going for a movie in the thirties from our village to the town was a whole day's family affair. We would go in a pre-arranged hiring car.

Recollections as an undergraduate

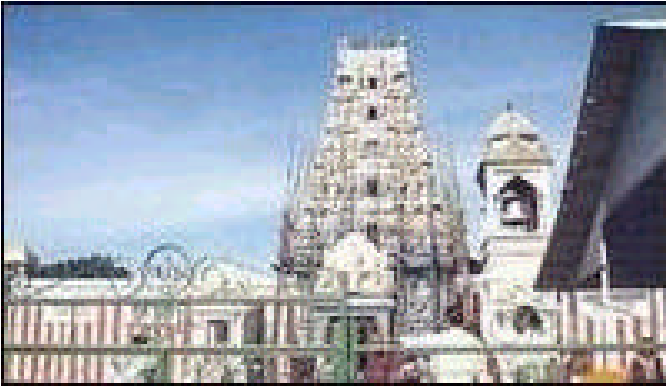
When I arrived in Colombo in 1947 to pursue my studies in the university, my living expenses cost only about Rs. 100 a month, and the university gave me a bursary of Rs. 20 a month. We had a Malayalee cook and about ten of us all Tamils, lived in a large house in what was referred to as 'chummary'. Some were officers and some students.

Colombo was quiet and peaceful. Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Madrasis, North Indians, Malayalees and Afghans were seen all over. Old open tram cars were shuttling in Colombo, the drivers slamming the loud bell with their feet. Buses and taxis owned privately were plying irregularly. I bought a second hand bicycle for Rs.100 from one of my brother-in-law's friends, and that was my transport for the four years at the university. Roads were not crowded or congested with traffic and therefore cycling was a pleasure. Colombo was clean.

There was some ragging, but not violent as it is now. The Late Amirthalingam was a senior and got into problems trying to prevent ragging. We got on well with students from all communities. We could not recognize who belonged to which community until we started conversing. The talk of Aryan and Dravidian division is fictitious.

Mr. K. Satchidananda (Chartered Accountant) started the accountancy course. Accountancy was a budding profession at that time and I jumped into the class eagerly. He was the son-in-law of the Tamil politician, Mr. C. Suntharalingam.

One day in February 1948, we heard that there was going to be an important announcement on the radio by the governor. Then came the announcement that Ceylon was being granted independence under the Soulbury Constitution. The complacent Tamils and their leaders never anticipated the tragedy that was to follow.



Thiruketheeswaram Temple, Mannar

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS UP TO INDEPENDENCE

Ceylon as a British colony

Ceylon was a British colony from 1795 to 1948 controlled from London through a Governor. The Governor was all powerful, exercising full political power and continued to be the government of the island till independence was granted in 1948. In 1815 the British had unified Ceylon by annexing the kingdom of Kandy. They defeated the last king of Kandy, Sri Wickrema Rajasinghe, a Tamil king who ruled over the Sinhalese kingdom.

The British ruled Ceylon for one and a half centuries. The Portuguese and Dutch had ruled Ceylon prior to that for one and a half centuries each. They had left their impressions on the land. The Portuguese arrived in Ceylon on 1505 and captured the Sinhalese kingdom of Kote and the coastal areas. After 115 years, in 1619, they defeated Sangilian the Tamil King of Jaffna, and annexed the Tamil kingdom. The Dutch who came in 1658 defeated the Portuguese, and ruled the maritime areas including Jaffna till 1795. The Tamil chiefs of Vanni were independent till Pandara Vanniyan, the last of them was defeated by the British in 1803. The kingdom of Kandy, however continued to be independent till the British annexed it in 1815.

The British followed a more liberal policy than their predecessors. The British Imperial authorities allowed some legislative powers for the Ceylonese under the overall authority of the British Governor. They were probably giving the Ceylonese some limited scope for learning democracy in practice. There was a nominated legislature

which evolved into an elected one with limited authority and responsible to the Governor.

In 1931 a new constitution was established in Ceylon on the recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission. Under the Donoughmore Constitution, internal self government was granted to the Ceylonese. A State Council was elected by universal suffrage to pass laws, and a Board of Ministers was formed to exercise executive functions. In 1936 elections were held for the second State Council.

Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan

In the beginning of twentieth century, the leader of the Ceylon Tamils was Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan. He was a British qualified Barrister and became a prominent politician. He was a member of the Legislature and Solicitor General. He was the founder of Ramanathan College for girls and Parameswara College for boys. His brother was Sir P. Arunachalam, another Tamil leader, whose son A. Mahadeva became a Minister under the Donoughmore Constitution. Sir P. Ramanathan's daughter married Mr. Subaiya Nadesapillai who became a member of the State Council and later the Parliament. He was also a minister for some time. A. Mahadeva's son, Balakumar Mahadeva who had a brilliant academic career, entered the Ceylon Civil Service, then a much respected and powerful service. I came into contact with him when I was a young accountant in the Ceylon Oils and Fats Corporation and he was appointed one of the Directors.

For a considerable period, this family played a prominent role in Ceylon politics. Sir P. Ramanathan came into greater prominence when he played an important role in the centre stage after the Sinhala-Muslim riots of 1915. During his lifetime, he stood tall among his countrymen.

G.G. Ponnambalam

After the demise of the Ramanathan and Arunachalam brothers, the Tamil leadership passed to G.G. Ponnambalam, a brilliant lawyer and orator. He was a powerful speaker in English and Tamil. He qualified as a barrister in England and when he returned to Ceylon, took to politics. He entered the legislature in 1930 and in 1944 inaugurated the All Ceylon Tamil Congress. He agitated for balanced representation (50/50) in Parliament, but was unsuccessful. He served as Minister of Industries after independence.

Sinhala-Muslim riot of 1915

Ceylon had its first experience of ethnic riot in 1915, when clashes broke out between the majority Sinhalese and the second large minority, the Muslims, whose mother tongue is Tamil. The Tamil community was unaffected in this riot. The riot which started in Kandy, spread all over the Sinhalese areas and caused concern to the British colonial authorities. The Muslims suffered at the hands of the majority Sinhalese.

According to the book written by Sir P. Ramanathan, trouble started in Kandy when a perahera crowd was passing along the Katugastota Road in the night. Some of the Sinhalese in the crowd had banged on the doors of a Muslim tailor. An old Muslim man had come out to see what was happening and he was assaulted by the Sinhalese hoodlums. The tailor, who was the son-in-law of the old man came out with a knife and stabbed two Sinhalese, one of whom died. This started the Sinhalese Muslim riots.

A rumour spread that the Muslims had attacked the Dalada Maligawa. The Sinhalese attacked Muslims all over Ceylon and the riot spreads. The First World War was raging and the worried British authorities declared martial law. They

brought down Punjabi policemen to quell the riot. The British commanders were in charge. The Punjabi policemen, mostly Muslims, did not know the Sinhalese or Tamil language spoken in Ceylon. A wealthy Sinhalese young man was arrested for looting. It was claimed that the Muslims had given him the properties for safe keeping during the riots. On the orders of the British commanding officer, the young Sinhalese man was shot dead by the Punjabi policemen. During the martial law, probably the government over- reacted and excesses were committed.

Fearing a Sinhalese revolt, D.S. Senanayake, D.B. Jayatilleke and other Sinhalese leaders were arrested by the British government. Sir P. Ramanathan went to England and pleaded with the British government to release those arrested. He succeeded and those arrested were released. When Sir P. Ramanathan returned to Ceylon and arrived at the Colombo harbour, he was drawn in a carriage by the grateful Sinhalese leaders, whom he caused to be released.

Sinhalese prior to independence

Prior to independence, the Sinhalese, who were in the majority, were a peaceful community. Their leaders D.S. Senanayake, D.B. Jayatilleke and S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake, showed no anti-Tamil attitude. They recognized both Sinhala and Tamil as the official languages. The Sinhalese and Tamil communities got on well up to the time of independence. Many Tamils earned their livelihood among the Sinhalese people without any animosities. My maternal grandfather used to travel deep into the South on business. The Sinhalese were hospitable people and the villagers were innocent and peaceful. People travelling by road between Colombo and Kandy were always tempted to stop at Pasyala to buy cadju from the pretty girls dressed in cambayam. At another place, people stop to buy snacks made of gingelly products.

Muslims in Ceylon

Muslims are the second largest minority in Ceylon after the Tamils constituting about 7 % of the total population. The Muslims live in large numbers in Batticaloa (39%),

Trincomalee (33.1%), Puttalam (29 %), and Mannar (24.9%). They are also spread all over the island and speak Tamil language at home. In the Amparai District, they constitute a majority in the Kalmunai, Samanthurai and Pottuvil areas, with a substantial Tamil population in villages like Karaitivu, Thirukkovil, Komari, Malwatte and Thraineelavani. The Sinhalese were brought into the Northeast region as colonists by the Sinhalese dominated government after independence, and as a result the proportion of Tamils and Muslims have been reduced. The Muslims share the Northeast homeland with the Tamils and the language has a binding influence. They are only different in their religion.

The Muslims have emerged in independent Ceylon as a prosperous community. However, the Sinhalese nationalists are envious of their position and the Muslims will do well to be on their guard. At the time of independence the Macan Markar family was a well known and prosperous Muslim family. One of them was a Chartered Accountant, who graciously offered me work in his accounting firm, after my articles, till I found a permanent job.

The Upcountry Tamils

As an articled clerk, my principal accountant Mr. Begbie sent me out to tea, rubber and coconut estates for audit with senior clerks. I visited over twenty tea estates and saw for myself the appalling conditions in which the Tamil labourers lived. These hardworking people had lived in Ceylon from the middle of the 19th century, but survived under difficult conditions. They lived in labourers' lines, and families of ten and twelve lived in single rooms. Health and education facilities were of a low standard. They shared common water tap, toilets and bathed in the open. At the time of independence there were over one million Upcountry Tamils in Ceylon. The Upcountry (or Estate Tamils) were

condemned to perpetual hard life and poverty. The Ceylon government dominated by the Sinhalese, gave them step motherly treatment. There were just a few who were better off as clerks, teamakers, and head kanganyies.

The leader of the Upcountry Tamils was S. Thondaman, a successful planter with a large and successful extended family of planters. I became a close friend of his nephew (brother's son), Arumugam, who married Kamala, a daughter of our family friends.

S. Thondaman was the uncrowned king of the upcountry Tamils, and led them through all travails for half a century till his death a few years back. After his death the law of succession prevailed and his grandson Arumugam Thondaiman ascended the throne. P. Chandrasekeran, the leader of The Upcountry People's Front, also commands a following among Upcountry Tamils.

I had a chance to meet Mr. Thondaman in mid-sixties. He was not at that time holding any ministerial post. However, by then he was the undisputed leader of the Upcountry Tamils.. While driving to work I took a wrong turn and banged into his car damaging it. His driver was at the wheel. I went up and told Mr. Thondaman that I was a friend of his nephew and that I would pay the cost of the damage. He said it is okay, not to worry and drove away.

The Ceylon Tamils

At the time of independence in 1948, Tamils of Ceylon constituted 26 % of the population and numbering over 2 millions. There were equal number of Northeast (or Eelam) Tamils and Upcountry Tamils. After independence, the Sinhalese dominated government has reduced the number of Tamils by their racist policies, as will be discussed later. The depleted Tamils now form only 18 % of the Ceylon

population, of whom Northeast Tamils are 12.7 % and Upcountry Tamils 5.5%.

When Ceylon became independent, the Ceylon Tamils were a divided lot. The Tamils of Jaffna, Vanni, Mannar, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and the Upcountry were disunited and did not follow any effective policy. To add to this, the pernicious caste system was a blot on the Tamils and Sinhalese alike. The dominant castes were Vellalas among the Tamils and Goigama among the Sinhalese. They were farmers by tradition. The Tamil Vellalas failed to treat the others castes with due respect and there were occasional clashes. Now, with the civil war, it is all history, and as a result of it the Tamil society has been in the melting pot.

At the time Ceylon was granted independence, the Tamils were content to live with the Sinhalese in a united Ceylon. There was no talk of separation, federalism or confederalism. G.G. Ponnambalam agitated for 'balanced representation' or '50-50' as referred to by some. His argument was that there should be equal representation for the majority Sinhalese and all other minorities put together, to prevent dominance by the majority community. GG's demand was rejected. Under the Soulbury constitution, Ceylon was given a British type constitution based on majority rule. The only safeguard for the Tamil minority in the constitution was an ineffective clause 29(2), that no laws shall be passed that would place any community at a disadvantage. Ceylon became independent under a unitary constitution that was to prove to be a dismal disaster for the unsuspecting Tamils, who were cheated in the very year of independence.

CHAPTER 4

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The Sinhalese dominated UNP comes to power

When the British decided to grant independence to Ceylon, D.S. Senanayake, the Sinhalese leader of the State Council lulled the Tamils into a false sense of security, by promising that the minorities need not fear any harm from the Sinhala majority. The constitution was based on the recommendations by the Soulbury Commission. There were no safeguards for the minorities except an ineffective clause 29(2) forbidding enactment of any laws that would discriminate against any group of people.

In the first general elections held after independence in 1948, no single party secured a majority. The United National Party, dominated by the Sinhalese obtained the largest number of seats, but not a majority, in the Lower House, which wielded the power in the state with 101 members. The leftist parties (LSSP and CP), and a few independents also won seats. The All Ceylon Tamil Congress (Northeast Tamil Party) led by G.G. Ponnambalam, won most of the Northern seats and Trincomalee. The Tamil dominated electorates in the Upcountry were won by The Ceylon Indian Congress (Upcountry Tamil party) led by S. Thondaman. The Ceylon Indian Congress was later named Ceylon Workers Congress. There was an Upper House called the Senate with limited powers.

The Tamils and the Tamil speaking Muslims were content to live in a united Ceylon and there was no talk of separation or federalism. D.S. Senanayake, the leader of the UNP formed the government with some independent Tamil MPs. Mr. C. Suntharalingam was allocated the Ministry of Commerce and Mr. Sittambalam the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. Later G.G. Ponnambalam joined the government and was given the Ministry of Industries. Some Muslims too were given ministries.

The great betrayal of Upcountry Tamils

Then came the terrible betrayal of the Tamils by the Prime Minister D.S. Senanayake and the U.N.P. In the very year of independence, the Upcountry Tamils who numbered over a million and had won 8 seats in the Parliament were rendered stateless. In a blatant act of perfidy, D.S. Senanayake, passed the Ceylon Citizenship Act depriving citizenship to the Upcountry Tamils (over half the Tamil population) who had lived in Ceylon for many generations. It was followed in the next year by the Ceylon Elections Amendment Act depriving voting rights to those Estate Tamils who constituted about 13% of the population. As a result, in the next elections in 1952, not a single Tamil member was elected from the Upcountry, where half the Tamils in Ceylon lived.

This was the first blow to the Tamils and this was to be followed by other numerous serious acts of discrimination by the Sinhalese majority against the Tamils by successive governments creating a permanent division between the two communities. D.S. Senanayake who started this anti-Tamil policies can be called the father of Sinhala racism. The Tamils even in this time of peril failed to take a united action. To the dismay of the Tamils, G.G. Ponnambalam who posed as the champion of the Tamils and minorities, voted in support of these discriminatory acts against fellow Tamils to enable him to continue in the cabinet. The Plantation Tamils, who were already living in sub-human conditions, were left without any political voice.

Tamil agitation

The honour of the Tamils was partly salvaged by S.J.V. Chelvanayagam, who voted against those despicable Acts of discrimination and broke away from the Tamil Congress

Party of G.G. Ponnambalam. In 1949 S.J.V. Chelvanayagam formed the Federal Party to agitate for a federal constitution to safeguard the Tamil rights. He was the first Tamil leader to alert the Tamils to the dangers of unitarianism and Sinhalese hegemony. However, at that stage he only agitated for a federal form of government and did not ask for a separate state for the Tamil minority.

In a future article I shall write about this great and far sighted Tamil leader, who showed his orphaned Tamils people, a way to a promised land. When the Tamils realized his wisdom, they looked to him for leadership and guidance. He came to be endearingly called “Thanthai Chelva” or the Father of the Tamil Nation by a grateful Tamil nation. Thus the mantle of Northeast (or Eelam) Tamil leadership passed from Sir P. Ramanathan, to G.G. Ponnambalam and then to S.J.V. Chelvanayagam. After the latter’s death it passed to A. Amirthalinagam and now it rests on the shoulders of V. Prabakaran. The Upcountry Tamils were led through thick and thin by their uncrowned king, S. Thondaiman for half a century till his death. Before he died, he had won some respectability for his helpless and despised community. Now his grandson Arumugam Thondaiman and P. Chandrasekaran lead the beleaguered people.

By a twist of fortune my wife’s uncle, Acting Chief Justice C. Nagalingam, brother of C. Suntharalingam acted as the first Ceylonese Governor General in 1954. I presume that as he was a Tamil, he was replaced as Governor General by Sir Oliver Goonatilake to succeed Lord Soulbury.

The Upcountry Tamil leader S. Thondaiman, and their party Ceylon Workers Congress carried on a hopeless and ineffective Satyagraha against the unjust laws. It was our misfortune that the Tamils failed to unite at this desperate hour for the Upcountry Tamils, who were suffering under the Sinhalese government and thugs. Having seen the conditions

in which these poor Tamils lived in Ceylon's hill country and how the Tamils lived in Apartheid South Africa, I can say that the Tamils in Ceylon estates were treated very much worse. The Tamils in Apartheid South Africa were also denied political rights, but they were economically prosperous and much better off than the Estate Tamils of Ceylon's Hill Country

Sinhala colonization of Tamil homeland

In pursuance of his racist policies, D.S. Senanayake launched massive colonization of the traditional Tamil homeland of the Northern and Eastern provinces with Sinhalese from the South. He planted undesirable Sinhalese ex-convicts and thugs in Gal Oya, Allai, Kantalai, Pavatkulam and other places squeezing the Tamils out of their lands in an effort to deprive them of their homeland. These Sinhala interlopers in 1956 and later years were attacking and killing Tamils in their own homeland of Northeast, driving them out of their villages and committing atrocities.

Sinhala Only Act

After D.S. Senanayake died, his son Dudley Senanayake became Prime Minister. In 1953, he resigned over a general strike and was succeeded by Sir John Kotelawala. S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake who broke away from the UNP in 1951 and formed the SLFP, started an agitation for Sinhala only as the official language. Hitherto both Sinhala and Tamil were recognized as official languages. The clamour for Sinhala only, became virulent among the middle and lower class Sinhalese. The Buddhist priests, Sinhala vernacular teachers, Sinhala ayurvedic physicians and the Sinhalese not educated in English, seized the opportunity to climb the economic and social ladder. The Tamils were aghast at the developments. They highly valued both the Tamil and English languages. In 1956 Bandaranayake won a landslide victory in

Parliamentary elections on the ‘Sinhala only in 24 hours’ cry and enacted the Sinhala Only Act.

The Sinhala Only Act made the division between Sinhalese and Tamils irreversible. Only the leftist among the Sinhalese spoke up for parity of the two languages. Colvin R. De Silva, the Sama Samajist leader made the prophetic remark in Parliament “one language two nations; two languages one nation”. Unfortunately even the Sinhala left parties eventually succumbed to the Sinhala only bug. There was discrimination against the Tamils in government offices and the increments of Tamil officers were stopped till they passed Sinhala proficiency tests. There was worry on the face of every Tamil.

Sinhala violence against the Tamils in 1956

When the Tamil leaders under the leadership of S.J.V. Chelvanayagam staged a peaceful and non-violent demonstration (Satyagraha) against the infamous Sinhala Only Act, organized bands of Sinhalese mobs attacked them injuring many. At the same time, the Sinhala thugs who had been planted in the Northeast attacked innocent Tamils and the situation was serious in the Gal Oya Valley. The criminals were being transported in government vehicles to riot and kill Tamils. Women were raped and molested. The Tamils had to flee from Gal Oya and adjoining villages and there was no help from the police. The riots stopped when some Tamil villagers retaliated against the marauding Sinhalese thugs using guerilla tactics. I heard that the Sinhala thugs met with their waterloo at the Tamil village of Thuraineelavani. If D.S. Senanayake started Sinhala state terror against the Tamils in 1948, the Sinhala mob terrorism started in 1956.

The Bandaranayake-Chelvanayagam Pact dishonoured

In 1957 the Bandaranayake-Chelvanayagam Pact was signed to devolve power through Regional Councils due to the efforts of Thanthai Chelva to solve the Tamil problem. J.R. Jayawardena leading the UNP, marched to Kandy protesting against the pact. Next year Bandaranayake abrogated the pact under pressure from the Sinhalese extremists and Buddhist priests. The Tamils were again cheated, disappointed and deeply frustrated. Sinhala extremism was on the rise and Tamils were openly abused by the Sinhalese as 'para Damalo', 'kallathonis' etc., and asked to get out of the Sinhala South. Life was becoming intolerable for the Tamils in Sinhalese areas.

Sinhalese massacre Tamils in 1958

To add to the bitterness of the Tamils, in 1958 anti-Tamil riots by Sinhalese hoodlums was organized by the racist elements, with the connivance of the Bandaranayake government all over the Sinhalese provinces. The loss of Tamil lives and property was extremely heavy. Tamil women were raped and tortured in different parts of the country. Velupillai Prabaharan, (who later became the leader of armed resistance), is said to have seen as a child of four, his uncle burnt alive. The Sinhalese mobs were moving all over wantonly killing Tamils and destroying Tamil property. I myself saw the Tamil victims in the Colombo refugee camps located in Captains Gardens and Royal College. The refugees, particularly women and children suffered terribly in the camps due to shortage of food and lack of facilities. Over 100,000 Tamils refugees evacuated to their homelands in the Northeast for safety. Many were transported by ship due to the danger of attack by the Sinhalese mobs on the way.

My brother and I were both single, living in a small flat in Dematagoda. We were tensed up and were planning to get lost in the crowd if attacked in the night. There was next

door, a tough young visitor Rajadurai who was visiting his sister. He was an Irrigation officer used to life in remote areas and had his gun. He had come with his wife and children and decided to open fire in defense if attacked. Luckily our lane was spared purely by chance.

One depressing fact was that the passive Tamils never retaliated and the cowardly Sinhalese thugs took advantage of it. In one rare instance, the Tamils in Ratmalana had taken refuge in a large house belonging to a Tamil judge for their safety. This incident was told to me by my Head Clerk Mr. Karunanithy, who was among them. When the Sinhalese mob attacked the house, the son of the judge, a young student had a gun and opened fire killing some. The Tamil refugees held out till they were ultimately rescued by the police and taken to a refugee camp.

The Chairman of our Corporation driving down from Matara to Colombo saw bodies of Tamils burnt on the road. A Hindu priest of Panadura was burnt alive at the temple. Many years later, the law of karma took its toll. The criminal who organized the murder was soaked in petrol by a rival gang and set on fire to die a horrible death. 'God moves in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform'. It is not correct to call it a Sinhalese-Tamil riot. It was a one-sided massacre of the helpless Tamils by the Sinhalese Budhists.

My brother-in-law was the Divisional Irrigation Engineer in Polonnaruwa and was trapped in the riots. Fortunately he was alone as my sister and children had gone to Jaffna at that time. He and his staff and about twenty five Tamils were evacuated by the police to Batticaloa. They were transported in vans and the armed Sinhalese gangs were attacking the vans with iron rods. The police prevented killings and dropped them in the Tamil area. From there the refugees reached Jaffna by boat. My brother-in-law lost everything except the clothes he was wearing. All his belongings were

looted or burnt by the Sinhalese, including his juniors. However, an honest junior Sinhalese employee later packed and transported to Jaffna the heavy furniture that remained after the loot. This is similar to what happened to many Tamils during that rioting by the Sinhalese.

In the East, the Sinhalese criminals who had been settled by the government, attacked and killed Tamils. In one place the Tamils hid among the sugar cane plants to escape the Sinhalese. The criminals set fire to the whole plantation and the helpless Tamil men, women and children were burnt to death.

In the North, it was the same story. The Sinhalese criminals settled or employed in the Northeast went about attacking the Tamil villages, and finally were planning to attack the Vavuniya town. Desperate Tamil villagers brought the terrifying news to the Vavuniya MP Suntharalingam. Tamil farmers doing chena cultivation had shot guns for protection from wild animals. They waited in the forest for the criminals on top of huge trees. When the Sinhalese gangs arrived in large numbers in government vehicles, the Tamils opened fire from the trees injuring some. The Sinhala 'veerayas' fled to the police station and begged the police to escort them up to the Sinhalese border town of Madawachi.

One of my brothers was a young Assistant Superintendent of Police in Kandy at that time, having joined the Ceylon Police in 1956. He was worried about the safety of my brother and me and drove through the riot torn areas with a police driver to Colombo to see whether we were safe. Having checked up he returned to Kandy.

We heard a shocking story about two Sinhalese officers fleeing the violence from Amparai to Colombo in a car. On the way they were stopped by a Sinhalese mob and ordered to recite the pirith. One was a Catholic and the other was a

Budhist who had a bad stammer. They both failed the test and were burnt alive.

There were some Sinhalese who gave sanctuary to the Tamils in the South, and Tamils who shielded the Sinhalese in the Northeast. The Muslims were not affected and some Tamils were saved by them. In one instance a relative of mine who was a doctor in remote Medagama and his apothecary were helped by the Muslims and driven to Moneragala police station dressed up like Muslims. That same Tamil apothecary's mother saved a Sinhalese midwife, her child and sister in Batticaloa to get away.

Emergency was declared only after 4 days of rioting. The Governor General Oliver Gunatilleke took control of the situation as Prime Minister Banadranyake was inactive. The army and the police were not politicised at that time. They had the tradition of discipline from the colonial days and carried out orders to maintain law and order. But the orders came late. The 1958 riot was the first island-wide genocide of the defenseless Tamil minority by the Sinhalese. It left the Tamils, particularly the youth boiling in anger.

CHAPTER 5

EVENTS LEADING TO TAMIL EELAM DEMAND

Srimavo continues the anti-Tamil policies

In 1959 S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake was shot to death by a Buddhist priest name Somarama Thero instigated by Budharakita Thero at his residence in Rosmead Place. The bodyguard opened fire injuring the assailant. I was working in the CWE head office nearby in the same street as an accountant, and heard the gunshot. The talk went round that the Prime Minister had been shot by a Tamil called Somaraman and people were agitated. The truth came out soon, and the Buddhist priests were at the receiving end of people's anger. W. Dahanayake and Dudley Senanayake were Prime Ministers for short periods.

In 1960, Mrs Srimavo Bandaranayake, his widow became the world's first woman Prime Minister. She and her party the SLFP continued the anti-Tamil racist policies of her predecessors. Buddhism was declared the state religion. In 1961, the Federal Party under Thanthai Chelva, launched a mass non-violent civil disobedience campaign in the Northern and Eastern provinces, paralysing the administration. They inaugurated a Tamil postal service in defiance of the government. The Tamils resented the Sinhala 'SRI' on the number plates of Tamil owned vehicles and there was a tar brush campaign. The Srimao government used the military to violently break up the peaceful Satyagraha. The Satyagrahis were assaulted and forcibly removed. The Federal Party MPs were arrested.

Attempted Coup

In 1962 there was an attempted coup by about 30 senior army and police officers, which fizzled out. The chief

organizers of the coup were mostly Christians brought up in the British tradition and who resented the way things were going. Colonel De Saram, DIGs C.C. Disanayake, Sydney Soysa, Civil Servant Liyanage were among them. The organizers of the coup wanted it to be a bloodless one. One senior police officer, who was in the know of things, got cold feet and blurted it out to his wife. She was the daughter of a well known Buddhist to whom she went for advice. Her father informed the authorities on condition that his son-in-law was pardoned.

The two brothers C.C and S.S. Disanayake were both DIGs but in the opposite camps. The politicians were scared not knowing whom to depend on. Srimao's nephew and Minister Felix Dias, a lawyer is said to have handled the matter on the government side. My brother was a young ASP in Kandy at that time. Apparently, the powers that be knew that he was one of those who was not involved in the coup. He received a message late in the day to report for work in Colombo immediately. Being single, he packed up his bag and baggage and arrived in Colombo in his car after mid-night and took charge of a police division. Srimao government purged the officer Corp and put in their own appointees.

Felix Dias was a contemporary of mine at the University, but in the law faculty. He was the son of a well known judge, Justice Dias Bandaranayake. When he entered politics he changed his name to Felix Dias Bandaranayake and became a powerful figure in the government. Colonel de Saram, one of the high ranking army officers involved in the coup was in the volunteer force. He was the lawyer for the corporation I worked for, and so I had occasion to see him in his office. I believe he was a Dutch Burgher and had served in the World War II. He was a man, who belonged to the British tradition. He considered Felix 'an inexperienced pup' and did not like the way things were going in the country. The coup fizzled

out and those involved were indicted. They were sentenced, but after a change of government, they were acquitted on appeal to the Privy Council.

Srimavo-Sashtri Pact

In 1964 another serious blow for the Tamils came in the form of Srimavo-Sashtri Pact signed to deport to India 500,000 Plantation Tamils who had been deprived of their Ceylonese citizenship. This was done against their wishes and the Plantation Tamil leader Thondaiman opposed it. India let down the Tamils of Ceylon. These deported Tamil people were reported to be suffering hardships in India.

Senanayake-Chelvanayagam Pact dishonoured

In 1965, the UNP under Dudley Senanayake came to power. Thanthai Chelva negotiated with Dudley to solve the Tamil problem. The Senanayake-Chelvanayagam Pact was signed to devolve powers to district councils and Regulations were to be enacted for the reasonable use of Tamil. The term 'reasonable' used in the enactment and regulations, showed how grudgingly the Sinhalese conceded this basic right to the Tamils. It was an insult to their language. Following anti-Tamil riots organized by Srimao's Sinhalese supporters, this pact too was unilaterally abandoned. Once again the Tamils were cheated by the Sinhalese. The Tamils and their leader S.J.V. lost all trust in the Sinhala leadership. They had been cheated earlier also by the abrogation of the Bandaranayake-Chelvanayagam Pact. At that time the opposition was by J.R. Jayawardena and the UNP.

Ceylon renamed Sri Lanka

In 1970 the United Left Front led by Mrs. Bandaranayake comes to power. A new constitution was adopted in 1972, renaming Ceylon as Sri Lanka and declaring it a republic.

Appeals to Privy council was abolished, leaving the Tamils at the mercy of the Sinhala dominated judiciary. Section 29(2) of the Soulbury Constitution giving some meager safeguard to minority' rights was eliminated. Buddhism was given the foremost position. Auradhapura was declared a Sacred Budhist Area and all Hindu temples in the vicinity demolished. Tamils were ousted from the old town of Auradhapura. The Sinhalese language was to be the single official language of the courts and administration. Colonisation of the Tamil homeland by Sinhalese settlers to change the demographic composition in the Northeast continued unabated. These Sinhalese colonists were mostly ex-convicts and undesirables who harassed the peaceful local Tamil villagers.

Tamil students discriminated

Tamils students were denied higher education and university admission by introducing standardization system with district quotas. Tamil students were required to get more marks than the Sinhalese to qualify for higher studies. To add to this, the government recruited very few Tamils into the public services and almost none into the armed forces. Many of the Tamils were worried, and for the sake of their children's future, wished to go out of the country of their birth. I too applied for jobs outside Ceylon, and left for Africa in February 1972. Thereafter, I only went to my motherland on short holidays, but after 1982 I have not set foot on that soil.

The JVP insurrection of 1971

In 1971 the Sinhala youth led by Rohana Wijeweera of the Jathika Vimukthi Peramuna revolted against the government. Some police stations were overrun. It was the first armed revolt in the country and the government was scared. Emergency was declared and army was called out. In this

insurrection, no Tamils or Muslims were involved. It was an exclusively Sinhalese revolt by the under-privileged.

It was rumoured that the danger was so serious, that Srimavo had taken refuge in an Indian ship sent by Indira Gandhi and staying off the shores. Indian troops were guarding the Katunayake airport

The rebels were not well armed. They tried to capture arms from police stations. The insurrection was crushed with a heavy hand and 3,000 Sinhala youth including girls are believed to have been killed brutally. Bodies tied together were found floating in rivers. In Tissamaharama, Premawathy Manamperi, a local beauty queen was suspected to have joined the rebels. The young girl was from a poor village family. She was arrested by the army, taken to Kataragama, mercilessly gang-raped and forced to walk naked near the sacred temple. She was thereafter shot and buried half alive.

The War of Bangladesh Liberation

The year 1971 was eventful in South Asia as Pakistan broke up into two and the new state of Bangladesh emerged. Pakistan was the second biggest country in the region, but it was in two geographically separated units – West Pakistan and East Pakistan (or East Bengal). Ironically, East Bengal had a slightly larger population than West Pakistan Bengal, but the power was grabbed by the latter and they treated East Bengal like a colony. The Bengalis deeply loved their language and resented the hegemony of the Punjabis of West Pakistan and the imposition of Urdu. The army was predominated by the West Pakistanis and the East Bengal Muslims were discriminated.

The people of East Bengal under their popular leader Sheik Mujibur Rehman rebelled and fought for their independence from West Pakistan. The freedom fighters of East Bengal (called Mukti Bahini) had only light weapons and could not overcome the Pakistani army, who committed atrocities. There was an exodus of East Bengalis into India's West Bengal, and India was forced to react. Under the command of Lieutenant General Jagjit Sing Aurora, the

Indians annihilated the West Pakistan army and took all the 93,000 of them prisoners. USA and China tried to intimidate India by hostile naval and army maneuvers, but Russia stood by India and countered their moves. Pakistan broke up at the seams and two nations came into existence – Pakistan and Bangladesh. Consequently Pakistan was relegated to a weak position in the region.

At that time Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India and she became a respected leader in her country and the region. The Sinhalese were feeling intimidated and overawed by India's role in the creation of Bangladesh. They feared that Sri Lanka may suffer a similar fate at her hands.

Police violence against the Tamils

In 1974, the Sinhala policemen arbitrarily broke up the International Tamil Research Conference in Jaffna firing into the crowd. Nine people lost their lives and many others were injured. It was alleged that the police were instigated by Alfred Duraiappah the Jaffna Mayor, and he paid with his life. He was shot dead by some Tamil youth in 1975. In 1976, police fired at a mosque in Puttalam killing many Tamil speaking Muslims.

The formation of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

The Tamil youth realized that the Sinhalese were able to carry out these racial policies with impunity because the Tamils were defenceless. Velupillai Prabaharan and a few dedicated youth were convinced that the only way to deal with Sinhalese terrorism was to take up arms. He formed the New Tamil Tiger Organization. In 1975 it was renamed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam with Prabaharan as the Military Commander. He was then a young man of 21 years

and lived to lead the Tamil Tigers in many a battle. In a future article I shall give his life history in greater detail.

The Vaddukoddai Resolution for Tamil Eelam

Thanthai Chelva resigned from his Parliamentary seat in 1972 as a protest against the new constitution and the mistreatment of the Tamils by the Sinhalese. In 1975 when the elections were belatedly held, he won the Kankasanturai electorate resoundingly. He proclaimed that his victory was a mandate for the Tamils to exercise the right of self-determination.

The Tamil United Liberation Front was formed in 1976 by uniting the Federal Party, the Ceylon Tamil Congress and the Ceylon Workers Congress under the formidable leadership of Messrs. Chelvanayagam, G.G. Ponnambalam and Thondaman. On May 14, 1976, the TULF at a convention held in Vaddukoddai presided over by Thanthai Chelva, passed a historic resolution calling for the formation of a separate state of Tamil Eelam covering the Northern and Eastern provinces.

Thanthai Chelva breathed his last on April 4, 1977. After him, A. Amirthalingam, his deputy became the leader of the Tamils. In the general elections held in 1977 after Thanthai Chelva's demise, the TULF received from the Tamils, an overwhelming mandate for a sovereign state of Tamil Eelam, winning 18 seats out of the 24 contested. By a twist of fate it emerged as the official opposition in parliament because it was the second largest party. A. Amirthalingam, became the leader of the opposition.

Anti-Tamil racial riot of 1977

The UNP headed by J.R. Jayawadena came to power at that election. Yet another racial riot was engineered and

executed against the Tamils. Sinhala mob violence was unleashed against the Tamils particularly in the estates, resulting in hundreds of deaths. 200,000 Tamils are said to have fled to India and to Northeast of Sri Lanka, and 40,000 became refugees and destitute. Nearly 100 Hindu temples were destroyed with the active involvement of Sinhalese politicians. Police radio network was used to spread false rumours to escalate violence. The policy of keeping out Tamils from the police and army made it exclusively Sinhala and hostile to Tamils.

Tamil youth answer the call of Thanthai Chelva

The Vaddukkoddai Resolution was the last will and testament of Thanthai Chelva to the Tamil nation and endorsed by the Tamil electorate. It was an unqualified call by the Father of the Tamil Nation and the Tamil leadership to the Tamil nation, particularly the Tamil youth, to launch a struggle and fight unflinchingly for the sovereignty and freedom of the Tamil nation. The Tamil youth answered the call of the late leader by heroically endeavouring to fulfill his last wish to free the Tamil nation. I shall give the full text of the Vaddukkoddai Resolution in Chapter 7. It serves as the Declaration of the Rights of the Tamil Eelam nation.

CHAPTER 6

THE FATHER OF THE TAMIL NATION

The history of the Tamils of Ceylon in the first three decades after independence is linked to the life of the great Tamil leader S.J.V. Chelvanayagam, whom the people came to refer as Thanthai Chelva or the Father of the Tamil Nation. His leadership and ideals guides the Tamils to this day. I quote the writer in the book published on the Centenary

Celebrations “Chelvanayagam was the pioneer of Tamil nationalism in the island. His greatest achievement was to keep the flame of Tamil nationalism burning so that a future generation could light up their torches of liberation with that. S.J.V. Chelvanayagam’s name will be enshrined for ever in the annals of Tamil history, as the father of Tamil Nationalism, when the Sri Lankan Tamils reach the promised land as envisioned by him”.



S.J.V. Chelvanayagam

Early years

Samuel James Velupillai Chelvanayagam was born on March 31, 1898 in Ipoh, Malaysia. His ancestral home was in Tellipalai. He was a Protestant Christian. His father Visvanathan Velupillai was a businessman in Malaysia. At the age of four his mother and his siblings moved back to Tellipalai from Malaysia. He studied in Union College, Tellipalai, St. John’s College, Jaffna, and St. Thomas’ College, Mt. Lavana. It was also of interest to me that

S.J.V. Chelvanayagam was a student of St. John's College, where I studied many years later. His elder son Manoharan, was some years my junior in the same school. At Thomas' College, S.J.V. was a contemporary of S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake with whom he later had political combats, each representing their own communities as leaders.

S.J.V. graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree as an external student of the University of London and taught at St .Thomas' College and Wesley College. He studied at the same time and qualified as an Advocate of the Supreme Court. He became a prominent civil lawyer and had a lucrative practice. It is to the credit of his mother, Harriet Annamma, to have brought up her children, three boys and a girl, while their father was in Malaysia. She was from a well established family and her father's name was Kanapathipillai.

S.J.V.'s family

In 1927 S.J.V. married Emily Grace Barr Kumarakulasinghe, daughter of the Maniagar of Tellipalai. Contrary to the Western Christian custom, he is said to have worn the verti and shawl, the Tamil national dress, at his wedding, showing his deep regard for Tamil culture. He was a devout Christian and did not compromise his religious beliefs for political gains. It is said that his political opponents tried to raise the religious cry against him, but were unsuccessful. It may be observed that many Sinhalese politicians who were Christians, converted to Buddhism (referred to as Donoughmore Budhists) to improve their chances in politics.

He had five children - one girl and four boys. All of them did well. The eldest was his daughter Susila, who married Professor Wilson. She happened to be my batchmate at the University of Ceylon and graduated in Economics. If I remember right, her future husband Wilson also was in our

batch. Manoharan, his eldest son, as I said was my junior in St. John's College, but in the same junior hostel, Evarts House. Manoharan is a PhD in Physics. The other son Vaseeharan, who is no more, had a doctorate in mathematics. The third son Raveendran qualified as a Chartered Accountant, and worked in Rowlands Ltd. for some time. I had occasion to see him there. The last one Chandrahasan is an Attorney-at-law married to ex-MP E.M.V. Naganathan's daughter and is in India.

My school friendship with Manoharan gave me a lucky chance to meet his father, who probably at that time had not yet entered politics. I recall the occasion vividly. He was a leading civil lawyer. Around 1943, when our school closed for holidays, as usual all the boys travelling to the south took train to join their parents. Manoharan and I travelled to Colombo, and at the Fort Railway Station, he was waiting for his father to pick him up. I was waiting to catch the connecting upcountry train to Demodara, where my father was working as a Station Master.

Manoharan's father came to pick up his son. He was dressed smartly in a white suit. He must have been about 45 years at that time. He was lively and walked briskly. When they were leaving, Manoharan bid me goodbye. Mr. Chelvanayagam looked at me and asked me where I was going and what was my plan. I replied that I was waiting to catch the connecting train and thanked him. Father and son departed. My meeting this great leader is a cherished memory.

I cannot agree with D.S. Senanayake's later remark that S.J.V. was "a lean and hungry looking man whom I cannot trust". At that time S.J.V. had a normal build, fair complexion and was handsome with an aristocratic look. Later, as a politician, he proved himself to be a man of integrity unlike D.S. who treacherously cheated the Tamil

people. Unfortunately, later S.J.V. suffered failing health and became frail. May be the responsibility of leading a persecuted people against heavy odds, weighed heavily on him. D.S. must have realized that S.J.V. unlike G.G. and Suntharalingam cannot be lured by the offer of a ministry.

Entry into politics

Chelvanayagam began interesting himself in politics and became active in the Ceylon Tamil Congress. He was part of the delegation led by G.G. Ponnambalam that made representation to the Soulbury Commission without success. In retrospect, the Soulbury Constitution proved a disaster to the country. Our history teacher, Mr. P.I. Mathai prophetically said when the Soulbury Commission arrived that they have come to bury the soul of Ceylon.

By 1946 S.J.V. had become the second in command to G.G. Ponnambalam in the Ceylon Tamil Congress. In the elections of 1947, Tamil Congress won seven seats and S.J.V. Chelvanayagam won at Kankasanturai.

Federal Party

However, when G.G. Ponnambalam voted with the Sinhalese dominated UNP government in support of the Citizenship Act against the Upcountry Tamils, differences erupted between G.G. and S.J.V. Finally in 1949 S.J.V. broke away from the CTC and launched the Federal Party with the support of MP Vanniasingam and Senator E.M.V. Naganathan.

The Federal Party of S.J.V. had federalism as it's objective, formulated Tamil nationalism on linguistic lines, introduced the concept of Tamil homeland in Northern and Eastern Provinces, and stood for parity of status for Tamil with Sinhalese. Chelvanayagam's demands were for all Tamil

speaking people including Upcountry Tamils and the Muslims. His party was also against altering the demographic situation of Northeast through colonization of Tamil homeland by the Sinhalese from the South.

In 1952 the Federal Party did not have the support of the Tamils who were still not aware of the impending dangers from Sinhala chauvinism. The Tamils still did not favour even a federal form of government. The party fared badly and even S.J.V. lost at Kankesanturai. This was the first and the last time he was defeated at an election. With Bandaranayake and the SLFP raising the language and racist cry, the Tamils were alarmed and began to look upon S.J.V. as a prophet who had foreseen the impending threat from Sinhala Buddhist hegemonism.

In 1956 S.W.R.D. Bandaranayake won a landslide victory in the Sinhala South, while the Federal Party won ten seats in North and Eastern Provinces. The Sinhala only Act was passed and the Federal Party adopted a policy of non-violent protests. S.J.V. held the Kankesanturai seat from 1956 till his demise in 1977. He woke the national conscience of the Tamil people and was endearingly referred to as Thanthai Chelva. Although he followed non-violent satyagraha, the Sinhalese government and mobs retaliated with serious violence against the Tamils.

Peaceful protests under Thanthai Chelva

Peaceful protests were held in front of kachcheris, anti-sri tar brush campaigns were conducted, and Tamil postal service was started. Thanthai Chelva's satyagraha and peaceful protests became a mass movement of the Tamils. The army was used to break up the demonstrations and the leaders including Thanthai Chelva detained. He united the people of the Northern and Eastern Provinces and had their overwhelming support. Two agreements Thanthai Chelva made

with the Sinhalese leaders to solve the ethnic problem were unilaterally abrogated by the Sinhalese. They were the Bandaranayake-Chelvanayagam Pact of 1957 and the Senanayake-Chelvanayagam Pact of 1965, which if honoured may have avoided armed revolt and civil war resulting in immense destruction and bloodshed.

In addition to the Sinhala only Act, the anti-Tamil measures like the discrimination against Tamils in government services and jobs, standardisation in examinations, discriminating against the Tamil students favouring the Sinhalese and the constitutional changes detrimental to the interests of the Tamils, further aggravated the bitterness. Thanthai Chelva strongly opposed the state colonization of the Tamil homeland by Sinhalese from the South. Thanthai Chelva continued to strive for the protection of the Tamils by non-violent means. The Sinhalese leaders missed the chance to solve the Tamil ethnic problem peacefully while Thanthai Chelva was at the helm of Tamil leadership. Consequently, the leadership passed to a new generation of no-nonsense armed militants.

Tamil United Liberation Front

In 1976 the Tamil United Liberation Front was formed by uniting the Federal Party, Tamil Congress and the Ceylon Workers Congress, and the demand for a separate Tamil State was adopted. It was a joint leadership by the three Tamil leaders at that time - Chelvanayagam, Ponnambalam and Thondaiman. The utter frustration due to the racist policies of the Sinhalese government drove Thanthai Chelva to say “only God could save the Tamils now”. S.J.V. Chelvanayagam gave formal approval for a separate Eelam Tamil State before he passed away.

The Sinhalese leadership had a great opportunity in solving the Tamil ethnic problem while the sagacious Thanthai

Chelva was alive. With the latter's demise, the last chance to peacefully solve the problem was lost. The Sinhalese scornfully ignored him with dire consequences to follow endangering the unity of the country.

The concept of Free, Sovereign State of Tamil Eelam was unequivocally embodied in the Vaddukoddai Resolution adopted by the TULF on May 17, 1976 under the Chairmanship of S.J.V. Chelvanayagam. The resolution called on the Tamil nation, and particularly the Tamil youth to come forward and throw themselves fully into the sacred fight for freedom and flinch not till the goal of sovereign state of Tamil Eelam is reached. This was an unqualified call.

Demise of the great leader

On April 24, 1977 Thanthai Chelva passed away to the grief of the Tamil people. The funeral was attended by an unprecedented crowd in Jaffna. The last will and testament of our beloved leader was the Vaddukkoddai Resolution. Three months after his death, the TULF by a landslide victory, received an overwhelming mandate from the Tamil people at the polls. People of all shades of opinion mourned his loss.

The heroic Tamil youth, followed Thanthai Chelva's challenge to Sinhala hegemony and persecution, and the mandate overwhelmingly endorsed by the Tamil nation in the general election of 1977. They took up the leader's torch of freedom and his last wish to redeem the Tamil nation. The more militant among them answered the great leader's call to come into the sacred fight for freedom by taking up arms. The worm had turned at last.

In the next chapter, I shall give in full, the historic Vaddukoddai Resolution. It serves as the Declaration of the Rights of the Tamil nation.



Tamil Eelam and Sri Lanka

CHAPTER 7

VADDUKODDAI RESOLUTION

THE RESOLUTION

Unanimously adopted at the First National convention of the

TAMIL UNITED LIBERATION FRONT

Held at Vaddukoddai

On May 14, 1976

Chairman S.J.V. Chelvanayakam Q.C., M.P. 9K.K.S)

Whereas, throughout the centuries from the dawn of history, the Sinhalese and Tamil nations have divided between themselves the possession of Ceylon, the Sinhalese inhabiting the interior of the country in its Southern and Western parts from the river Walawe to that of Chilaw and the Tamils possessing the Northern and Eastern districts; And,

Whereas, the Tamil Kingdom was overthrown in war and conquered by the Portuguese in 1619, and from them by the Dutch and the British in turn, independent of the Sinhalese Kingdoms; And,

Whereas, the British Colonists, who ruled the territories of the Sinhalese and Tamil Kingdoms separately, joined under compulsion the territories of the Sinhalese and the Tamil Kingdoms for purposes of administrative convenience on the recommendation of the Colebrooke Commission in 1833; And,

Whereas, the Tamil Leaders were in the forefront of the Freedom movement to rid Ceylon of colonial bondage which ultimately led to the grant of independence to Ceylon in 1948; And,

Whereas, the foregoing facts of history were completely overlooked, and power over the entire country was transferred to the Sinhalese nation on the basis of a numerical majority, thereby reducing the Tamil nation to the position of subject people; And,

Whereas, successive Sinhalese governments since independence have always encouraged and fostered the aggressive nationalism of the Sinhalese people and have used their political power to the detriment of the Tamils by-

(a) Depriving one half of the Tamil people of their citizenship and franchise rights thereby reducing Tamil representation in Parliament,

(b) Making serious inroads into the territories of the former

Tamil Kingdom by a system of planned and state-aided Sinhalese colonization and large scale regularization of recently encouraged Sinhalese encroachments, calculated to make the Tamils a minority in their own homeland,

(c) Making Sinhala the only official language throughout Ceylon thereby placing the stamp of inferiority on the Tamils and the Tamil Language,

(d) Giving the foremost place to Buddhism under the Republican constitution thereby reducing the Hindus, Christians, and Muslims to second class status in this Country,

(e) Denying to the Tamils equality of opportunity in the spheres of employment, education, land alienation and economic life in general and starving Tamil areas of large scale industries and development schemes thereby seriously endangering their very existence in Ceylon,

(f) Systematically cutting them off from the main-stream of Tamil cultures in South India while denying them opportunities of developing their language and culture in Ceylon, thereby working inexorably towards the cultural genocide of the Tamils,

(g) Permitting and unleashing communal violence and intimidation against the Tamil speaking people as happened in Amparai and Colombo in 1956; all over the country in 1958; army reign of terror in the Northern and Eastern Provinces in 1961; police violence at the International Tamil Research Conference in 1974 resulting in the death of nine persons in Jaffna; police and communal violence against Tamil speaking Muslims at Puttalam and various other parts of Ceylon in 1976 - all these calculated to instill terror in the minds of the Tamil speaking people, thereby breaking their spirit and the will to resist injustices heaped on them,

(h) By terrorizing, torturing, and imprisoning Tamil youths

without trial for long periods on the flimsiest grounds,

(i) Capping it all by imposing on the Tamil Nation a constitution drafted, under conditions of emergency without opportunities for free discussion, by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of the Soulbury Constitution distorted by the Citizenship laws resulting in weightage in representation to the Sinhalese majority, thereby depriving the Tamils of even the remnants of safeguards they had under the earlier constitution, And,

Whereas, all attempts by the various Tamil political parties to win their rights, by co-operating with the governments, by parliamentary and extra-parliamentary agitations, by entering into pacts and understandings with successive Prime Ministers, in order to achieve the bare minimum of political rights consistent with the self-respect of the Tamil people have proved to be futile; And,

Whereas, the efforts of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress to ensure non-domination of the minorities by the majority by the adoption of a scheme of balanced representation in a Unitary Constitution have failed and even the meagre safeguards provided in article 29 of the Soulbury Constitution against discriminatory legislation have been removed by the Republican Constitution; And,

Whereas, the proposals submitted to the Constituent Assembly by the Ilankai Thamil Arasu Kadchi for maintaining the unity of the country while preserving the integrity of the Tamil people by the establishment of an autonomous Tamil State within the framework of a Federal Republic of Ceylon were summarily and totally rejected without even the courtesy of a consideration of its merits; And,

Whereas, the amendments to the basic resolutions, intended to ensure the minimum of safeguards to the Tamil people moved on the basis of the nine point demands formulated at the conference of all Tamil Political parties at Valvettithurai on 7th February 1971 and by individual

parties and Tamil members of Parliament including those now in the government party, were rejected in toto by the government and Constituent Assembly; And,

Whereas, even amendments to the draft proposals relating to language, religion, and fundamental-rights including one calculated to ensure that at least the provisions of the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Regulations of 1956 be included in the Constitution, were defeated, resulting in the boycott of the Constituent Assembly by a large majority of the Tamil members of Parliament; And,

Whereas, the Tamil United Liberation Front, after rejecting the Republican Constitution adopted on the 22nd of May, 1972, presented a six point demand to the Prime Minister and the Government on 25th June, 1972, and gave three months time within which the Government was called upon to take meaningful steps to amend the Constitution so as to meet the aspirations of the Tamil Nation on the basis of the six points, and informed the Government that if it failed to do so the Tamil United Liberation Front would launch a non-violent direct action against the Government in order to win the freedom and the rights of the Tamil Nation on the basis of the right of self-determination; And,

Whereas, this last attempt by the Tamil United Liberation Front to win Constitutional recognition of the rights of the Tamil Nation without jeopardizing the unity of the country was callously ignored by the Prime Minister and the Government; And,

Whereas, the opportunity provided by the Tamil United Liberation leader to vindicate the Government's contention that their constitution had the backing of the Tamil people, by resigning from his membership of the National State Assembly and creating a by-election was deliberately put off for over two years in utter disregard of the democratic right of the Tamil voters of Kankesanthurai, and,

Whereas, in the by-election held on the 6th February 1975, the voters of Kankesanthurai by a preponderant majority not only rejected the Republican Constitution imposed on

them by the Sinhalese Government, but also gave a mandate to Mr. S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, Q.C. and through him to the Tamil United Liberation Front for the restoration and reconstitution of the Free Sovereign, Secular, Socialist State of TAMIL EELAM.

The first National Convention of the Tamil United Liberation Front meeting at Pannakam (Vaddukoddai Constituency) on the 14th day of May, 1976, hereby declares that the Tamils of Ceylon by virtue of their great language, their religions, their separate culture and heritage, their history of independent existence as a separate state over a distinct territory for several centuries till they were conquered by the armed might of the European invaders and above all by their will to exist as a separate entity ruling themselves in their own territory, are a nation distinct and apart from Sinhalese and this Convention announces to the world that the Republican Constitution of 1972 has made the Tamils a slave nation ruled by the new colonial masters, the Sinhalese ,who are using the power they have wrongly usurped to deprive the Tamil Nation of its territory, language citizenship, economic life, opportunities of employment and education, thereby destroying all the attributes of nationhood of the Tamil people.

And, while taking note of the reservations in relation to its commitment to the setting up of a separated state of TAMIL EELAM expressed by the Ceylon Workers Congress as a Trade Union of the Plantation Workers, the majority of whom live and work outside the Northern and Eastern areas,

This convention resolves that restoration and reconstitution of the Free, Sovereign, Secular, Socialist State of TAMIL EELAM, based on the right of self determination inherent to every nation, has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil Nation in this Country.

This Convention further declares -

- a. that the State of TAMIL EELAM shall consist of the people of the Northern and Eastern provinces and shall also ensure full and equal rights of citizenship of the State of TAMIL EELAM to all Tamil speaking people living in any part of Ceylon and to Tamils of EELAM origin living in any part of the world who may opt for citizenship of TAMIL EELAM.
- b. that the constitution of TAMIL EELAM shall be based on the principle of democratic decentralization so as to ensure the non-domination of any religious or territorial community of TAMIL EELAM by any other section.
- c. that in the state of Tamil Eelam caste shall be abolished and the observance of the pernicious practice of untouchability or inequality of any type based on birth shall be totally eradicated and its observance in any form punished by law.
- d. that TAMIL EELAM shall be a secular state giving equal protection and assistance to all religions to which the people of the state may belong.
- e. that Tamil shall be the language of the State, but the rights of Sinhalese speaking minorities in Tamil Eelam to education and transaction of business in their language shall be protected on a reciprocal basis with the Tamil speaking minorities in the Sinhala State.
- f. that Tamil Eelam shall be a Socialist State wherein the exploitation of man by man shall be forbidden, the dignity of labor shall be recognized, the means of production and distribution shall be subject to public ownership and control while permitting private enterprise in these branches within limit prescribed by law, economic development shall be on the basis of socialist planning and there shall be a ceiling on the total wealth that any individual of family may acquire.

This Convention directs the Action Committee of the TAMIL UNITED LIBERATION FRONT to formulate

a plan of action and launch without undue delay the struggle for winning the sovereignty and freedom of the Tamil Nation;

And this Convention calls upon the Tamil Nation in general and the Tamil youth in particular to come forward to throw themselves fully into the sacred fight for freedom and to flinch not till the goal of a sovereign state of TAMIL EELAM is reached.

(A Translation of the Resolution Unanimously Adopted at the 1st National Convention of the Tamil United Liberation Front, held at Pannakam (Vaddukoddai Constituency) on May 15 1976, Presided over by Mr. Chelvanayakam, Q.C, M.P. The TULF went to polls in 1977 with this and received an overwhelming mandate from the Tamil electorate. This was the last time Tamils of Eelam were able to express their wish freely at a democratically conducted poll.)

CHAPTER 8

TAMIL YOUTH REACT TO SINHALA TERROR

Tamil militancy

From the Vaddukkoddai Resolution of 1976 to the genocide of the Tamils in 1983, there was a worsening of the treatment of the Tamils by the Sinhalese dominated government. The TULF which was the political representatives of the Tamils was treated with indifference by the rulers. Amirthalingam of the Federal Party and Sivasithambaram of the Tamil Congress, both lawyers, emerged as the dominant Tamil leaders. Sivasithambaram was President of the Tamil Congress and died recently of old age and ailment. He was a respected, straight and helpful leader, whom I had an occasion to meet.

The Tamil youth were getting impatient and restless with Sinhalese state terror and mob violence. Young Tamils began to think of defending the Tamil people against the ethnic violence and state terror by arming themselves. A young boy called Sivakumar of Urumpirai tried to kill a notorious police officer but was cornered and committed suicide in 1974. Some young boys including Prabakaran learnt the use of firearms in the jungles of Vanni.

An over enthusiastic police officer, Inspector Bastiampillai tried to capture them in the jungle. He went with two other policemen and a driver. It appears he went on his mission without informing his superiors. They were trapped and put to death by the boys who included Sellakili, a leading figure among the rebels. The dead bodies were recovered later. This Bastiampillai was known as one who had brutally tortured Tamil boys in detention. It was rumoured that he and his wife had been warned by the boys that he would be executed.

Some Tamil policemen involved in investigations against the boys were also shot dead in Jaffna. Inspector of Police Guruswamy was killed by militants. Youths attacked Anaicoddai, Nelliadi and Chavakacheri police stations. An Avro aircraft was destroyed in the airport by a bomb planted by militants, but there were no casualties. An army unit at Paranthan was ambushed.

The boys were trying to collect funds by robbing banks. The Peoples Bank at Neervely was attacked and the money robbed. A jewellery shop in my ancestral village of Kurumpayiddy was robbed. These attacks were never considered serious enough to become a threat to the Sinhalese state. The Sinhalese did not foresee that this was just the tip of the iceberg and serious trouble was to brew later. These were just pin pricks, but the government did not want to take chances.

J.R. Jayawardena, the Sri Lankan President who had all the opportunity to come to some settlement with the moderate Tamil leadership under Amirthalingam, took them for a long ride. The Tamils met him many times, but he granted none of their requests.

Another constitution introduced

In July 1978 a new constitution was adopted and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka was established. J.R. Jayawardena became the first president with immense executive powers. Tamil language was given the place of a national language, without a clear defining of its usage and scope. He proscribed the LTTE as an illegal organization. The Parliament enacted the notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act. Emergency was declared in the Tamil areas and the police were given a free hand to kill Tamil youth.

In 1979 President Jayawardena appointed his nephew Brigadier Weeratunga as the overall commander of the

security forces in Jaffna giving him full powers to crush the Tamil militants in 6 months' time. Some innocent boys like Inban and his brother-in-law were arrested, tortured and killed but none of the militants were caught. The forces were given the power to dispose of dead bodies without an inquest. Torture camps were set up and Tamil boys disappeared.

State aided colonization of the Tamil homeland was accelerated by the implementation of the Mahaveli Development Scheme. The Tamils of the Northeast and the Upcountry were kept out of these schemes and the Sinhalese including armed criminals from the South were planted in Tamil areas. These thugs, and the paid Muslim home guards with the support of the armed forces inflicted horrible atrocities on the unarmed Tamils in their own homeland.

Burning of the Jaffna library by the police

In 1981 the army and the police rampaged in Jaffna, setting fire to buildings including printing presses and shops. Civilians were killed and another anti-Tamil riot was unleashed. The Tamil daily Eelanadu's office and the Jaffna MP's house were burnt and property looted. Arbitrary arrests, torture and disappearances of Tamil activists was rampant. Two Sinhalese ministers, Gamini Dissanayake and Cyril Mathew, both outspoken anti-Tamil racists were in Jaffna at that time. In a brazen act of state vandalism, the historic Jaffna Public Library was torched, resulting in the destruction of 95,000 valuable books. The Tamils will not forget this act of cultural genocide.

Anti-Tamil hostility

In the ethnic violence of 1977 and 1980, the plantation Tamils were the worst affected. As a result of the recurring ethnic violence against Tamils, many plantation Tamils had taken refuge in the Northeast and settled down there as farm hands. The Sinhalese politicians used the armed forces to uproot them. They were forcibly put into buses and taken to the plantations and dumped there. The Gandhियam Movement which was looking after their welfare was crushed and the organizers, Dr. Rajasundaram and Architect David were arrested and treated like common criminals.

The attack on the Tamil students at Peradeniya University, the major university in Sri Lanka, was planned to prevent the educational advancement of the Tamil youth. They were already handicapped by standardisation and discrimination in employment.

The Sinhalese were openly abusive of the Tamils. In a mockery of democracy, the ruling party introduced a motion of no-confidence against A. Amirthalingam, the Tamil leader of the opposition. The SLFP member of Kundasale threatened his life in parliament in a most derogatory manner exposing the calibre of the Sinhalese parliamentarians. They had lost their heads, intoxicated with power and the knowledge that the Tamils were unarmed and helpless. The UNP government was able to weaken the Tamils and ensure the breakup of the TULF by offering portfolios to Thondaman, Rajadurai and Devanayagam. The Jayawardena government had no minister from the North. The rabid Sinhala-Budhist lobby was spearheaded by an outspoken racist Cyril Mathew, the Minister of Industries, who was their leader. They were vociferously intolerant of the Tamil presence in Sinhala areas and thereby greatly contributed to strengthening the Tamil demand for separation.

Sporadic attacks by Tamil youth intensified

The Tamil youth were provoked by the brutalities perpetrated by the Sinhalese police and armed forces. Militant groups were formed and the youth started sporadic attacks. Arms were not available in adequate quantities to mount an all out attack. There would have been probably about 50 boys in the underground movement. Valvettiturai, the Northern coastal fishing village became the hub of the militants. The Supreme Commander of the LTTE and the present national Tamil leader, Velupillai Prabaharan hails from that village. The people of that seafaring village were traditionally hardy and daring. They had close contact with India and goods were brought down from there. Some of the Valvettiturai boys would go by boat to Tamil Nadu to see the latest Tamil movies and return late in the night the same day.

There was intermittent friction among the Tamil groups. In 1982 Prabaharan and Uma Maheswaran were involved in a shoot out in Madras. They were arrested, but Indira Gandhi refused to hand them over to the Sri Lankan government. The Sri Lankan government sent Rudra Rajasingam, the Inspector General at that time to India to persuade India to hand over the militants, but he returned empty handed.

The first Tamil Tiger to die was Lieutenant Sathiyathan (Sankar) in 1982. Since then, to date the Tamil Tigers have lost over 17,500 fighters in their battles against the Sri Lankan armed forces. The LTTE carried out a daring raid on the Chavakacheri Police station under the command of Lieutenant Seelan, and Sellakili as number two capturing the arms and ammunition. Two Tamil policemen sacrificed their lives defending the police station.

Seelan, whose real name was Charles Lucas Anthony, was born in Trincomalee. He was a close confidante of Prabaharan. He was injured in the Chavakacheri attack but survived. Later he died a martyr, in an encounter with the

SL armed forces. He was seriously injured in the clash and could not be evacuated to safety. In the tradition of the Tamil Tigers, he ordered his comrades to shoot him rather than fall into the hands of the Sinhalese enemies. Prabakaran named his first born son, Charles Lucas Anthony in honour and memory of his bosom pal.

In a daring attack on an armoured car at Umayalpuram, the Tamil Tigers gave a scare to the army and the government. It is believed that Kittu, Sellakili, Mathaya, and Ponnammam (Kuhan), among others were involved in the attack.

Arbitrary arrests of Tamils

Kuttimani, Jegan and Thangathurai who were suspected to be in the underground movements were quite by chance arrested by the police on the beach. Kuttimani tried to shoot himself but failed. They were taken to Colombo by plane for interrogation and severely tortured. They were starved and humiliated. Iron rods were forcibly inserted into the anus to force confessions. At the trial Thangathurai made a statement that was a symbolic of Tamil nationalism and an indictment of the Sri Lankan state. Kuttimani was nominated to the Parliament while in jail.

Police were making arbitrary arrests of Tamils on suspicion. In Jaffna the police arrested a lecturer Nithiyananthan and his wife Nirmala. They were subjected to humiliation. Catholic priests, Father Singarayar and Father Sinnarasa were arrested among others. Dr. Rajasundaram and Architect David of the Gandhiam Movement, who were doing social service in Vanni were arrested. Architect David, Nithiyananthan, Nirmala and Sinnarasa were rescued by the militants in two daring jail breaks at Batticaloa. The militants tried to persuade Father Singarayar to leave with them and escape, but he declined the offer and remained in jail till he died later.

The political detainees numbering 53 Tamils were put to death in the Welikade jail in a horrible way by the Sinhalese convicts aided by the prison authorities in 1983 during the anti-Tamil genocide. In the next chapter I will narrate in greater detail the horrible massacre of the Tamils in 1983 by the Sinhala mobs organized by the J.R. Jayawardena government.



The Jaffna Public Library

CHAPTER 9

THE 1983 GENOCIDE OF TAMILS BY SINHALESE

The genocide of the Tamils by the Sinhalese in 1983 was a turning point in the ethnic holocaust in Sri Lanka. The ethnic cleansing of Tamils by the Sinhalese state and Sinhalese mobs was a process that started from the very year of independence in 1948. It started with the abrogation of the citizenship and voting rights of plantation Tamils. It was followed by denying the language rights of all Tamils in Ceylon, rights to employment and higher education, grabbing of Tamil lands to settle Sinhalese from the south and the repeated racial riots. Half a million Upcountry Tamils were forced to leave for India.

Professor Stanley Thambiah writes that between 1948 and 1983, there were more than seven large scale racial attacks on the Tamil community by the Sinhalese population. I can recall the massacre of Tamils in 1956, 1958, 1961, 1977, 1979, 1981 and 1983. I lived through the first three of them and left the country and the misery in 1972. The culmination was in 1983 when the Jayawardena government executed a well conceived and coordinated series of deliberate acts of orgy and violence against the defenceless Tamil civilians unparalleled in the country's history.

After the 1983 massacre of Tamils, the armed forces and police have carried out systematic ethnic cleansing in the Northeast using the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The SL government has followed it up with the economic strangulation of the Tamils in the Northeast and the Upcountry. It is estimated that 800,000 have fled the country in addition to the 500,000 Upcountry Tamils expelled to India in the sixties under the Sashtri-Srimavo Pact. There are about one million internally displaced Tamils.

The holocaust by the Sinhalese has lasted for fifty five years from independence to the cease-fire in 2002. The small Ceylon Tamil nation has suffered cumulatively and comparatively in relation to its numbers, worse than most other people subjected to persecution. The Nazi holocaust lasted only four years from 1939 to 1944, whereas the Sinhalese holocaust of the Tamils went on for fifty five years. The pogrom has all but destroyed the Tamil nation.

The ambush at Thinnevely

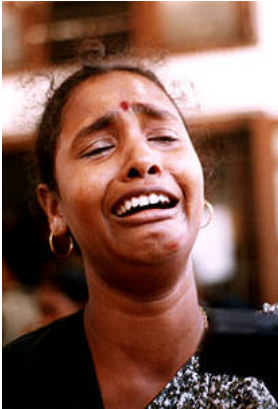
Since the late seventies there was a low intensity conflict between the Tamil youth and the Sri Lankan armed forces. There was never any attack on Sinhalese civilians. There were probably less than 50 boys engaged in hit and run attacks. The stray attacks by armed Tamil youth were treated as manageable and not considered a potential threat to Sinhalese hegemony. What the Sinhalese thought was that the Tamils were a helpless minority and could be kept under control by unleashing the armed forces and terrorising them. It was believed that whatever atrocities were committed, the Sinhalese could get away with impunity

The Sri Lankan government stopped recruiting Tamils to the armed forces and the police. The all Sinhala army and police were alien to the Tamils and were behaving in the Northeast like an army of occupation. In Jaffna they were treating the Tamils, as if they were a conquered people. The army was going about nonchalantly as they had no idea of what was brewing. In July 1983 came a rude shock. A group of Tamil Tigers including Prabakaran, Sellakili, Kittu, Kuhan, Aruna, Mathaya, Pulendran, Victor, and others ambushed and killed 13 soldiers at Thinnaveley. The army was going for the Tigers, but the hunters got hunted. It was fair game, but the Sinhalese masters would have none of it. They wanted to teach the Tamils an object lesson and organized a well conceived plan of ethnic cleansing. It did not matter that the

Sinhalese armed forces had indulged in an orgy of killing Tamils before and after the ambush by LTTE. The army massacred 51 Tamil civilians in the Northeast in revenge, but this news was suppressed by the government.

The Sinhalese massacre Tamils

The ‘state funeral’ of the thirteen fallen ‘heroes’ held at the Kanatte cemetery in Borella, Colombo was used by the politicians, priests and the press to whip up anti-Tamil hysteria. As a revenge for the killing of the soldiers in Jaffna by the Tamil Tigers, the government of Sri Lanka under J.R. Jayawadena started an island-wide massacre of the Tamils. The Sinhalese politicians and the Sinhalese owned media fanned the flames of communal passions. In the genocide, over 3,000 Tamils were killed, and 90% of their property destroyed. The Sinhalese thugs went about their job with electoral and householders’ lists. Army and police supplied them with petrol to do the dirty work. Tamil girls and women were brutally raped and sexually assaulted. Innocent civilians were burnt alive some in their cars and in buses.



Wife of a disappeared Tamil



Tamil refugees

Several ship loads of Tamil refugees fled to their Northeast homeland. There were 100,000 refugees in Colombo and 175,000 elsewhere. Many Tamils fled to India and other parts of the world. Canada and Australia opened their gates to the helpless Tamils.

Almost every Tamil family was affected one way or the other. They were made refugees and destitutes in their land of birth. They fled to the North by land and sea. Many escaped as refugees to various parts of the world. It is estimated that the Tamils who fled from the country to India, Britain, Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, Africa and other countries total about 800,000. One of my brother's house in Colombo was burnt and he and his family left as refugees. Another brother had left earlier. My sister and husband left for Australia. One brother was left in Sri Lanka till he too later immigrated to Canada with all his children. The fate of his house in Maviddapuram is not known as it falls in the High Security Zone. My ancestral village of Kurumpayiddy, near Palali is understood to have been flattened by the army and nobody is living there.

Tamils sought refuge in many over-crowded refugee camps, and underwent terrible suffering. The Editor of the Ceylon Times was an honoured guest in St. Peter's College refugee camp. Ironically he was the Senior Prefect of the College when he became a refugee. The Christian management did their best to accommodate the refugees. The Tamil refugees were transported in three Indian ships to Jaffna to save them from the Sinhalese predators.

In the maximum security prison at Welikade, 53 Tamil political detainees were massacred by the Sinhalese convicts and guards in two days of violence. The victims included Kuttimani, Thangathurai, Jegan, Dr. Rajasundaram of the Gandhiam Movement and others held without trial. Mr. David an Architect escaped death and lived to tell the tale.

He was rescued by the militants after two months in a daring jail break in Batticaloa. Kuttimani's eyes were gauged and all the dead bodies were placed in front of the Budha statue in the prison.

By this time the army and the police were politicised and racially motivated. Only Sinhalese were recruited after independence and Tamils were kept out. The politicians, the Buddhist priests and the Sinhala press had been spreading the racial venom. The Sinhalese people had become anti-Tamil and were hostile to the Tamil victims. The injured Tamils were refused treatment at the hospitals by the Sinhalese nurses and attendants. Except in rare instances Sinhalese neighbours refused to give refuge to the hunted Tamils. We did hear of some Muslims allowing Tamils to sleep in their houses for safety.

There were many horror stories. One young woman who was being evacuated by the police in Bandarawela in a van saw her father and brother dead on the roadside. A girl in her early teens related how she saw her father and brother killed before her very eyes by the Sinhalese criminals. A brother of one of our friends went to see his relative but never returned. Aged women had to jump over walls to escape the maniacs. The stories are endless to relate here.

Indians, particularly in Tamil Nadu were angered by the racial atrocities on the Tamils. Indira Gandhi was understood to have warned J.R. to stop the killings and sent the Foreign Minister Narasimha Rao to Sri Lanka to pressurise the Sri Lankan government. At one stage she is reported to have alerted her armed forces for an invasion, but withheld action. When the Sinhalese army and police heard about the possibility of an Indian attack, they vacated most of their positions in Jaffna Peninsula and withdrew to the Town.

The massacre went on for two weeks unchecked. There was condemnation by the international community. Australian and Canadian governments decided to grant asylum to the Tamil refugees. The Jayawardena government was under threat from India and Indira Gandhi, and found that it could not continue with the looting and killing.

No Sinhalese leader has uttered a word of apology for the genocide of the Tamils. Minister Gamini Dissanyake threatened “In 14 minutes, the blood of every Tamil in the country can be sacrificed to the land, by us.” There was poetic justice when Nemesis overtook some years later and his blood was sacrificed to the land. Many Sinhalese writers and journalists later expressed regrets at the cruelties inflicted by the Sinhalese on the Tamils in that black July, not because of the injustice done to the Tamils, but because the world was aghast at the brutalities of the Sinhalese.

The Tamil ethnic problem became internationalised and at last the world community opened their eyes. The large scale exodus of Tamils resulted in the Tamils going into many parts of the world never known to them. They have now become an international community speaking many different world languages. Tamil children have adopted to the different countries in which their parents sought refuge.

Tarzie Vittachie the well known Sinhala journalist in his book on the 1983 racial riots, wrote “Have the Sinhalese and Tamils reached the parting of the ways ?”. Events that unfolded later gives credence to his view. The experiences of the Tamils at the hands of the Sinhalese mobs, the Sinhala armed forces, and the government has made it clear that it would be suicidal for the Tamils to disband the Tamil Tiger army, even if permanent peace is established.

CHAPTER 10

AFTERMATH OF THE HOLOCAUST

Sixth Amendment to the constitution

The Jayawardena government brought in the Sixth Amendment to the constitution making it illegal to advocate separation. All office holders including Members of Parliament were required to take an oath of allegiance to the unitary constitution. The TULF refused to take the oath and boycotted parliament. The Tamil MPs were forced to leave Parliament and many took refuge in India. The Tamils were thus left without representation in parliament. This resulted in the leadership of the Tamils passing to a new generation of young people and paved the way for armed revolt.

Unitary and Federal constitution

The concept of unitary and federal forms of government, has become a serious concern to the people of Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The Tamil leader Chelvanayagam, enunciated the need for a federal form of government in Sri Lanka. While the unity of the country is a legitimate concern of patriots, the insistence on a unitary form is foolish and hypocritical. The Sinhalese who do not want to share political power with the Tamils, keep confusing the people by pretending that there cannot be unity under a federal form of government. Sri Lanka can well be a united country under a federal form of government as in Canada, USA, Switzerland etc. The unitary system has failed and the country has split into two.

Jayawardena government further alienates Tamils

State aided colonization of the Tamil homeland was accelerated by the implementation of the Mahaveli Development Scheme. The Tamils in the Northeast and the

Upcountry were kept out of these schemes and the Sinhalese including armed criminals from the South were planted in Tamil areas. These thugs, and the paid home guards, with the support of the armed forces, inflicted horrible atrocities on the unarmed Tamils in their own homeland

Army camps were established all over the Tamil homeland and Security Zones were declared preventing free movement of Tamils. Economic activity of the Tamils was restricted. Tamil youths were arbitrarily arrested, tortured and killed. In Colombo and Sinhalese areas, thousands of Tamils were rounded up arbitrarily and tortured. This state of affairs continued till the cease-fire in 2202, resulting in large number of Tamils taking up arms.

For instance, the daughter and teenage grandchildren of the chief Hindu priest of Captains Garden temple had gone from Africa to see the sick parents. They were detained for no reason and later released. My brother's grown up sons were woken up in their sleep and detained at the Bambalapitiya police station without any reason and released after some days. The younger boy was arrested a second time without any reason along with some boys who were innocently chatting. The police released him on payment of a ransom. Many Tamils disappeared.

The Tamil homeland was totally destroyed by the Sinhala forces. Tamil homes, were bombed and bulldozed in large numbers. Homes, schools, temples, churches, public buildings were destroyed or taken over by the armed forces for their own use. The trees and plants were destroyed or used for the army camps and defences. Palmyra trees which were dear to the Tamils were pulled down in the thousands. The forests of Eelam were scorched.

Tamil militancy gathers strength

President Jayawardena thundered “if the Tamils want war, they will have war; if the Tamils want peace they will have peace”. It was a declaration of war by the Sinhalese president on the Tamil nation. The Tamil youth took up the challenge. Tamil young men and women underwent military training inside and outside the country and prepared for an armed uprising. The large number of Tamil refugees was a reservoir of recruits.

Probably the genocide of 1983 was the undoing of the Sinhala hegemony, as the armed Tamils later became a strong rebel army, which the Sri Lankan government could not crush. The Tamil resistance, which was a guerilla movement gradually became a powerful army of liberation. Also the Tamil diaspora sent financial assistance to their kith and kin at home, and brought the Sinhalese criminal acts to the world’s attention. Today the Tamils are an international community with connections in many parts of the world.

The LTTE has developed into a territorial and conventional army defeating the Sri Lankan armed forces in many a battle. They have a powerful naval force under Special Commander Soosai, and a merchant fleet plying all over the world. They have a strong Eelam police force under the Police Chief Nadesan. They have now established that there are two separate nations with two territorial conventional armies. These facts need to be recognized.

After the 1983 holocaust, large number of Tamil refugee youth volunteered for military training under the various groups. Tamil girls started joining the LTTE for combat training. They were in many militant groups LTTE, TELO, PLOT, EPRLF, EROS, and so on. LTTE was led by Prabaharan, TELO by Sabaratnam, PLOT by Uma Maheswaran, EPRLF by Padmanaba, and EROS by

Balakumar. It was unfortunate that they could not unite to form one Tamil army. Inter-group rivalry dissipated the movements and weakened the Tamil cause.

Tamil Nadu government and the people were fully sympathetic to the long suffering Sri Lankan Tamils. There were many training camps under the various groups in South India and some in the North. Some militants underwent training in Palestine and other countries. The LTTE, which was a small splinter guerilla group was growing up to be a strong rebel army with the object of freeing the oppressed Tamils from the Sinhala yoke. Prabaharan was in India for some years while the LTTE boys were being trained. Lieut. Colonel Ponnammam (Kuhan) was in charge of the training while Prabaharan was in overall command.

Sinhala ‘Veerayas’

During the 1983 anti-Tamil riots by the Sinhala thugs, one sobering lesson was learnt by both Sinhalese and Tamils. Till 1983 Tamils were always at the receiving end and the Sinhalese behaved like bold fighters as long as Tamils were passive. It was the general impression among the Sinhalese, that Tamils as a race are passive and cowardly. So much so that Tamils were despised as second class people. However, the Tamil Tigers had carried out some daring attacks against the army and police even before 1983, and the Sinhalese had begun to fear and respect them. The young Tamils were a new breed of angry and fearless youth.

When the Sinhalese mobs were going about freely attacking Tamils in 1983, a rumour went round that the Tamil Tiger cadres had appeared in Colombo. The Sinhalese ‘veerayas’ and chandiyas were in total panic and were fleeing in all directions as far as Kalutara and Avisawela. Some ran into Tamil houses for safety. It was obvious that these Sinhalese thugs were a bunch of cowards who will boldly attack if

Tamils are passive, but flee when challenged. There is a saying in Tamil, that a fellow who keeps knocking when one keeps bending down is a fool, and a fellow who keeps bending down when one keeps knocking is also a fool. This is what was happening during the time of the older generation of Tamils. The Tamil youth were not prepared to take things lying down for ever.

Plan to separate Northern and Eastern Provinces

The Sinhalese politicians had a sinister plan to break up the demographic contiguity of the Tamil provinces of North and East. They settled Sinhalese in the border areas connecting the two provinces. For example, Dollar and Kent Farms were owned and occupied by Tamils. The army killed or drove out the Tamils and settled Sinhalese convicts on parole. These convicts were a danger to the Tamil villagers. In 1984 the militants retaliated by killing and driving away these convicts. The Sinhalese renamed the Tamil villages. The ancestral Tamil land called Manalaru was renamed by the Sinhalese as Welioya, and 25,000 Sinhalese were settled in the areas aided by the Sinhalese army. Another Tamil village Nelukkulam, was re-named Janakapura to honour Janaka Perera, a Sinhalese army officer who had driven the Tamils out and brought in Sinhalese convicts to settle on Tamil lands. Janaka Perera was rewarded with a diplomatic post in Australia despite demands by Tamils to have him charged as a war criminal. He has also been accused of being responsible for the mass graves at Chemmani in Jaffna, where 600 Tamils are said to have been buried.

The Gandhiam Movement was a charitable organization to help poor Tamils to live in the Vanni. They were giving free food and milk for the benefit of children. The organization was managed by Dr. Rajasundaram and an Architect Mr. David. The Sinhalese army arrested them and broke up the organization. The Upcountry Tamils who had settled in the

North after the intermittent killings by Sinhalese thugs, were driven out by the army. Many of them were forcibly loaded into buses, taken to the estates and dumped there. Many others were killed.

The Tamil exodus

The number of army camps in the Tamil areas of the Northeast were increased, and Security Zones were declared obstructing freedom of movement. The common suffering at the hands of the Sinhalese government and thugs, united the Eelam Tamils of the different parts of Northeast and the Upcountry. Economically the Tamils were strangled. Tamil youth taken into custody were tortured and 3,300 Tamil civilians were killed. The government followed a scorched earth policy, and Northeast was economically blockaded. In addition to the killings by the armed forces and police, the government enlisted Sinhalese and Muslim home guards, who committed the worst atrocities on the Tamils. All this resulted in the exodus of Tamils out of Sri Lanka to all parts of the world.

The Sinhala dominated government systematically left the Tamils out of the public services, police, army, higher education and land settlement. It is reported that as of now the Sinhalese who are 74 % of the population hold 92 % of the jobs in the public sector. The balance 8 % are shared by the Tamils and Muslims. There were exceptions when Tamils held high posts such as those of Attorney General and Inspector General of Police. But two sparrows do not a summer make.

CHAPTER 11

THE EELAM WAR 1

Beginning of the Eelam Wars

The war of Eelam liberation can be said to have started sometime after the holocaust of 1983. The period of conflict from 1983 to the arrival of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in 1987 is referred to as Eelam War 1. Prior to that there was only sporadic low intensity conflicts between the Tamil youth and the Sri Lankan armed forces, composed of almost exclusively Sinhalese. The mentality of the Sinhalese men in the armed forces, the Sinhalese politicians and the Sinhalese masses was that of rulers, treating the Tamils as the ruled. The Sinhalese armed forces and the police behaved like an army of occupation., and never made an attempt to win the hearts and minds of the Tamils. They never anticipated a Tamil resistance.

The Black July of 1983, changed the scenario. Large number of Tamils were rendered refugees and many of the Tamil youth volunteered to join the Tamil armed organizations. Young Tamils underwent military training at home and abroad. In the jungles of Vanni, some boys learnt to use firearms. Many were trained in India and some in the Middle East. The numerous militant organizations that were formed became more powerful, but they were not united under a single organization. The different militant bodies started carrying out some daring armed operations that jolted the Sinhalese army and hierarchy.

Guerilla attacks

The militant groups carried out successful attacks on the Chavakacheri police station, and on the train going to Jaffna from Colombo. In 1985, the LTTE attacked a police station

near the Sinhalese border town of Madawachi. The Jaffna police station was overrun by the LTTE. At the beginning of the Eelam war, although there were different Tamil militant groups, they helped each other when cornered by the SL army. During Eelam War 1, Jaffna Peninsula came under the control of the Tamil militants, while the army had garrisons in places like Palali, Elephant Pass and Jaffna Fort. Colonel Kittu was commander of Jaffna till he was seriously injured by a grenade attack. The Tamil boys also controlled a good part of the Northeast jungles and outlying areas.

Sinhala atrocities

At Valvettirurai, over 50 Tamil civilians were locked up in the community centre building and blown up. Over 200 civilians were believed to have been killed in that explosion. Some Tamil militants under the command of Colonel Victor of Mannar, in retaliation, drove into Anuradhapura town and killed about 150 Sinhalese civilians. The police panicked and opened fire on a suspected van killing more Sinhalese. The Tamil raiders nonchalantly drove back to Mannar through the Wilpattu National Park forcing one of the Sinhalese game park employees to show the way out of the jungle. This incident sent shock waves in Sinhala areas as hitherto only Tamils civilians were being massacred by the Sinhalese army and Sinhalese mobs. Colonel Victor, the LTTE commander of Mannar later died in battle.

On the day after the Anuradhapura massacre, the Sinhalese Navy men killed 48 Tamil passengers including women and children with axes and clubs on a boat named Kumudhini near Nedunthivu (Delft), an islet off Jaffna peninsula.

Cease-fire and Thimpu Talks

In July and August 1985, there was a temporary cessation of conflict, and talks were held between the Sri Lankan

government and the Tamil militants in Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan. Indira Gandhi had been assassinated by her Sikh bodyguard and Rajiv Gandhi, her son had become Prime Minister of India. Indian Foreign Secretary, Romesh Bandari who was tactless and probably under the influence of the SL government, played an important role in these talks. The talks failed, as the Sinhala dominated government was not prepared to accede to the demands of the Tamil militants. The Tamils demanded the recognition of Tamils as a nation, the Northeast as the Tamil homeland, the right of Tamils for self-determination and right of citizenship for all Tamils in Sri Lanka.

During these talks, the TULF represented by Amirthalingam and the Tamil militant groups represented by Prabakaran, Sabaratnam, Padmanaba and Balakumar were presenting a united front. Lawyer Nadesan Satyendra also was among the Tamil delegates. After the breakdown of the talks, there was inter group rivalry, and LTTE overwhelmed TELO, EPRLF, EROS and PLOT. This unfortunate hostility among the Tamil militants considerably weakened the Tamil cause.

Sinhala state terrorism continues

The killings, rapes, mass arrests, disappearances and torture of Tamils and destruction of property by the Sinhalese armed forces and police continued unabated. In 1986 more than 25 Tamil civilians were killed by the Special Task Force, in Iruthayapuram in the Batticaloa district. In the hamlet of Udumbankulam in the Amparai district over 100 Tamil farmers were brutally killed by the Sinhalese armed forces.

Women in LTTE

The continuing atrocities by the Sinhalese on Tamil civilians and women resulted in large number of women joining the

LTTE to fight them. The Tamil girls had been subjected to sexual assaults, rape and humiliation by the occupying forces. This changed their attitude towards the Tamil struggle for liberation. The hardy village girls were able to withstand the rigours of jungle warfare. The Tamil women had been part and parcel of the conservative Tamil society. The Hindus especially were more conservative than the Christians and the men were protective of the women. All this changed after the holocaust of 1983 and the Tamil society has undergone a complete change. It is ironical that the Tamil women's LTTE battalions are the most feared by the Sinhalese army men.

The LTTE women fighters were led by Colonel Sothia, who died of heart attack. Now Colonel Vithusa is in charge of the LTTE women cadres. She is the most senior of the women commanders and holds a high position in the LTTE organization on par with the most senior male commanders. She is from a conservative Jaffna Brahmin family, and started in the LTTE as a ranker when she was a young girl. She underwent training as a commando in the training camp in the Alampil jungles in Mullaitivu, and by her courage and ability rose to the highest position.

Colombo Tamil society women like UNO Rapporteur Radhika Coomaraswamy, seated in the comfort of Colombo and pampered by the Sinhala government, have no understanding of the Tamil women of the Northeast, who were tortured, raped and sexually abused by the Sinhalese. Such women like Radhika should highlight the atrocities by the Sinhala armed forces and thugs on the Tamil women. She should understand the difference between causes and effects. Radhika, Kadirgamar and the like are doing veiled cover up for the Sinhalese atrocities.

Lieut Colonel Ponnammam and Yogaratnam Yogi

During the early days of the armed resistance, many Tamil youth at the risk of their lives joined the liberation movements and attacked the Sinhalese army and police. In the early eighties one of the young Tamils who joined Prabaharan to resist Sinhala terrorism was Kuhan of Kaladdi, near Jaffna town. He was known to his comrades as Ponnammam. He was hunted by the police and had to flee from his home and live as a fugitive. I have heard about the boldness and daring of Kuhan from his uncle Mr. S. Kandiah, who was my colleague in Zambia and Botswana.

Lieut.Colonel Ponnammam (Kuhan) was in charge of the training of LTTE cadres while Prabaharan was in overall command. His closeness to Prabaharan was evident from videos, which showed him accompanying Prabaharan when he was inspecting a passing out parade of LTTE fighters. Ponnammam was also organising the manufacture of arms and explosives and was high up in the organization. But for his premature death, today he would have been one of the top men in the LTTE hierarchy, probably second to Prabaharan.

Ponnammam took part in many daring attacks by the LTTE on army and police. He attained martyrdom in 1987 when he and many of the LTTE fighters were blown into thin air at Kaithady when a water bowser heavily laden with explosives accidentally blew up during an attack planned on Navatkuli army camp. The death of Ponnammam was a great loss to the Tamil resistance and Prabaharan was deeply agitated.

After his death, his brother Yogaratnam Yogi, who was educated in England as an Engineer, came to Sri Lanka and joined the movement. He accompanied Prabaharan and Anton Balasingam to Delhi in 1987, to meet Rajiv Gandhi before the arrival of the IPKF. Yogi was active during the

time IPKF was in the Northeast. It was Yogi who symbolically handed over a revolver to the IPKF to signify the handing over of the arms by LTTE. Yogi was active after the IPKF left, in ousting the EPRLF and bringing the Northeast under LTTE control. He was one of those who represented the Tamil Tigers in their negotiations with the Premadasa government. Yogi has now withdrawn from active service.

Vijaya Kumaratunga

Vijaya Kumaratunga, the late husband of President Chandrika, visited Jaffna in an effort to bring about peace. He took with him the relatives of two Sinhalese soldiers who had been captured by the LTTE. Kittu was then the LTTE commander of Jaffna and they had a cordial meeting. The meeting of the relatives with the captured soldiers was emotional. Later on these two soldiers were released by the LTTE, in exchange for two of the LTTE fighters in detention. Kittu, the LTTE commander of Jaffna and his aide carried out the prisoner exchange. The Sinhala extremists were furious with Vijaya and the JVP killed him in February 1988.

Appapillai Amirthalingam

While Tamil militancy was gaining strength, the influence of the Tamil politicians waned. After the demise of Thanthai Chelva, Appapillai Amirthalingam was leader of the TULF, and the spokesman of the Tamil people in Parliament. In 1977, TULF won 18 seats and Amirthalingam became leader of the opposition. It was the first and last time that the position was held by a Tamil. The 6th Amendment to the constitution by J.R. Jayawardena, compelling all MPs to sign an oath of allegiance to the unitary constitution, resulted in the Tamil MPs leaving the country for India. Amirthalingam and Sivasithambaram left for India and later came back. In

1989, Amirthalingam and Yoheeswaran, the Jaffna MP were assassinated and Sivasithambaram injured. The death of Amirthalingam removed a Tamil voice in Parliament. He was an ardent supporter of the Tamil cause from his University days.

The Black Tigers

On the eve of Eelam War 1, in 1987, the Jayawadena government planned a massive attack to occupy the Jaffna peninsula. The offensive was named Operation Liberation. The army occupied Vadammaradchy and was camped in the Nelliady Central College near Pt Pedro. The LTTE staged the first suicide attack by the Black Tigers. Captain Miller drove a truck laden with explosives killing himself and 200 army men. The Minister of National Security Lalith Athulathmudali who was talking tall, visited the destroyed camp and returned a subdued and sadder man. About the same time, a car bomb exploded at the central bus stand in Colombo killing over 100 people.

Thousands of Tamil youth were arrested and imprisoned in the South. Many disappeared. Jaffna was economically blockaded and severely bombarded causing immense destruction. The plans of Lalith Athulathmudali and the Jayawadena government were abruptly halted by Indian intervention. Under the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement, the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) arrived in Sri Lanka and occupied the Northeast.

CHAPTER 12

THE PATRIARCH OF UPCOUNTRY TAMILS

The Tamils were led by three outstanding leaders in their struggle against Sinhala racism in independent Ceylon. To call them affectionately, they are Thanthai Chelva, Thalaivar Thonda and Thalapathi Praba. Thanthai Chelva resisted Sinhala racism through Satyagraha, and non-violence on behalf of all Tamils in Ceylon. Thalaivar Thonda resisted racism through non-violence, trade union action and strategy, to liberate the Upcountry Tamils. Thalapathy Praba resisted state oppression by armed resistance. Thanthai Chelva's life history has been given already. Prabakaran's life will be given in detail later.

The life of Saumiyamoorthy Thondaman depicts the story of Upcountry Tamils in the last six decades of the 20th century. He was a man of extraordinary achievements. Before his death, he had won back much of the political rights which his people had been deprived of. However, his people remain economically backward and many are still stateless.

Early life

Saumiyamoorthy Thondaman was born in Pudukkotai in Tamil Nadu in 1913. He was the son of Karupiah Thondaman, who migrated to Ceylon as a 'kankani'. Kankani is the Tamil word for supervisor of tea estate labourers. Head Kankani is in charge of all kankanis and labourers in the estate. They were affluent and wielded considerable influence in the estate. Thondaman's father probably rose up as Head Kankani and by hard work and enterprise became the owner of Wavendon Estate in Ramboda.



Saumiyamoorthy Thondaman

Young Saumiyamoorthy came to Ceylon in 1924 at the age of 11. He studied in St. Andrews College, Gampola and took to planting, a vocation then monopolised by Britishers. He was fortunate as his father was a successful estate owner. The whole family later become successful as estate managers and owned many of them. I came to know more of this family as I became a close friend of his brother's son Karupiah Arumugam, who married Kamala, a daughter of our family friends. The Ravenscraig Estate in Nawalapitiya, owned and managed by him was a pleasure to see.

Entry into politics

The Ceylon Indian Congress was formed in 1939 to represent Upcountry Tamils, and in 1940 Thondaman entered politics as Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Gampola Branch. The CIC became a powerful organization both politically and as a trade union by the time Ceylon became independent in 1948. He led the Upcountry

Tamil community till he died in 1999 at the age of 86, while holding a ministerial post.

Upcountry Tamils deprived of citizenship and franchise

In the 1947 elections, the Upcountry Tamils secured 8 seats out of total of 101 in the first Ceylon Parliament. Thondaman was the leader of the CIC and won the Nuwara Eliya seat. The block estate Tamil votes influenced 12 other electorates in favour of left parties. D.S. Senananyake, the first Prime Minister and the father of Sinhala racism, introduced legislation to deprive the one million Upcountry Tamils of their birth rights. They were deprived of citizenship and franchise, though they had lived in Ceylon for generations.

Upcountry Tamils were brought to Ceylon by the British in the nineteenth century as indentured labourers from Tamil Nadu to work on Tea and rubber estates. They lived in squalor and appalling conditions and were denied basic facilities. Thondaman spearheaded Upcountry Tamil struggle for their basic rights.

Jaffna Tamils fail Upcountry brethren

The sad side of this tragic episode was that the Ceylon Tamils, particularly the Jaffna Tamils led by G.G. Ponnambalam and the Tamil Congress supported this despicable law. Chelvanayagam saved the honour of the Tamils by breaking away and formed the Federal Party. The older generation of Jaffna Tamils caused a lot of self-inflicted damage to themselves by their petty attitudes. They caused disunity and weakened the Tamil cause by considering themselves different from all other Tamils. All Tamils in Ceylon should have at that time united to resist Sinhala racism and the laws against the Upcountry Tamils.

Agitation against Sinhala racism

The CIC under the leadership of Thondaman carried on a Satyagraha campaign against the unjust laws, but called it off as it was ineffective. The agitation was ignored by the Sinhalese politicians. The Upcountry Tamils were not only handicapped economically and in education. Now they were without any political leverage and no seat in Parliament. It was infuriating to hear the Sinhalese refer disparagingly to the Upcountry Tamils as 'kallathonis' (illicit boat people). Later the Northeast Tamils were being insulted by the Sinhalese as 'para damalos'. The founder of Sinhalese race, Vijaya came to Ceylon as illicit immigrant banished from Bangladesh or Northeast India. Many immigrants have merged with the Sinhalese. Now they are talking of Tamils, who were the original inhabitants of Ceylon in disparaging terms. Provocation was making Tamil endurance unbearable and resistance unavoidable.

Renaming to Ceylon Workers Congress

In 1950, the name of Ceylon Indian Congress was changed to Ceylon Workers Congress, and it became a powerful force as it controlled a large and strong trade union. The word 'Indian' is misleading and should not be used in referring to Upcountry Tamils. The Sinhalese who claim to have come from India are not referred to as Indian Sinhalese.

Sirima-Shastri Pact

In a glaring case of betrayal, the Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri agreed to the repatriation of 600,000 of the one million Upcountry Tamils to India. This was done against the wishes of the Tamils of Ceylon by signing the Sirima-Shastri Pact in October 1964. The Northeast and Upcountry Tamils had by then been alerted to the danger of Sinhalese racism and were against the mass deportation.

Under the agreement, 375,000 Upcountry Tamils were to be given Ceylon citizenship. However, this was done at a slow pace by the Sinhalese administration.

The champion of orphaned people

Thondaman became the champion of the oppressed estate underdogs. It is a sad fact that the estate Tamils lived in lines with no proper facilities. The Sinhalese thugs treated them like sub-human beings. It was depressing to see the estate labourers manhandled by the Sinhalese when they go to town. The Upcountry Tamil leaders gradually roused their alertness and they began to assert themselves. The estate Tamils began to defend themselves and give it back when provoked. This oppressed Tamil community was gradually becoming a powerful force.

Eviction of estate Tamils

The Srimavo government was severely racist and evicted the estate Tamils by various ruses. They nationalised the estates and uprooted the Tamils to settle Sinhalese. During the repeated anti-Tamil riots by the Sinhalese, estate Tamils like the Northeast Tamils were chased out of their homes. Consequently, some of them sought refuge in the Northeast. The Tamil refugees from the estates were trying to make a living in the remote areas of Northeast, but many were again mercilessly attacked and uprooted by the Sinhalese army.

Common suffering of Northeast and Upcountry Tamils

The Tamils of both Northeast and the Upcountry, were bound by the common suffering at the hands of the Sinhala state and mob terror. They were all made refugees, victimised and uprooted from their homes. In the sixties and seventies 600,000 Upcountry Tamils were forcibly deported. In the eighties and nineties 600,000 Northeast Tamils were

forced to flee the country as a result of Sinhalese terror. The common suffering united the Tamils of all communities. The ethnic cleansing of Tamils was effectively executed by The Sinhalese state and mob terror.

Triumvirate of TULF leaders

When the Tamil United Liberation Front was formed in 1976, Thondaman was elected to the triumvirate of leaders along with G.G. Ponnambalam and Chelvanayagam. When the TULF decided to agitate for separation, Thondaman chose a different path that he thought would help his own estate community.

Re-entry into Parliament

In 1960 and 1965 Thondaman was made an appointed Member of Parliament to represent the stateless Tamils. When the number of Tamils registered as citizens increased, their influence in elections began to be felt. In 1971, after 30 years, he won an elections on the Tamil votes in Nuwara Eliya. In 1978 he was appointed to the cabinet as Minister of Rural Industries. From then on, almost always he held a ministerial post under different governments till his death. He used his ministerial position to uplift the economic position of the estate people and to regain part of the lost rights. In 1994 the CWC secured nine seats in Parliament and became a force to be reckoned with in Sri Lankan politics.

Thondaman extracts concessions

Thondaman used his political and ministerial position to win back some of the rights of his oppressed people though much remains to be done. Most of the Tamil Upcountry people, though not all, fought and got their civic rights. Wages also were increased due to trade union action. Thondaman

succeeded due to various factors. He was a master strategist and used his cabinet position to obtain concessions. He used the strength of the CWC trade unions to pressurise the government and estate employers. He used the block Tamil vote in parliamentary, local and presidential elections. He used the voting power of the CWC in Parliament to influence the formation of governments. He came to be regarded as king maker, much to the resentment of Sinhala racists.

Northeast rebellion helps Upcountry Tamils

Most of all, he was greatly helped by the fear the Sinhalese government had of the armed resistance in Northeast. As the estate Tamils were isolated in the central highlands, the Sinhalese would have suppressed them. With the LTTE hammering the SL armed forces in the Northeast, the government did not want a revolt in the Highlands. Thondaman used his influence with his people to prevent the Upcountry Tamil youth from joining the armed rebellion. Such a revolt would have had far reaching consequences. Nevertheless, the estate youth settled in the Northeast could not be prevented from throwing their lot with their bothers and sisters of the Northeast. The truth is that despite all the strategies of Thondaman and the strength of the Upcountry Tamils, they would have been kept down by the Sinhalese, if the Northeast Tamils had not posed a serious armed threat.

State Funeral

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When he died at the age of 86, he was still active as a cabinet minister. He was given a well attended state funeral, and he was the only Tamil to be given that honour. Over 100,000 people attended his funeral. His people cried. So great was his influence with his people, that his grandson Arumugam Thondaman was recognized as his successor even before his death. Today Arumugam Thondaman is the President of the CWC and a cabinet Minister. Saumiyamoorthy Thondaman

can be considered the greatest of all Upcountry Tamils and his contributions were unique. He came to be regarded as the uncrowned king of the Upcountry Tamils and a king maker in Sri Lankan politics.



Upcountry Tamil Tea Pluckers

CHAPTER 13

THE IPKF WAR

Operation Liberation

In 1987, when the Eelam War 1 was ongoing, Sri Lankan Defence Minister Lalith Athulathmudali planned for the forces to occupy Jaffna Peninsula, which was under the control of LTTE. The Offensive was named 'Operation Liberation' and the army in large numbers, entered Vadamardcchy. There was massive destruction of the Jaffna peninsula. There was blockade of food, fuel and medicine and the people were driven to starvation. The armed forces advanced on a large scale by land, sea and air using Tamil civilians as a human shield for the Sinhalese army. They took 4,000 youths as hostage, and destroyed houses hospitals and schools. The army designated the temples as 'safe areas' advising people to gather there. Treacherously the forces bombed the temples where the Tamils had gone for safety.

The Black Tigers carried out their first suicide attack on the Nelliady army camp. Captain Miller drove a truck with explosives into the army camp at Nelliady Central College killing over 200 soldiers. Lalith Athulathmudali saw the destruction and was visibly shaken. About the same time, a car bomb exploded at the Colombo Central Bus Station killing over 100 people. The country was in turmoil. People in India, particularly Tamil Nadu were getting agitated.

Air drop and talks

The Indian government dispatched a flotilla of boats to Jaffna with supplies of food. The Sri Lankan navy prevented them on the way and turned them back. The Indian government responded a few hours later by sending transport planes over Jaffna dropping food supplies. The planes were

escorted by Jet fighters. The Sinhalese were flabbergasted and the Sri Lankan government protested that their sovereignty had been violated.

Things were taking place behind the scenes between the Indian and Sri Lankan governments. The Jayawardena government was intimidated by the airdrops and was forced to submit to Indian intervention. Negotiations were taking place between the two governments. The Indian High Commissioner in Colombo, Mr Dixit was actively involved. Prabaharan, then in Jaffna was invited by India for talks and taken in an Indian plane. He was accompanied by Anton Balasingam, Yogaratnam Yogi and Dileepan of the LTTE. However, they were kept incommunicado in a hotel in Delhi and felt deeply frustrated. They were virtually forced to agree to whatever that had been decided.

Indo-Sri Lanka Accord

On July 29, 1987, the Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi and the Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayawardena signed an agreement known as the Indo-Sri Lanka accord. Under the agreement, the Indian army referred to as the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), landed in Jaffna to enforce the agreement and maintain peace in Northeast. The IPKF was to disarm the militants under the agreement. The Tamils welcomed the Indian army jubilantly, but the LTTE were suspicious. The Sri Lankan history would have taken a different turn had the Indian government taken Prabaharan into confidence and accommodated his wishes.

The Sinhalese were frightened but angry at the arrival of the Indian army. There were demonstrations in the South by the extremist Sinhalese. The JVP, SLFP, MEP, and Sinhalese racist parties were making noises, but they were impotent and frightened. The Indian army could have landed in Colombo if the Indians so decided.

Rajiv Gandhi made a visit to Sri Lanka immediately after the arrival of the IPKF. During an inspection of the guard of honour, a Sinhalese sailor attacked him with the butt of a gun, but he escaped serious injury. The Sri Lankan commander escorting Rajiv Gandhi, intercepted the blow, and young Rajiv, a former pilot, swiftly ducked.

Prabaharan held a largely attended meeting at Suthumalai in Jaffna, and on behalf of the LTTE and the Tamils, agreed to abide by the agreement. The LTTE surrendered a large amount of arms and ammunitions. Yogaratnam Yogi, the brother of the Late Ponnammann, on behalf of the LTTE, symbolically handed over a revolver to the IPKF commander at a ceremony in the Palali airport.

The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution

In August 1987, The J.R. government passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the Sri Lankan constitution. Under its provisions, Provincial Councils were created and the Tamil homeland of Northern and Eastern Provinces were merged into one Northeast Province. This was an important landmark in the Tamil freedom struggle. However, unfortunately, things took a turn for the worse.

Death fast by Dileepan

The LTTE felt that the Indian and Sri Lankan governments were not honouring the conditions of the agreements and there was some tension. One of the LTTE cadres, Thileepan, the LTTE's political wing leader began a fast unto death. Unfortunately, the powers that be, failed to take action and he died fasting. This infuriated the LTTE and a section of the Tamil people.

Death of twelve LTTE commanders

In October came the tragedy. Top LTTE commanders, Kumarappa and Pulendran and fifteen other LTTE leaders were arrested by the Sri Lankan navy in the seas. They were held as prisoners in the Palaly airport surrounded by Sinhalese soldiers. The whole episode was inexplicable. There was an accord and the LTTE had surrendered their weapons under the accord. Palaly airport was under IPKF control. There was no reason to arrest the LTTE commanders. The J.R government, particularly National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali insisted that the arrested commanders should be brought to Colombo for 'interrogation'. There was no doubt what was intended. Knowing the brutality of the Sinhalese policemen towards Tamil detainees, the LTTE commanders knew they would be tortured and killed. What could not be explained was why the Indian authorities decided to permit these well known LTTE top men to be taken to Colombo. The airport was under Indian control, and they could have refused to allow the Sri Lankan army to take the LTTE commanders to Colombo. The LTTE men bit the cyanide and committed suicide. Twelve of them including Kumarappa and Pulendran died and five were in serious condition.

Operation Pawan

Prabaharan was furious at the perfidy of those concerned. Tamils were outraged. Valvettiturai from where the dead commanders hailed was in mourning. Unfortunately, the outraged Tamils killed some Sinhalese in revenge. J.R. Jayawardena insisted that Indian government should act against the LTTE. General Sundarji, the Indian Commander-in-chief visited Jaffna. He was a Tamil from South India. He made a fatal underestimation, and on his recommendation the IPKF attacked the LTTE, hoping to complete the operation in 72 hours. The offensive was

named Operation Pawan. It turned out to be a failure and the fighting dragged on with losses to both Indians and Tamils, much to the satisfaction of the cunning J.R. and Sinhalese.

The Indian army advanced from Palali and occupied all Jaffna. At the outset, the Indian army tried to capture Prabaharan who was camping near the Jaffna University. The airborne unit that landed there was ambushed and surrounded. The Sikhs fought bravely, but were overwhelmed by the LTTE cadres. When the Indians ran out of ammunition they baton charged as a last resort. All were killed except one who lived to tell the tale.

In occupying Jaffna, the IPKF massacred 7,000 civilians and in the process committed acts of brutality. It was reported that the Tiger snipers picked off the commanding officers, and the leaderless rank and file went amok, not knowing the land, the people and the language. They sexually assaulted women and plundered the civilians. Even doctors, nurses and hospital staff were not spared. My wife's elderly aunt and her young daughter, like many other innocents were killed in their home in Urumpirai. The Tigers withdrew into the Vanni jungles. The Indian army saturated the whole of Northeast with 100,000 men and heavy armour. However, the LTTE command structure was intact and they carried out incessant guerilla attacks on the Indian army.

The IPKF are alleged to have bombed the two Tamil newspaper offices of Eelamurasu and Murasoli in Jaffna to suppress news. The first woman LTTE fighter to die in battle was 2nd Lt. Malathi. The excesses of the Indian army antagonised the Tamil public, who had welcomed them with open arms when they first arrived.

Northeast Provincial Council

The Indian government made another fatal mistake. They allied with the undisciplined EPRLF group to sideline the LTTE. In the elections to the Northeast Provincial Council, with the backing of the Indian army, the EPRLF came to power. Varatharaja Perumal of the EPRLF was appointed Chief Minister. The EPRLF joined the IPKF in hunting the LTTE. They formed the Tamil National Army, and at the later stages opted for separation. They carried on till the IPKF left, but were liquidated shortly after.

LTTE fights back

The LTTE fighters under Prabakaran and Mathaya (Mahendraraja), carried out deadly attacks on the IPKF from the jungles. The battle hardened LTTE cadres withstood the Indian onslaughts. In an effort to trap Prabakaran and the LTTE leadership, the Indians sent in the Gurkhas who were renowned as the best jungle fighters. Although they fought their way close to Prabakaran in the Mullaitivu jungles, they could not capture him. The IPKF war dragged on for three years, and the Indian army lost over 1,200 men.

The second JVP revolt

In 1988 the JVP staged a second revolt in the South. One of their demands was the withdrawal of the IPKF from Northeast. They killed many police and army men. They were also suspected of killing Vijaya Kumarantunga, the husband of the present President Chandrika. Vijaya was a popular film star and politician with liberal views. The Sri Lankan government put down the rebellion with a heavy hand. Thousands of youth were brutally massacred in retaliation by the armed forces. Rohana Wijeweera, the JVP leader was captured, tortured and put to death by the Sri Lankan police.

President Ranasinghe, cease-fire and talks

In 1988 Ranasinghe Premadasa took over as President from Jayawardena. He was opposed to the presence of the IPKF in Sri Lanka and asked Rajiv Gandhi to withdraw them. Premadasa declared a cease-fire with the LTTE and started negotiating with them. Anton Balasingam, his wife Adele, Yogaratnam Yogi, Paramu Murthi and others represented LTTE.

Departure of the IPKF

Under pressure from Premadasa and the LTTE, the IPKF started pulling out in 1989, and ultimately in 1990, the last of the IPKF left the shores of Sri Lanka. It was a sad episode in the Tamil Eelam struggle. They left after suffering heavy losses and failing to accomplish their mission of resolving the Tamil-Sinhalese conflict. The talks between the Premadasa government and LTTE broke down thereafter and the Second Eelam war started.



IPKF in Sri Lanka

CHAPTER 14

THE EELAM WAR 2

President Premadasa requests IPKF withdrawal

When Ranasinghe Premadasa took over as President of Sri Lanka, there was a change in the Sri Lankan policy towards the IPKF presence in the Northeast of Sri Lanka. Premadasa was opposed to the induction of the Indian army into Sri Lanka. He requested the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to withdraw the IPKF from Sri Lanka. The Indian government was not prepared to withdraw their army from the Northeast immediately, and there was some correspondence between the two governments.

Cease-fire and talks

Premadasa sent some feelers to the LTTE supporters in London for negotiations. Anton Balasingam and Adele were invited from London, while Yogi, Paramu Murthi and some LTTE cadres were picked up by the Sri Lankan Air force and taken to Colombo for talks. Premadasa declared a cease-fire with the LTTE and again requested the Indian army's withdrawal. The LTTE started a political party named the Peoples Front of Liberation Tigers. Mathaya was Chairman and Yogi the Secretary. Premadasa was persuaded to supply arms to the beleaguered LTTE to fight the IPKF and they were delivered.

The Indians pointed out that the large Indian army and armaments cannot be moved out at short notice due to logistic problems. V.P. Singh became Prime minister of India and eventually the IPKF left Sri Lanka in 1990. Along with them Varatharaja Perumal left and the EPRLF melted away. The LTTE moved in and filled the vacuum left by the departure of IPKF and occupied most of Northeast.

Talks fail

Premadasa was a self made man from lowly beginnings. He was not highly educated, but was persevering and known as a go getter. He was under the illusion that he could settle the Tamil problem within a unitary constitution. Unfortunately, the Sinhalese through ignorance or arrogance held fast to the concept of unitary constitution like leaches. Many failed to understand the difference between, a unitary and a united state. They failed to understand that a country can well be united under non-unitary constitution. The option of federalism was not acceptable to the die hard Sinhalese. The motive was to prevent the dilution of Sinhala hegemony and sharing power with the Tamil minority.

Hostilities break out

No sooner the IPKF left, differences surfaced between LTTE and the Premadasa government. The LTTE requested the 6th Amendment to be repealed as they wanted devolution and the right of self-determination. They also wanted the dissolution of the Northeast District Council controlled by EPRLF. Premadasa was stalling and clinging to the concept of a unitary state of one people, one nation and one homeland. Minister Hameed who was playing an important part in the talks was asked to request the Tigers to surrender their arms. Tigers were not prepared to comply and conflict was becoming inevitable.

Premadasa ordered the SL forces to fan out and occupy the Tamil Northeast Province. There was tension between the army and the LTTE, and fighting broke out all over Northeast. The Eelam War 2 thus started and raged from 1991 to 1994. Ranjan Wijeratne was the Deputy Minister of Defence and declared that he would annihilate the Tigers. In March 1991, he was killed in a bomb explosion. The LTTE occupied a good part of Northeast and many policemen

surrendered or fled. The Sinhalese forces bombarded the Tamil areas by land, sea and air and enforced an economic embargo. They counter attacked and advanced in the East.

Tamils massacred by army and Muslims in the East

In 1990 the Sinhalese armed forces, Muslims and home guards massacred hundreds of Tamils at Veeramunai South of Batticaloa. They massacred 150 Tamils in the village of Kokkadicholai. 158 Tamil civilians from the Eastern University Refugee Camp and 184 from Sathurukondan village were rounded up and slaughtered.

Battle for Jaffna Fort

The LTTE laid siege to the army holed up in the old Dutch Fort in Jaffna town and captured it eventually. The SL government tried to break the siege by intense bombing by land and air. The siege went on for 107 days and the army was isolated. The army was finally forced to evacuate by sea via a tunnel in the Fort.

Assassination of Rajiv Gandhi

In May 1991, Rajiv Gandhi, electioneering in Madras was killed, allegedly by a woman suicide bomber. The Indian government suspected the LTTE and banned it under TADA. Since then the relationship between the Indian government and Sri Lankan Tamils has been strained.

The Battle for Elephant Pass

The Jaffna Peninsula is connected to the mainland by a narrow strip of land at Elephant Pass. The SL government maintained a large army camp there, and the Sinhalese soldiers were harassing the Tamils and preventing the free

flow of people. It was a symbol of Sinhalese hegemony and subjugation of Tamils

In July 1991, Prabakaran made an ambitious plan (Operation Ahayam Kadal Veli) to capture Elephant Pass. He made a determined effort to overrun the camp, but he was unlucky. An improvised armoured vehicle leading the Tamil Tiger vanguard was prematurely blown up by an alert soldier. The Tigers fought bravely but they could not capture the camp although they had surrounded it. The SL army sent in reinforcements to rescue the beleaguered garrison by sea. They landed on the East of the Peninsula at Vettilaikerni and Kaddaikadu sea coast and advanced by land towards Elephant Pass.

Prabakaran and his fighters offered stiff and determined battle to stop the reinforcements, but many were killed. The terrain favoured the better armed Sinhala forces. After 24 days of fighting Prabakaran ordered a withdrawal to avoid further losses. LTTE losses were heavy. 573 Tigers including 123 women died fighting to capture the important gateway to Jaffna. The ferocious Tamil Tiger licked its wounds and withdrew into the Vanni den to live and fight another day.

It was a major set back, but the LTTE leadership had learnt important lessons for the future. It was the first major direct conventional onslaught by the LTTE on a big army camp. Prabakaran realised that he required a larger Tamil army with better equipment on land and a strong navy to interdict the SL navy at sea.

Assassinations

In 1992, Lalith Athulathmudali was killed by a gunman. Major General Denzil Kobbekaduwa along with six veteran army officers were blown up by a mine on one of the islands

off Jaffna near Arali. Admiral Clancy Fernando was killed in Colombo when being driven in a vehicle.

Assassination of Premadasa

President Premadasa was killed by a suicide bomber in Colombo at a procession in 1993. He was succeeded as President by the then Prime Minister D.B. Wijetunga. The latter was a man of limited ability and the ethnic problem continued to drift.

Mathaya (Mahendraraja)

In 1993/94 there was a crisis within the LTTE that shook at the seams, but the organization weathered the storm. Mathaya (Mahendraraja was his real name) was the Deputy Leader of the LTTE and the next most powerful leader after Prabaharan in the organization. The LTTE high command found him guilty of colluding with RAW of the Indian Intelligence to eliminate the leadership and take over the LTTE. He and a few of his fellow conspirators were executed on December 28, 1994, after investigation.

Sinhalese and Muslim Home Guards

The government formed a para-military force in Northeast to help the army to oppress the Tamils. The men were drawn from Sinhalese and Muslim undesirables and paid monthly salaries to carry out the grisly tasks against the defenseless Tamils. They carried out the worst atrocities against the Tamils, including rape, torture, murder and espionage.

The Sinhalese government achieved a dual objective. Not only were the Home Guards used to kill and drive out Tamils. The Muslim Home Guards were used to create hostility between the Muslims and Tamils. The atrocities by the paid Muslim Home Guards unfortunately resulted in the

LTTE taking action against the Muslim community. There were retaliatory attacks on Muslims and they were expelled from Jaffna. The Muslims should not allow the Sinhalese to use them as pawns against the Tamils.

War continues

The war continued with the SL forces killing innocent civilians in the Jaffna lagoon near Kilaly on two occasions. The Tamils were crossing over to and from the mainland through the Jaffna Lagoon at Kilali as the Sinhalese army blocked them at Elephant Pass. The Sinhalese in navy boats intercepted them killing over 35 and again later 8 passengers.

The Sri Lankan forces started an offensive called Operation Yarl Devi to advance towards Palai from Elephant Pass. They were repulsed with heavy losses by the LTTE. Not long after that, in November 1993, the LTTE successfully attacked the SL camp at Pooneryn and inflicted considerable damage. The raid named Operation Frog Leap resulted in heavy casualties for the SL forces and LTTE took away valuable equipment.

Chandrika Kumaratunga takes over

In 1994 the Peoples Alliance under the leadership of Chandrika Kumaratunga, the daughter of two former Prime Ministers, came to power on a peace mandate. She became the Prime Minister and started negotiations with the LTTE. A cease-fire was declared by LTTE on November , 1994 and the Second Eelam war came to an end.

CHAPTER 15

BEGINNING OF EELAM WAR 3

Chandrika assumes power

As Chandrika Kumaratunga had been returned to power by the people on a peace mandate, there was high hopes in the country for peace when she became Prime Minister. She led the Peoples Alliance Party to victory in the general elections held in August 1994. D.B. Wijetunga was the Executive President belonging to the UNP, but he did not interfere with Chandrika's policies. Later Chandrika was elected President and thus both the President and Parliament was under the control of Peoples Alliance.

Peace talks

There was jubilation in the Tamil province of Northeast. Peace talks began between the Chandrika Kumaratunga government and Tamil Tigers in Jaffna. The LTTE declared a unilateral cease-fire as the talks were proceeding. Four round of talks were held, but not much progress was made. The government was not represented at a high level. The Sri Lankan armed forces were able to sabotage the peace process. The SL armed forces were blocking the supply of essentials to the Tamil regions and enforcing a virtual economic embargo. They were preventing the flow of food, fuel, fishing and medical supplies to the Tamil people. While the peace talks were in progress, Chandrika was running to India and making tactless anti-LTTE and provocative remarks against Prabaharan.

Gamini Dissanayake assassinated

Opposition Leader Gamini Dissanayake and 50 others were killed by a suicide bomber. Thus ended the life of the man

who as a Minister in 1983 after the massacre of the Tamils by the Sinhalese, threatened that in 14 minutes the blood of every Tamil in the country can be sacrificed to the land. “God moves in mysterious ways his wonder to perform”.

Eelam War 3 breaks out

The Tamil Tigers were getting disappointed with the progress of talks. They expressed concern about the behaviour of the armed forces and the non-fulfillment of the agreements reached at the talks. Prabaharan released 14 Sinhalese prisoners of war as a sign of goodwill. The Tigers warned that the outstanding issues relating to the economic embargo should be resolved by March 28, 0995, and later extended the deadline to April 19. The response was not encouraging, and the LTTE decided to withdraw from the talks. No sooner the deadline ended, the Sea Tigers blew up two ships in the Trincomalee harbour killing 12 sailors and the Eelam War 3 started.

This conflict went on from 1995 to the end of December 2001, when the LTTE declared a unilateral cease-fire after the UNF came to power in Parliament. Ranil Wickremasinghe, the Prime Minister reciprocated the cease-fire in February 2001 and signed a Memorandum Of Understanding with the LTTE through Norwegian mediation.

Operation Leap Forward

In July 1995 the Sri Lankan government started a massive attack from Palali, code-named Operation Leap Forward, advancing towards Jaffna in a two pronged drive Southward and Westward along the coast. Prabaharan counter attacked naming it Operation Tiger Leap. The Tigers inflicted heavy losses on land and also sank a ship and brought down an aircraft. The SL army was pushed back. The forces resorted

to heavy artillery shelling and aerial bombardment. The SL air force criminally bombed a church in Navaly, where Tamil civilians had taken refuge killing 120 people. The air force also bombed a school in Nagarkoil killing 24 students and injuring 35. In the South, some Tamil detainees in Kalutara jail were killed by the Sinhalese. In another offensive code-named Operation Thunder the SL army advanced though Valigamam West and strengthened their positions.

Proposal for devolution

The Chandrika government proposed constitutional changes for the devolution of powers to the Northeast to satisfy Tamil demands. As usual the Sinhalese extremists and the opposition were agitating against any concessions to the Tamils and nothing materialised. The SL government was prosecuting the war claiming that it was a 'war for peace'. Laxman Kadirgamar, who was in name a Tamil, but had no credentials from the Tamils, was appointed Foreign Minister and employed by the Sinhalese chauvinists to do propaganda against the LTTE. At the same time the government imposed a strict censorship to prevent news reaching the international community.

Bomb attacks in Colombo

Colombo was rocked by blasts. It was reported that a bomb concealed in a cart had exploded killing 14 people. The oil depots in Kolonawa and Urugodawatte were attacked by militants killing 20 security officers and damaging the installations.

Operation Riviresa (Sun Rays)

The final assault code-named Operation Riviresa (Sun Rays) came soon after and the SL forces advanced on Jaffna. They

were firing indiscriminately, killing and destroying everything on the way. The LTTE warned the people to move out of Valigamam. There was a mass exodus to Thenmaradchi causing immense suffering to the Tamil civilians and a humanitarian disaster. The UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Gali was alarmed and called for international assistance. However, Foreign Minister Kadirgamar, exploiting his Tamil name, silenced the lonely voice. When the Sinhalese army moved into Thenmaradchi, the Tigers withdrew into the jungles of Vanni. The people were in a dilemma. Some went to Vanni through the Kilali Lagoon, while others returned to Jaffna. Those who went to Vanni went through immense hardships and starvation

Anurudha Ratwatte, the Junior Minister of Defence and maternal uncle of President Chandrika celebrated the army occupation of Jaffna by hoisting the Sinhala lion flag ceremoniously in the Jaffna esplanade on December 5, 1995. It is to be noted that the Commander in charge of the SL army before the invasion of Jaffna, objected to the invasion on the grounds that it would not be feasible in the long term. He was superseded and replaced by the willing Rohan Daluwatte to conduct the operations. Time was to prove the correctness of the forthright commander who refused to carry out plans, which he felt was not in the best interests of his country. The occupation of Jaffna created severe supply problems for the Sinhalese army.

Unceasing Waves 1

Prabaharan and his Tamil Tigers, having withdrawn into the jungles of Vanni, patiently prepared for war and counter attack. In July 1996 LTTE captured Mullaitivu in a large scale offensive code-named Operation Unceasing Waves, which will be described in greater detail in the next chapter. The SL troops launched Operation Sath Jeya from Elephant Pass occupying Paranthan and part of Kilinochchi town.

Operation Jayasikuru (Victory Assured)

In May 1997 the Sri Lankan army launched the fateful and ill-conceived Operation Jayasikuru to open the Highway from Vavuniya to Jaffna. It was a hard fought, long drawn and costly battle. Colonel Karuna, the tough commander of Batticaloa marched from the East with his battle hardened fighters including the elite Jayanthan Brigade to Vanni to reinforce his embattled comrades. The Tigers are renowned jungle fighters and inflicted heavy losses on the army. They were ably commanded by Colonel Balraj, Colonel Karuna, Colonel Deepan, Colonel Banu, and Colonel Vithusa.

The women's brigade was led by Vithusa. The Tamil girls fought bravely and fiercely, shoulder to shoulder with their Tamil brothers. The young Tamil boys and girls are the pride of the Tamils and defended the honour of the nation. They fought the powerful and brutal Sinhala armed forces with the traditional heroism of the Tamil Marawar (warriors) depicted in ancient Tamil literature. The Tamil civilians willingly came to their assistance. The grateful Tamil nation dispersed throughout the world rallied to their support.

The Sinhala invading force numbered 30,000, and was able to advance up to Mankulam with the greatest difficulty and staggering losses. They could not break through the Tiger defences and were effectively stopped. It should have been obvious to the Sinhalese generals and politicians, that even if the Sinhalese army had advanced up to Jaffna, they would have been confronted with a logistic nightmare. The Tigers would have pounced incessantly on their supply lines from their jungle strongholds. The Sinhalese armed forces paid dearly for this blunder.

Reliable sources estimate that about 3,000 soldiers died and 7,000 were injured in the campaign, which dragged on for two years. The Sinhalese lost large stock of arms, much of

which fell into the hands of the Tamil Tigers and increased their fire power.

Unceasing Waves 2 and 3

In September 1998, the LTTE launched Operation Unceasing Waves 2, overrunning Kilinochchi and Paranthan, inflicting heavy losses on the army and capturing large stocks of arms. The SL army was in a deep quagmire. The Sinhalese soldiers were suffering from fatigue resulting in large scale desertions. They were in a hostile land, with hostile people and the terrain suited the Tigers. On November 02 1999, Prabaharan dealt the final blow, which ended the Operation Jayasikuru. Victory assured became defeat assured. This campaign code-named Operation Unceasing Waves 3, took the Tamil Tigers right up to the gates of Jaffna Town.

I will describe these heroic battles of Unceasing Waves 1, 2 and 3 in detail in the following chapters.



Thirukoneswaram Temple, Trincomalee

CHAPTER 16

THE LIBERATION OF MULLAITIVU

Tamil ancestral district of Mullaitivu

Vanni was the home of the Tamils long before the days of the powerful Tamil King Ravanaan. It was ruled by Tamil kings, last of whom was the Tamil hero Pandara Vanniyan. He ruled most of Vanni with his base at Mullaitivu. His sister was the governor of Trincomalee. He was defeated in battle by the British troops under the command of Captain Van Driberg on October 31, 1803. He died young and his heroism is an inspiration to the Tamil fighters.

The rape of Mullaitivu

Mullaitivu and Kokilai regions are the connecting link between the Tamil homeland of Northern and Eastern Provinces. The Sinhalese dominated Ceylon government (now Sri Lanka) plotted with a sinister motive, to break up the demographic continuity of the two Tamil provinces. In 1961 a Sinhalese army camp was established in Mullaitivu with 22 men. It was later expanded to an area covering 5 square miles protected on one sided by the seas. The Sinhalese felt that their garrison was strong and impregnable. Denzil Kobekaduwa, who later was a Major General and Brigadier Paranagama served as commanders of the camp. An airstrip was built to strengthen the garrison.

The SL government planted Sinhalese criminals and undesirables on Tamil lands and built Budhist temples bringing in Sinhalese Budhist priests. They chased away the Tamils to make way for the Sinhalese settlers. They renamed the Tamil village of Manalaru as Welioya, and as a blatant insult to the Tamil people, named a Tamil village Janakapura after a Sinhalese commander accused of

massacring Tamil civilians. These unscrupulous Sinhalese army men and settlers were denying the indigenous Tamil people the right to do farming and fishing, which was their means of livelihood. The Tamils were thus reduced to destitution.

Operation Unceasing Waves 1

The Sri Lankan government and the Sinhala chauvinists were lulled into a false sense of security in the belief that the Tamils had been weakened by the advances of the Sinhala forces during Operation Riviresa. ‘General’ Anurudha Ratwatte was bragging that 85 % of the war was over and that he would soon finish off the Tamil Tigers. In fact by 1996, the Tamil Tigers appeared cornered in Vanni. However, things took an unexpected turn and a thunder bolt came in the form of Prabaharan’s Operation Unceasing Waves.

Unknown to the Sinhala army and intelligence, LTTE boys were carrying on reconnaissance and scouting of the Mullaitivu army camps from April 1996. They risked their lives and some lost their lives and became martyrs. Then on July 17, 1996, just 10 minutes past midnight, the Tamil Tigers staged a deadly multi pronged attack on the Mullaitivu camp. The Operation code named Operation Unceasing Waves 1 was the first in a series of successful offensive onslaughts by the LTTE. The youthful Tamil boys and girls were well armed and equipped with back packs but many of them wore open sandals and slippers. Very few wore the military type boots used by the Sri Lankan army. The Tamil fighters’ uniform was camouflaged with stripes like those of Tigers, but most were not in the Tiger uniform.

The Tamil army was commanded by Colonels Balraj, Soosai, Sornam, Banu, Deepan and Vithusha among others. The commanders had explained Prabaharan’s plans to the

fighters before commencing the operation. As usual, the fighters took their oath of allegiance to their leader and the Tamil cause en masse. They were hardy, young, daring and determined boys and girls who could stand the rigours of jungle warfare. The Upcountry Tamil youth settled in Vanni were among the Tamil Tiger fighters. As a student, teacher and accountancy student, I have come into close contact with Upcountry Tamils, and known how much feelings they had for the Tamil cause.

The Sri Lankan army sent reinforcements by sea from Trincomalee and Vettalaikerni after battling for about an hour. Prabaharan had anticipated this and made counter plans. The Sea Tigers intercepted the Doras and prevented them from proceeding. By 8.30 a.m. the main army grounds had been captured. The Tigers penetrated by land and sea and most of the army camp was in their hands. They had cornered the Vijayabahu Regiment into a section of the camp.

At 12.30 hours on the same day (July 18), the SL army sent ships escorted by the air force to land troops to support the Mullaitivu garrison. The Sea Tigers effectively thwarted their attempts. The SL army fired long range artillery from Manalaru and Prakramapura army camps at Tiger positions. When the Sinhalese reinforcement did land, Prabaharan decided to deal with them later, and made a decisive attack on the camp.

The advancing Tamil Tigers completely overran the Mullaitivu camp. The Tamil commanders and fighters had proved their worth. They were dedicated and motivated. They acquired much of the combat skill in the field of battle, unlike the textbook and 'civilian' generals controlling the Sinhalese forces. Col. Balraj congratulated the victorious Tamil Tigers and conveyed to them Prabaharan's appreciation of their performance.

The Sea Tigers commanded by Colonel Soosai, engaged the SL navy in sea battles off the coast of Mullaitivu. Major Sellapillai and Captain Sudaroli, drove a boat with explosives into the engine of one ship sinking it. Innisai, Vithubalan and Pathuman sank another ship. Gunboat Ranaviru was one of those sunk. Commander Parakrama Samaraweera and 40 SL soldiers were killed. The air force escaped high into the skies.

In a bid to reinforce Mullaitivu garrison, the SL army landed at a beach near Mullaitivu under the command of Lt. Col. Faisly Lafir. They were cut down on the beaches and over one hundred were killed. Lt. Col Lafir laid down his life in the line of duty. It was a tragedy for his fiancée who was to have married him.

Mullaitivu liberated

On July 21, 1996, SL commandos landed at Silavathai, but were under attack and suffered heavy losses. Again on July 25, more landed without success. The situation for the SL army was desperate and the reinforcements had to be rescued from annihilation. Finally on July 26, 1996 the remnants of the reinforcements escaped, abandoning the dead and stock of arms. The Tamil tigers triumphantly entered the Mullaitivu camp. It was not a hit and run attack; this time they were there to stay.

Casualties

The LTTE lost 332 of the cadres on land and at sea in the Mullaitivu battle. At least 1,200 army men were killed and over 100 auxiliaries were also killed. 900 bodies of SL soldiers were recovered intact in addition to 286 shattered bodies. The Tigers were prepared to hand over 441 bodies to the Red Cross to be given to the SL government. The latter refused to accept such a large number of dead bodies and

only took 55 of them. Consequently the GAs of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu, disposed of the bodies. This action of the then PA government was an insult to the soldiers who had sacrificed their lives in carrying out their orders.

The prize of war

Over Rs.200 crores worth of arms and ammunition fell into Tigers' hands. The civilians helped them to gather the large booty. Two 122 mm artillery guns that can fire 15 kilometres were in LTTE hands, and proudly inspected by Prabaharan. Besides these, the LTTE captured armoured cars, trucks, vehicles, ammunitions, communication and naval equipment etc. These were a valuable additions to the fledgling conventional Tamil army and a blow to Sinhala chauvinism.

Inexorable LTTE advance

The astounding victory of the Tamil Tigers over the SL army was an important event in the war of Tamil liberation. Colonel Balraj speaking to his cadres immediately after the capture of Mullaitivu praised the historic victory. Col. Deepan impressed on the need to inflict maximum damage to the enemy with minimum losses to his cadres.

The LTTE was considerably strengthened by the addition of the arms that fell into their hands at Mullaitivu. The SL army had handed over to LTTE on a platter, large stocks of arms and ammunition, strengthening the latter's firepower. The Tamil Tigers pursued the Eelam war with vigour, and in due course recaptured most of Vanni. In a series of operations code name Unceasing Waves 1, 2 and 3, they advanced inexorably till they captured Elephant Pass and started hammering at the gates of Jaffna town, knocking the daylight out of the enemy. Details of the heroic Operation

Unceasing Waves 2 and 3 by the brave Tamil Tigers will be given in the next chapter.

The unceasing waves rise and wash the sacred shores of Tamil Eelam. The Tamils thirst unceasingly for their beloved homeland of Tamil Eelam.



The statue of King Sangilian of Jaffna

CHAPTER 17

THE LIBERATION OF VANNI AND ELEPHANT PASS

Prabaharan prepares for counter offensive

Deep in the jungles of Vanni, Prabaharan built his headquarters and strengthened the Tamil Tiger army. After Operation Riveresa in 1995, the bulk of the LTTE fighters in Jaffna had withdrawn into Vanni. The capture in July 1996 of Mullaitivu in Operation Unceasing Waves 1, had strengthened the Tiger armoury. They had also acquired additional arms. More recruits joined the LTTE. The Sinhala army had been weakened as a result of heavy losses in their Operation Jayasikuru. The prolonged campaign in the Vanni jungles had caused fatigue among the Sinhalese soldiers.

Unceasing Waves 2

In September 1996, the SL troops advanced from Elephant Pass camp in an operation code-named Sath Jaya and seized Kilinochchi. It was a consolation for the belligerent minded Sinhalese after the disaster of Mullaitivu.

Prabaharan launched Operation Unceasing Waves 2 in September 1998 liberating Kilinochchi and Paranthan and causing heavy losses to the enemy. It is believed that about 1,250 army men were killed, while LTTE lost 398 fighters. The LTTE handed over 684 bodies of the dead Sinhalese soldiers to the Red Cross. The hope of the Sri Lankan army to open the A9 Highway were gone. Operation Jayasikuru came to a grinding halt at Mankulam and a stalemate prevailed. However, for domestic consumption, the propaganda machine of the SL government was claiming that 85 % of the war was over.

Unceasing Waves 3

On November 2, 1999, just after midnight, Prabaharan struck at Odduchuddan, lying South West of Mullaitivu commencing a massive assault code-named Operation Unceasing Waves 3. After capturing it, the Tamil Tigers advanced South, and in a lightning attack captured Nedunkerni, which lay 6 miles away. It was soon apparent that it was a major campaign by Prabaharan to recapture Vanni. The wounded Tamil Tiger, provoked in its den, was now going for the kill.

The liberation of Vanni

The Tamil Tigers advanced relentlessly and swiftly overrunning Ambagamam, Olumadu, Mankulam, Kanagarayankulam and Puliyanakulam camps. Kanagarayankulam was a large military complex with luxury facilities. It was the Headquarters of the 55 and 56 Divisions. The Sinhalese army was fleeing in disarray. The Tigers advanced up to Omantai, Manalaru, Janakapura, Madu, Palamadu (near Thuruketheeswaram) and occupied the whole of Vanni. Tigers were in control of a wide area from Omantai to Kilinochchi which they had already occupied the previous year. The counter attacks by the SL forces by land, sea and air was of no avail. The Sinhalese army was in dire straits. Thousands of them were killed or injured and immense supply of arms fell into Tigers' hands.

The Tamil Tigers were proud to have liberated the lands of their forefathers. This was the land ruled by the Tamil heroes Kailai Vannian and Pandara Vannian. The Tigers were commanded by Colonel Balraj, Colonel Karuna, Colonel Banu, Colonel Deepan, Colonel Sornam, Colonel Jeyam and Colonel Vithusa. Balraj, the top Tiger military commander is a son of Vanni. The Sinhalese wantonly killed 45 Tamil civilians who had taken refuge in the Madu Church as a cowardly revenge for the military reverses.

The capture of Elephant Pass

Prabaharan was planning to avenge the 1991 debacle at Elephant Pass. It lay on the narrow passage to the mainland from Jaffna and the military camp was like a thorn in the Tamil throat. Extensive preparation were made for the assault. The plan was to land Tamil fighters on the East coast of the peninsula by sea from the mainland. They were to land on the beaches between Chundikulam and Kudarappu. The commanders Balraj, Deepan, Banu and Vithusa gave instructions to the fighters, while Soosai explained to them about the sea journey.

On December 11, 1999 the LTTE landed at Vettilaikerni and Kaddaikadu beaches and captured the camps. They also advanced by land and captured Umayalpuram on the mainland. The Sinhalese forces were fleeing before the advancing Tamils. In Elephant Pass there were probably 17,000 SL troops well armed. It was thought that the sprawling garrison spreading far and wide was impregnable.

The Tamil leadership made a bold and brilliant move. They decided to land 1,200 LTTE fighters behind the enemy lines at Kudarappu and Mamunai beaches, which are South of Nagarkoil. There was a strong army camp with defences at Thalaiady and Tigers by passed it by landing North of it. The landing at Kudarappu was historic. It involved tremendous organization to ensure logistics. The Tamil Tigers compare it in importance to the Normandy landings in World War 2 in relation to Eelam war, though the scale was very much smaller. Soosai, the sea commander told the LTTE fighters that they will be taken by sea, but they have to return by land. It was a do or die operation and the Tiger fighters rose up to the occasion.

On March 26, 2000, the commanders and their fighters landed successfully. On the beaches, 14 of them were killed

and buried with full honours. They waded through water and marshy lands, tired and wet. Balraj had a bad limp due to a war injury in his leg but kept up with his boys and girls. The Tamils advanced into the interior and occupied Muhamalai and Ittavil cutting off the main supply route A9. Another Tiger column had landed in Thanangkilapu from Poonery on the mainland and advanced towards Chavakacheri and Jaffna cutting off the Pt. Pedro route. The advance by the Tigers left only the coastal route through Pulopalai open to the army at Elephant Pass.

At sea, there was fierce battles and two SL ships were sunk. The commanders Wjeroopa and Wijepura were killed along with sailors. Thalayadi and Maruthangerni camps were overrun. The Tiger advance threatened the Kilali escape route as well. The army tried a many pronged attack and claimed to have surrounded Balraj, but it was not to be. On April 21st Iyakachchi fell to the Tigers and the fate of Elephant Pass was sealed.

Short of water, thirsty and surrounded, the Sinhalese in the Elephant Pass garrison fled in terror through Kilali. Brigadier Percy Fernando and Colonel Baktiar Jayatileke were among the dead. They left vast amount of arms and ammunitions. The stragglers were pursued and hunted by the Tigers. Tanks were destroyed and bodies of dead soldiers were scattered all over. The Tamil Tigers triumphantly entered Elephant Pass, and on April 23, 2000, Colonel Banu, the Artillery Commander, proudly hoisted the Tamil Tiger flag over the fort.

The capture of Elephant Pass is considered one of the greatest military feats in South Asian conflicts. It is compared to General Giap's spectacular victory at Dien Bien Phu over the French in Vietnam.

Tigers advance on Jaffna Town

Tiger columns from Pooneri and Kerativu had landed nearer Jaffna and captured Chavakacheri, Koyilakandy, Sarasalai, Madduvil, Kalvayal and Thanankilappu in December 1999. They further advanced and occupied Navatkuli, Kaithady, Ariali, Manianthottam, Chemmani, Columbuturai, and parts of Passaiyoor. They were in the outskirts of Jaffna Town.

Shock waves went through the government circles and Sinhala chauvinists. An all Sinhala army of occupation had been destroyed and humiliated by an all Tamil non-state resistance army. Swallowing their pride and abandoning their lofty concept of sovereignty, the Sinhalese establishment ran from pillar to post, begging the foreign powers on their knees to save the 40,000 Sinhala troops trapped in Tamil Jaffna.

India proposed to send their ships to Kankesanturai to rescue and evacuate the SL troops from the peninsula. At the same time international pressure was brought on the Tamil Tigers to desist from taking Jaffna Town and Palaly airport. Many countries supplied arms, ammunitions and weapons of destruction to the Sri Lankan government. Imminent danger was thus averted and the Sinhalese army escaped from the jaws of defeat.

Anton Balasingam's illness

Anton Balasingam, an LTTE stalwart fell ill in the Vanni in 1999 as his kidneys were failing. Efforts were made to send him through Colombo to Europe for treatment. In a vindictive manner Chandrika Kumaratunga and Kadirgamar prevented him leaving by laying down impossible conditions. Prabakaran arranged for him to be sent by sea direct from Vanni in LTTE ships. He was given a kidney transplant in Norway.

Massacre of Tamil children by Sinhalese mobs

On October 25, 2000, a horrible massacre of Tamil children and boys in ages from 14 to 23 by Sinhalese mobs aided by policemen and homeguards took place at Bindunuwewa near Bandarawela. These 84 Tamil children and boys were detained in a camp under the PTA without trial. Of them, 29 boys were brutally tortured and killed by 2,000 Sinhalese men and women and the rest seriously injured. However, the Sinhalese continue to shed crocodile tears for imaginary LTTE child soldiers.

Killing of Tamil Journalist Nimalarajan

In October 2000, Mayilvaganam Nimalarajan, a well known Tamil international journalist was killed in the Jaffna security zone. The EPDP led by Cabinet Minister Devananda, working alongside the Sinhalese army was strongly suspected.

Prabaharan declares cease-fire

On December 24, 2000, Prabaharan declared a unilateral cease-fire and extended it every month till April 24, 2001. The Chandrika government abetted by the self seeking Kadirgamar, refused to reciprocate it and repeatedly attacked the LTTE positions during the cease-fire. Over 160 LTTE fighters were killed and 400 wounded in the dastardly attacks. Chavakacheri was reduced to ruins. The Tamil Tigers withdrew from the areas around Jaffna and Chavakacheri and regrouped South of Eluthumattuval. The frontline around the Nagarkoil, Eluthumadduval, Kilali axis was strengthened by both sides.

No sooner the unilateral cease-fire ended on April 24, 2001, that very day, the Sinhalese army staged a massive surprise attack on the Tamil Tiger defences on the Nagarkoil, Elthumattuval, Kilali frontline. The Sinhalese troops were advancing on Palai to eventually recapture Elephant Pass. A terrible disaster awaited the attacking Sinhala soldiers.



The statue of Avvaiyar in Jaffna Town

CHAPTER 18

THE HERO OF TAMIL LIBERATION

The Son of the People

Two men have left indelible impressions on the history of Eelam Tamil struggle for liberation from Sinhala hegemony. The first is the sagacious S.J.V. Chelvanayagam, the Father of the Tamil Nation, or Thanthai Chelva as he was endearingly called. The other is the indomitable and iron willed Velupillai Prabakaran, the present undisputed Tamil National Leader. If Thanthai Chelva, the pacifist fostered a national conscientiousness among the Tamils of Ceylon, and introduced the concepts of Tamil autonomy, self-determination and federalism, Velupillai Prabakaran the warrior, united the Eelam Tamils and through armed resistance, brought those concepts into the realms of reality.

Prabakaran was born as the Son of the Tamil People, to lead his downtrodden people through thick and thin to the path of liberation. He led the vanguard of the Tamil resistance to Sinhala domination, injustices and atrocities. He was the divine answer to the yearning of the defenceless Tamil nation for a leader to lead them to deliverance from Sinhala ethnic genocide.

The legendary hero

In the history of mankind, from time to time, people subjected to persecution and suffering have looked for someone among them to lead them against their oppressors and save them from destruction. The Tamils, suffering under Sinhala terrorism and helpless against state oppression, needed a leader. That leader came in the person of Velupillai Prabakaran.



Prabaharan with LTTE fighters

Prabaharan, as a child saw the physical atrocities and terrorism committed by the Sinhalese criminals on the innocent and defenceless Tamils. During the 1958 anti-Tamil riots by the Sinhalese, he is reported to have seen one of his uncles burnt alive by the rampaging mobs. The inability on the part of the Tamils to defend themselves, and the failure on the part of the Sinhala government and the armed forces to protect the Tamil victims, left young Prabaharan bitter and furious. As a youth, he decided that armed resistance was the only course open to the victimised Tamils to protect themselves. He gathered together with some Tamil youth to defend the honour and rights of the Tamil people. The rest is history, and in course of time, he became the leader and legendary hero of the Tamils.

Early years

Prabaharan was born on November 26, 1954, in the Northern coastal village of Valvettiturai in the Jaffna peninsula. He is the last born son of Thiruvengadam Velupillai and Parvathi. The couple had four children - son Manoharan and daughters Jegatheeswari and Vinothini. Prabaharan's father was a land development officer. The old couple were living in retirement in Tamil Nadu and are reported to have recently returned to their homeland. As his father was employed in the outlying areas, Prabaharan gained a good knowledge of the terrain in the Northeast. This helped him in his guerilla war against the Sri Lankan army.

Young Praba took to militancy while still a schoolboy in the early 1970s. He did not go for higher studies, and he is more fluent in Tamil than English. He was truly a 'Made in Eelam' product. He was suspected for an arson attack in Jaffna in 1971, and the assassination of the Jaffna Mayor Alfred Duraiappah in 1975. In 1972 he formed the Tamil New Tigers (TNA), probably the first Tamil militant group. In 1976 he changed its name to the renowned Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In 1973 in an accidental explosion his right leg was burnt. He fled from his home, when the police came looking for him in the night. He became an outlaw with a high price on his head.

The LTTE was suspected of carrying out 11 assassinations of persons working against the Tamil cause. For a short time he allied with the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), but soon revived and strengthened the LTTE. In 1982 he came into the limelight when he shot his rival Uma Maheswaran in Madras (now Chennai). He was arrested by the Indian police, and the Sri Lankan government tried unsuccessfully to have him deported. The Sinhalese government sent the then Inspector General of Police Mr.

Rajasingam to India, but he returned empty handed. Prabakaran later jumped bail and escaped to Sri Lanka.

In July 1983 came the ambush of the Sri Lankan army patrol by Prabakaran and his comrades at Tinnevely killing 13 soldiers. This was followed by the Black July massacre of 3,000 Tamils all over the island. Thereafter, he shifted back to Madras and began training of Tamil militants on a large scale. Many other Tamil militant groups did likewise and the Tamil separatist war escalated.

Marriage and family

On October 1, 1984, Prabakaran married Mathivathany (Mathy) at a Hindu Temple in Tamil Nadu. Mathy was one of four girls rescued by the militants from death when they were engaged in a fast at the Jaffna University and brought to India. Praba and Mathy are blessed with three children, all named after fallen heroes of the struggle. They are a son, Charles Anthony Seelan, a daughter Thuwaraha, and another son Balachandran. The entire family are living in the jungles of Vanni hunted relentlessly by the hostile Sinhala forces.

Consolidation by Prabakaran

In 1985, Prabakaran was involved with other Tamil militant groups in peace talks with the Sri Lankan government in Thimpu the capital of Bhutan. The talks collapsed. Prabakaran subsequently overwhelmed other Tamil militant groups, TELO, PLOT, EPRLF, EROS etc. and controlled the Jaffna Peninsula till the arrival of the IPKF.

Prabakaran lost many of his trusted friends and lieutenants like Seelan (Charles Anthony), Sellakili, Ponnammam (Kuhan), Kittu, Mathaya, Victor, Sothia, Kumarappa and Pulendran. However, he fought against heavy odds in his subsequent wars against the Sinhala army of occupation,

ably assisted by other young commanders like Balraj, Banu, Soosai, Karna, Deepan, Sornam, Vithusa and Thamilchelvan. They were all locally trained and creditably acquitted themselves as against the foreign trained Sinhalese commanders and soldiers.

Praba was at the start of his involvement in the struggle for Tamil liberation called 'Thambi' (Yonger brother) as he was a teenager. Now he is endearingly called 'Anna' (elder brother) by his cadres. The LTTE cadres take an oath of allegiance to their leader Prabaharan and the Tamil nation.

When the Sri Lankan government attacked Jaffna in force during Operation Liberation in 1987, Prabaharan was surrounded, but broke through with his bodyguards. Prabaharan has cheated death many times. The Sri Lankan government and the security forces are out to kill him. He is vigilantly guarded by a group of fearless and dedicated Tiger cadres who will not hesitate to lay down their lives.

The Indian factor

Prabaharan became internationally recognized when he successfully resisted the offensive by the Indian army between 1987 and 1990, killing over 1,200 Indian soldiers. Prabaharan was invited to Delhi by Rajiv Gandhi in 1987 prior to the Indo-Ceylon Agreement. He was treated shabbily and kept in a hotel incommunicado. His views were not considered.

When the IPKF attacked the LTTE, he withdrew into the Vanni jungles and carried out devastating guerilla attacks on the Indian army. He negotiated with President Premadasa, but after the IPKF left Sri Lanka, the talks failed and Eelam War 2 broke out. Prabaharan controlled Jaffna, Vanni and parts of Trincomalee and Batticaloa.

Retreat to Vanni and counter attack

During the “Operation Riveresa” offensive in 1995 into Jaffna and later Jayasikuru in 1997 into Vanni, by the Chandrika government, Prabakaran made a tactical retreat into the jungles of Vanni with his fighting units intact. He lived to fight another day. He prepared to fight back and recruited boys and girls into his fighting force. He counter attacked with deadly force later, naming his operation Unceasing Waves, driving the Sinhalese army out of most of the Northeast. The Sri Lankan army was shattered and the Chandrika government ran to other countries begging on their knees for military aid to save their army of 40,000 men in Jaffna Peninsula.

Road to victory

Prabakaran commanded the Tamil Tigers during Operation Unceasing Waves, and in 1996 captured Mullaitivu, wiping out the Sri Lankan garrison killing 1,200 soldiers in 72 hours. He annihilated the Sri Lankan army in Vanni, Poonahari, Paranthan, Kilinochchi and victoriously advanced into the Jaffna Peninsula. He crowned his military victories by capturing Elephant Pass, the gateway to Jaffna Peninsula in April 2000. His commander of the artillery division, Colonel Banu, who hails from Arialai (near Jaffna town), triumphantly hoisted the Tamil Tiger flag over Elephant Pass. He crushed the Sri Lankan army at Muhamalai, when they tried to advance towards Elephant Pass during ‘Operation Agni Keela’ in 2001. Three months later, he planned and executed the historic military exploit. His Black Tigers devastated the Katunayake military airport and the adjoining International airport crippling irreparably the Sinhalese air power. This daring operation by the Tamil Tigers of Prabakaran brought the whole country into economic and political turmoil.

Prabakaran has withstood the ravages of time. He has lived through to see the unceremonious departure of many of his

adversaries like the Jaffna Mayor Alfred Duraiappah (1975), the TULF leader A. Amirthalingam (1989), Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (1991), Junior Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne (1991), Major General Denzil Kobekaduwa (1992), Rear Admiral Clancy Fernando (1992), Minister Lalith Athulathmudali (1992), Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa (1993), Minister Gamini Dissanayake (1994), and Neelan Thiruchelvam (1999). In 1999, President Chandrika Kumaratunga survived a suicide attack, but lost an eye.

Battle hardened veteran

Prabaharan has seen many battles and campaigns against the Sri Lankan government and armed forces. He held his own in many high sounding operations against him by the government - Operation Liberation, Riviresa, Sathjeya, Jayasikuru, Ranagosha, Rivibala and culminating in Agni Kheela. He came out with flying colours when he waged a low intensity guerilla war from early 1970s to 1983, and again in Eelam War 1 (1983 to 1987), IPKF war (1987 to 1990), Eelam War 2 (1990 to 1994), and Eelam War 3 (1995 to 2001). He did a Grand Slam with his Operation Unceasing Waves. The life of Prabaharan from adolescence covers the history of Tamil armed struggle for liberation from Sinhala chauvinism.

Prabaharan offers peace

Prabaharan fought the Sri Lankan government till a cease-fire was agreed upon by the UNF government in February 2002. The LTTE declared a unilateral cease-fire in December 2000 and again in December 2001, but was reciprocated by the SL government only later in February 2002 by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed and peace negotiations commenced.

Today at the age of 49, Prabaharan is the Supreme Commander of the LTTE, one of the most powerful resistance armies in the world with an army, navy, anti-aircraft and police forces. He is endeavouring to create a Tamil air force as well. He now controls most of the Tamil homeland of the Northeast, with a strong defence, administration, banking, police and judicial systems.



***Velupillai Prabaharan, the Supreme Commander
of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam***

CHAPTER 19

THE AGNI KEELA AND KATUNAYAKA DEBACLES

Debacles in 2001

The year 2001 saw two major debacles suffered by the Sri Lankan armed forces. The first was the ill-fated offensive by the SL army around Muhamalai in Southern Jaffna Peninsula to recapture Elephant Pass. The second was the LTTE commando attack on the Katunayaka airport.

AGNI KEELA

Surprise offensive

On April 24, 2001, the day the four month long unilateral cease-fire by LTTE ended, the Sri Lankan army launched a massive surprise offensive to recapture Palai and Elephant Pass. The operation was code-named Agni Keela (Rod of Fire). With heavy artillery and air cover the army opened up on the Tamil Tiger defence lines on the Nagarkoil, Eluthumattuval, Kilali front. The objective was to recapture Palai and then Elephant Pass from the LTTE.

Prabaharan had intelligently anticipated the possible plans of the army and made careful preparation for defence. The defence of this frontline was mainly entrusted to women cadres of the LTTE. Colonel Vithusa is the overall commander of women's battalions. She was in charge of the Eastern sector around Nagarkoil. Lt Col. Suthanthira was in charge of the Western sector around Kilali. The central sector at Muhamalai was held by a combination of boys and girls.



Women fighters of Tamil Tigers

Tamil women repulse Sinhalese army

It appears the LTTE cadres were well instructed how to deal with the enemy. The girls lay low while the SL army opened up the heavy artillery barrage and air bombardment, giving the impression that they were annihilated. The army optimistically advanced a few kilometres. Once the Sinhalese soldiers entered the trap, the LTTE fighters responded with heavy fire dispersing the soldiers. The closeness of the combatants made it not possible for the SL air force to give air cover for the attackers. The desperate soldiers ran astray into the pre-laid mines and many had their legs blown off.

It is estimated that about 400 soldiers were killed and over 2,000 injured, many seriously. LTTE reported few casualties on their side, which is not unlikely as the LTTE cadres were in protected trenches and stuck to them. It appears the strategy was well carried out. The brave LTTE women fighters bore the brunt of the Agni Keela barrage. Lt. Col. Suthanthira was killed in battle. Col. Vithusa, the tough Brahmin girl from the North, is today a senior

commander of the LTTE army. She deserves the title ‘The Heroine of Muhamalai’ for repulsing the Sinhala hordes. Tamil men of our generation cannot but admire and feel proud of the brave young women of Eelam. Shame on Colombo Tamil socialites who point fingers at them.

The LTTE cadres carried out mopping up of the Sinhalese stragglers. The defeat was complete and the SL army retreated to their original positions. The LTTE had battle hardened fighters entrenched in the rear to confront the Sinhalese troops if they overpowered the women’s battalions, but that did not happen.

Chandrika raved at her commanders. The Tamil Tigers once again proved their mettle in a head on conventional battle. The Sinhalese soldiers were badly demoralised by the heavy casualties and numerous amputees. The Sinhalese dreams of recapturing Elephant Pass were shattered at least in the short term.

KATUNAYAKA DEBACLE

Anniversary of the 1983 Black July

It was the eighteenth anniversary of the Black July in 1983. In that horrific month, Sinhalese marauders, backed by the Sri Lankan government, the police and the armed forces, slaughtered over 3,000 innocent Tamil civilians all over the country. All over the Sinhala provinces, they killed, raped, plundered and burnt hundreds of thousands of Tamils. The Tamils fled into refugee camps, and from there sought sanctuary in the Northeast Tamil homeland or left the country. Tamil boys who were toddlers at that time were now in the prime of youth and ready to die for their people and their homeland.

The Attack

On this day July 24, 2001, in the dark hours, about 21 Black Tiger cadres were making their way to the Katunayake airport, which housed the killer planes that rained bombs and destruction on the Tamils. Fourteen of them were elite commandos of the Tamil Tigers and seven of them were intelligence operatives. The commandos were the cream of Tamil youth. They travelled in a Mitsubishi van to Katunayaka on their mission. They had earlier bought soft drinks, danced baila like the Sinhalese, and had a picnic in an open grounds near the Katunayaka airport. They changed into combat uniforms and were well armed with weapons and night glasses.

At 3.30 a.m the Black Tigers cut through the fence of the airport and entered the military airport through a canal. The 7 Tiger intelligence operatives either went away before the commandos entered the airport, or entered the airport with them and left after they had done their part, while the commandos were in action within. The Tiger commandos started destroying the military planes and helicopters. They were moving towards other targets. In the fighting some Tiger commandos and security officers were killed. Six Tiger commandos entered the International Airport and destroyed some passenger planes.

The fighting lasted for about five hours till about 8.30 a.m. It was a shock to me when I heard early morning from our family friend Mrs. Karunai Pooranachandran, that our boys were fighting in Katunayaka airport. I could not believe my ears. How they reached that place all the way from the Vanni jungles and how the boys had entered the military airport was beyond my comprehension. The battle raged from 3.30 till well after daybreak. The daring Tamil boys fought as long as they could. Additional SL troops were rushed to the airport and the fighting ended when all the Tamil

commandos were killed. The Tamil boys had fought till their ammunition ran out.

Colossal damage

The toll was heavy and the damage was estimated by the government at 50 billion rupees. The economic fall out was worse and did long term damage. Tourism was ruined. Ten of the military men were killed and 24 injured. All 14 Tamil commandos died fighting. It was reported that 28 military and civilian aircraft were completely destroyed or damaged. Of these, 18 were completely destroyed and 10 were badly damaged. The SL air force was severely crippled, and civilian flights curtailed and diverted.

According to Tiger sources, the bombing capability of the SL air force was reduced by 45 %. The commandos succeed in blowing up the storage of bombs, arms warehouse, ammunition dump, fuel storage tanks and oil tankers.

The seven Tiger intelligence operatives escaped. The Mitsubishi van in which the commandos travelled to Katunayaka was not recovered. It is one of the most daring operations in military history. The organization and logistics was perfectly coordinated. The commandos had been thoroughly trained. The operation was carried out with clinical precision.

Military analysts consider it the most devastating attack in aviation history. The Tamil nation bows to its brave and fearless martyrs.

Sinhalese propaganda

Rohan Gunaratane, a Sinhalese defence analyst who is a propagandist for the Sinhala chauvinists, tried to make out that it was an act of international terrorism. There is no

doubt that the airport was a legitimate target in the civil war. The Sri Lankan government should not have located the military air force in the premises of the civilian airport. The military planes were using the runway of the international airlines. Therefore the attack on the airport was justified. Rohan Gunaratna pretending ignorance of facts suggests that the injury to a Russian ‘engineer’ makes it an act of international terrorism. It is an open fact that Russian mercenaries are employed by the SL air force to bomb and kill Tamils and this so called ‘engineer’ was one of them. The mercenaries and the Sri Lankan government and armed forces who employ them, deserve no sympathy.



Destruction at Katunayake airport

CHAPTER 20

LEADERS OF TAMIL SPEAKING PEOPLE

Tamil leadership developments

Prabaharan is the unquestioned leader of the armed Tamils and the most powerful Tamil leader today. He has been committed to the redemption of Tamils from Sinhala hegemony by armed resistance and not involved in parliamentary politics. The Tamils have been represented in parliament by other leaders.

After the death of Thanthai Chelva, Appapillai Amirthalingam took over the leadership of the Tamils. After the latter's death in 1989, the most eligible Tamil politician was Murugesu Sivasithambaram, the veteran leader of the Tamil United Liberation Front. He was ageing and ailing and led the Tamils in Parliament till he passed away in 2002.

Neelan Thiruchelvam, was Deputy President of the TULF and was in Parliament as a National List Member. He was regarded a moderate by the Sinhalese, and was involved in proposals for constitutional changes with the Chandrika government, but it did not materialise. He was suspected of collaborating with the Sri Lankan government and assassinated on July 29, 1999 at the age of 55. His wife's name is Sithie. He won heaps of praise from the Sinhalese. Neelan was an intellectual, but had no Tamil following.

Saumiyaamoorthy Thondaman, who led the Upcountry Tamils for six decades died on October 30, 1999 and was succeeded by his grandson Arumugam Thondaman. Arumugam is President of the powerful Ceylon Workers Congress and a cabinet minister in charge of Housing and Plantations. P. Chandasekaran, another minister, and leader of the

Upcountry People's Front, also has a following among Upcountry Tamils.

Collaborators

President Chandrika Kumaratunga has foisted on the political scene, Laxman Kadirgamar who calls himself a Tamil, but has no Tamil credentials. He was a virulent pro-Sinhala Foreign Minister under the PA government and now he is the advisor to the President. He has strong backing from the Sinhala chauvinists.

Another Tamil leader, who owes his position to the patronage by Chandrika is Douglas Devananda, the leader of the EPDP. His party fought against the LTTE alongside the Sinhalese army, and he was rewarded with the Ministry of Rehabilitation in the PA government. He was very powerful till the PA was defeated at the December 2001 elections. He is now an MP fighting for survival.

Muslim leadership

The Muslims are Tamil speaking people. They are distributed all over the island, but more concentrated in the East, particularly Amparai district. From the time of independence they collaborated with the two Sinhala parties, the UNP and SLFP. They benefited from both parties and wielded considerable influence.

M.H.M. Ashraff, a lawyer by profession, hailing from the Amparai District in the East, formed the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress and won seats in the 1999 and 1994 elections. He commanded considerable support from the Muslims of the East. He emulated Saumiyamoorthy Thondaman and assumed the role of king maker in Sri Lankan politics. He was Minister of Ports from 1994 in the PA government. He was killed in a helicopter crash on September 16, 2000. After Ashraff's untimely death, Rauf Hakim assumed the leadership of the SLMC at the age of 40. He is from Kandy

and regarded as a moderate. He took over as Minister of Ports. Hakim brought down the PA government of Chandrika by resigning and joining the opposition. He met Prabaharan in Vanni and endeavoured to bring about a settlement of the Muslim problem vis a vis the LTTE. Hakim was a Minister in the UNF Government and represented the Muslims at the peace talks.



Rauf Hakim

Unfortunately, there was a split in the SLMC caused by the Eastern MPs and the party is in disarray. Ashraff's widow, Ferial Ashraff is also an MP and opposed to Hakim. While Hakim is supporting UNF, Ferial Ashraff is allied with President Chandrika. The future is unpredictable.

‘Mamanithar’ Kumar Ponnambalam

Kumar Ponnambalam, the son of the famous G.G. Ponnambalam, became an outspoken champion of the persecuted Tamils. He was the leader of the Tamil Congress and a lawyer like his father. He was living in Colombo and despite threats to his life, spoke out exposing the wrongdoings of the Chandrika government and the armed forces. He was never in Parliament, but came to be

respected by the Tamils for whom he raised his voice. On January 5, 2000, he was murdered by a Sinhalese criminal. It is believed that the suspect had connections with the Presidential Security Division.

Prabaharan, in recognition of Kumar's services to the Tamil people, conferred on him the title of 'Mamanithar' or Great Man. His son Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, also a lawyer, is carrying the torch and serving as an MP of Tamil National Alliance, of which Tamil Congress is a constituent Party. Kumar leaves behind his wife Yogalakshmy, son Gajendrakumar, and daughter Mirnalini, a physician.

Murugesu Sivasithambaram

Murugesu Sivasithambaram was born on July 20, 1923 and died on June 5, 2002. He was first elected Member of Parliament for Udupiddy on the Tamil Congress ticket and served the Tamil community in politics till he died. He participated in the Satyagraha organized by S.J.V. against the imposition of Sinhala only. In 1977 he joined the Tamil United Liberation Front, and won the Nallur seat. He served as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Sivasithambaram and his family suffered in the Sinhalese terror of July 1983 and his house was burnt. He moved to India and later returned to Sri Lanka. He suffered serious injury in 1989 when Amirthalingam was assassinated. He joined the Tamil National alliance when it was formed in 2001 and became a National List MP.

Siva was an honest and upright politician of a rare and exemplary character. He believed in non-violence and took part in many demonstrations on behalf of the Tamil people. He died at the age of 79, leaving his wife, son and daughter and their families. Tamils lost another good leader.

Rajavarothaiyam Sambandan

Observing the developments in Sri Lankan Tamil politics, it is obvious that Prabaharan as the leader of the LTTE commands real power and is recognized as the Tamil national leader. However, he has not entered parliamentary politics. The Tamil parties formed a coalition in 2001 and named it the Tamil National Alliance. The Tamil United Liberation Front, The Tamil National Congress, TELO and a faction of EPRLF combined to form the alliance. The TNA declared that LTTE are the representatives of the Northeast Tamils. At the December 2001 general elections, they swept the Tamil votes getting elected to 15 seats in Parliament.

It appears that the General Secretary of that party, Rajavarothiam Sambandan, a lawyer has evolved as the spokesman for the non-combatant Tamils and leader of the TNA. It is to be hoped that he will perform his role effectively. The TNA accepts the LTTE as the representatives of the Tamils because the interests of the Tamils and LTTE are identical. The TNA has an important role to play in Parliament as a non-combatant Tamil party. Sambandan hails from a leading family in Trincomalee and is a nephew of the first Tamil Congress MP for Trincomalee, M. Sivapalan. I have known the family and remember young Sambandan as a school going teenager in Ratmalana, where his father Mr. Rajavarothaiyam was Superintendent of the Irrigation Plant Store. Sambandan, as leader of the TNA is playing an important role in the affairs of Tamils, and they look to him for leadership in Parliament.

Anton Balasingam

Anton Balasingam is the Chief Negotiator for the LTTE and held six round of talks with the Sri Lankan government. He was a journalist and married Adele, an Australian nurse. Both lived among the Tamil Tigers in India and Sri Lanka for many years. Balasingam is from Karaveddi in Vadamadachi and a non-practicing Roman Catholic. He is a close confidante of Prabararan.. He had severe kidney problem when he was in Vanni and was transported by sea in an LTTE boat as Chandrika government refused him passage through Colombo. He underwent a kidney transplant in Norway. Balasingam is the theoretician and political advisor to the LTTE.



Anton Balasingam (left) greets Minister G.L. Peiris at Peace Talks.

Col. Karuna, who later turned renegade, is seated at left.

CHAPTER 21

CEASE-FIRE

Cease-fire

The twin debacles of Agni Keela and Katunayaka suffered by the SL armed forces in 2001, had a beneficial effect. The Sinhalese leadership realised that the war could not be won and a painful stalemate had settled in. President Chandrika Kumaratunga invited the Norwegians to mediate, but her immaturity and Kadirgamar's arrogance resulted in the prolongation of the debilitating civil war. In the general elections held in December 2001, the UNF led by Ranil Wickremasinghe came to power on a peace mandate. Sri Lanka was left with an Executive President belonging to the Peoples Alliance and a Prime Minister of the United National Front, two antagonistic Sinhalese parties.

The LTTE declared a unilateral cease-fire on December 24, 2001 and renewed it monthly. Norwegians were acting behind the scenes and prepared a Memorandum of Understanding. Prabakaran signed it first. On February 22, 2002 Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe signed it in Vavuniya on behalf of the Sri Lanka government and the Third Eelam War ended. Before signing he showed it to Chandrika, but she refused to sign it. She was left fuming and whining. The cease-fire has held for almost three years continuously. The people have to thank Prabakaran and Ranil Wickremasinghe for this blessing.

It was a great relief for all people of Sri Lanka, except the warmongers and those who profited by the war. Particularly to the Tamils of SL who had been the victims of the Sinhalese army brutalities, it was a great relief. The poorer Sinhalese too are happy, as it is their young men who joined the army due to poverty and died or lost their limbs. The

Sinhalese of the richer classes did not have to go to war. Chandrika Kumaratunga, Laxman Kadirgamar, Douglas Devananda, Anurudha Ratwatte, JVP, Sinhala Urumaya, Island newspaper, some Buddhist priests and Sinhala extremists continued to obstruct peace.

Peace talks

The Sri Lankan government and LTTE have held 6 rounds of peace talks in Thailand, Germany and Norway. Agreements were reached on the need for a federal form of government, but the details have to be worked out. Agreements were also reached on the normalisation of the living conditions of the Tamil people of Northeast. The LTTE and the UNF government made an effort to solve the ethnic problem. The economic blockade of Northeast was lifted by the UNF government.



Prabaharan and his commanders

Unfortunately, the 100% Sinhala army and navy of which President Chandrika is the commander-in-chief, were once again as in 1995, blocking all attempts at easing the situation. Tamil people were being prevented from engaging

in farming and fishing. They were illegally blocking the free flow of goods to Tamil people.

The killer STF have provoked Tamils by shooting at unarmed Tamil civilians at Thirukkivil. The police and Sinhalese home guards attacked Tamils in Trincomalee killing and wounding many. The armed forces continue to occupy numerous Tamil homes, schools, hospitals, temples and hotels. They refuse to move out of populated Tamil areas. They holds vast stretches of ancestral Tamil lands as High Security Zones, forcing the indigenous Tamils to live as displaced refugees.

The Sri Lankan navy earlier in March 2003, sank an LTTE merchant ship on the high seas causing the death of 11 LTTE cadres. The Sri Lankan navy has again provoked the LTTE to precipitate war. On June 14, 2003 they sank another LTTE merchant ship in international waters, and the fate of the 12 Tamil members of the crew is not known.

Suspension of talks

On April 21, 2003 the LTTE informed the SL government that they were suspending talks temporarily, but were not pulling out of the peace process. The reasons they cited were the exclusion from the donor conference in Washington, the refusal by the government to implement the normalisation aspect of the Cease-fire Agreement and the agreements made at talks, the failure of thousands of troops to vacate public buildings and homes, and the denial of displaced people the right to resettle. It was also alleged that the government's 'Regaining Sri Lanka' document lacked identified goals for the Northeast. The LTTE further suspended participation in the Sub-committee on Immediate Humanitarian Needs (SIHRN).

The Sinhalese and their leaders must realise that the Tamil homeland of Northeast was wantonly devastated by the all Sinhala armed forces of occupation. There are hundreds of thousands of internally displaced refugees in need of basic amenities. The Northeast has to be given priority in rehabilitation and reconstruction and cannot be treated on par with the Sinhalese areas.

Holding peace talks serve no purpose if the SL army and navy do not comply with the agreements made at the negotiations. They keep flouting agreements.

Reactions to suspension

The US Ambassador in Colombo, Ashley Willis was quick to voice the opinion of the Sinhala extremists, putting the blame on the LTTE and failing to understand the suffering of the Tamils. He ignored the Sinhala state and mob terrorism inflicted on the Tamil people by the previous governments till the Cease-fire Agreement. While US was supplying arms and providing military training to the Sinhalese military, he called on the LTTE to decommission weapons, exposing the Tamils to Sinhala terrorism.

As usual the opposition came out with some absurd proposals. Laxman Kadirgamar, the advisor to President Chandrika proposed that three more countries including India should be brought in as Monitors. He was obviously not serious as he knows that he will first have to ask India to lift the ban on LTTE. While India was silent, the SL opposition was speaking impudently on its behalf.

Anton Balasingam, the Chief LTTE Negotiator, wrote to PM Ranil Wickremasinghe requesting the formation of an Interim Administration for Northeast. Chandrika revealed her tactless arrogance by growling “how dare they suggest it”. Ranil replied diplomatically, but did not meet the expectations of the Tamil leadership.

Efforts to resume talks

An all out effort was made by the Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe, Norway, Japan, EU and the international community to resume the peace talks. A donor conference was held in Tokyo on June 9 and 10, but LTTE did not participate. The international community with the initiative of Japan, pledged aid to Sri Lanka of up to 4.5 billion dollars, on condition that the peace process progressed satisfactorily.

The hands of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe were tied because President Chandrika wields considerable powers. She is a spoiler and belongs to the opposition party.

SL government's proposals for a NE Interim Administration

The progress of peace negotiations in Sri Lanka between the Tamil Tigers and the Sinhala dominated Government of Sri Lanka now seems to hinge on the outcome of the proposed Interim Administration to be set up for the Northeast Province.

It is a sad fact that despite two years of peace, little has been done to resettle the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced Tamil refugees. The Sinhalese armed forces have effectively prevented the Tamil refugees from resettling in their ancestral homeland. The LTTE hopes to expedite this task of Tamil rehabilitation through participation in an interim administration.

The government drafted a set of proposals for a 'provisional administrative structure', and it was handed over to S.P. Thamilselvan, the political head of the LTTE on July 17, 2003 by the Norwegian special envoy Jon Westborg. The governments proposal provides for a Provincial Administrative Council with administrative and financial powers, composed of members nominated by the

government, the LTTE, and the SLMC. The numbers would ensure a majority for the LTTE and weighted representation for the Muslims and Sinhalese.

The proposed council's powers are to include rehabilitation, reconstruction and resettlement with authority for making policy, implementation and monitoring. Unfortunately, the government proposal stipulated that **the Council's powers are to exclude the vital areas of police, security, land and revenue.** These four areas are considered important in the eyes of Tamils to control their homeland.

The proposals provide for two Chairpersons representing the LTTE and the government, with the right for each of them to veto any proposal. The alternative is to have one Chairperson, but **any decision which affects either the Muslim or Sinhalese community has to be passed by a double majority ie. by a majority both at the Council and by a majority of the representatives of that particular community.**

These proposals are ambiguous and fall far short of the expectations of the LTTE and the Tamils. There is bound to be perennial disputes as to what matters affect the Muslim and Sinhalese communities. The government objective was obviously to considerably limit and paralyse the powers of the interim council controlled by the Tamils. While there has to be safeguards for the Northeast Muslims, it is not reasonable to allow Sinhalese settlers (including criminals) coming into the Tamil homeland of Northeast from the Sinhalese provinces to paralyse the only Tamil provincial administration. The safeguards envisaged for Muslims and Sinhalese in the Northeast are not given to Tamils in Sinhalese majority provinces. The government is displaying great concern for the non-Tamils in the Northeast. It would have looked more even handed if the same safeguards are given to the Tamils in the seven Sinhalese provincial councils and the central government. It is obvious that the Sri Lankan government is adopting a step motherly attitude towards the Tamils.

The Northeast Interim Administration without any control over police, security, land and revenue as proposed by the Sinhalese dominated

Colombo government would make the proposal an attempt by the Sinhalese to prevent the devolution of real power to the Tamils in their own homeland. The Muslim and Sinhalese members of the council would be able to argue that any measure to be adopted by a majority in the council would affect them and demand a double majority by the respective members.

LTTE Paris Meeting

The LTTE held an internal committee meeting at Paris, where Tamil legal experts from various countries such as Australia, USA, Malaysia, Singapore and Sri Lanka, assembled to consider and give advice to the LTTE on the Interim Administration. They advised on the legal implications of the government proposals and suggested proposals to formulate counter proposals to form the basis of future discussions. It is reported that the committee was in contact with Anton Balasingam, the Chief LTTE Negotiator who is in London, but not in good health. S.P. Thamilselvan and Col. Karuna, returned to their Northeast bases to consult the LTTE supreme leader Prabaharan in Vanni, before finalising their response to the Sri Lankan government.

LTTE proposals for an Interim Self-Governing Authority.

On October 31, 2003 the LTTE handed over to the Norwegian ambassador, a comprehensive and detailed proposals for an Interim Self-Governing Authority for the Tamil Northeast province. This document was handed over to the Sri Lanka Government for implementation. It is a landmark document which I shall reproduce in the next chapter.



Tamil Eelam Police march past

CHAPTER 22

INTERIM SELF-GOVERNING AUTHORITY

The proposal by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on behalf of the Tamil people for an agreement to establish an interim self-governing authority for the north-east of the island of Sri Lanka.

Consistent with the principles of the rule of law, the human rights and equality of all persons, and the right to self-determination of peoples,

Determined to bring lasting peace to all persons of the island of Sri Lanka,

Acknowledging with appreciation the services of the Royal Norwegian Government, the Norwegian People, and the international community in attempting to bring peace to the island,

Recognising that a peaceful resolution is a real possibility, despite the challenging history of the peace process between the Tamil people and the Sinhala people,

Determined to establish an interim self-governing authority for the north-east region and to provide for the urgent needs of the people of the north-east by formulating laws and policies and, effectively and expeditiously executing all resettlement, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development in the north-east, while the process for reaching a final settlement remains ongoing,

Being aware that the history of the relations between the Tamil people and the Sinhala people has been a process of broken promises and unilateral abrogation, by successive governments of Sri Lanka, of pacts and agreements solemnly entered into between the government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the elected representatives of the Tamil people,

Bearing in mind that successive governments of Sri Lanka have perpetrated persecution, discrimination, state violence and state-orchestrated violence against the Tamil people,

Noting that the Tamil people mandated their elected representatives to establish an independent sovereign, secular state for the Tamil people in the elections subsequent to the Vaddukoddai Resolution of 1976,

Bearing in mind that the Tamil armed struggle as a measure of self-defence and as a means for the realisation of the Tamil right to self-determination arose only after more than four decades of non-violent and peaceful constitutional struggle proved to be futile and due to the absence of means to resolve the conflict peacefully,

Recalling that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) first took measures towards peace by unilaterally declaring

the ceasefire in December 2000 and again in December 2001, opening highways, facilitating trade and the free movement of people, and entering into peace negotiations in good faith in the hope of creating an environment conducive to the return of normalcy and a just resolution of the conflict,
Taking note of the political courage of the present GOSL in reciprocating to the 2001 ceasefire,

Realising that the war in the island of Sri Lanka was principally confined to the north-east, resulting in the destruction of the social, economic, administrative, and physical infrastructure of that area, and that the north-east still remains the region in the island of Sri Lanka affected by war,

Recognising that the majority of the Tamil people in the north-east, by their actions in the general elections held in the year 2000, gave their mandate acknowledging the LTTE as their authentic representative,

Knowing that the LTTE exercises effective control and jurisdiction over the majority of the north-east area of the island of Sri Lanka,

Realising that reaching a final negotiated settlement and the implementation thereof is expected to be a long process,

Affirming the necessity for the safe and free return of all refugees and displaced persons and their urgent need for unimpeded access to their homes and secure livelihoods at land and sea in the north-east,

Mindful that institutions and services provided by the GOSL have proved to be inadequate to meet the urgent needs of the people of the north-east,

Recognising the failure of the Sub-committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs (SIHRN) and other sub-committees formed during the peace negotiations, which failure was due to the composition of such sub-committees, which repeatedly led to inaction,

Acknowledging the recognition by the GOSL of the necessity for an interim authority, as mentioned in its 2000 election manifesto,

***Realising** that maintenance of law and order is an essential pre-requisite for a just and free society,*

***Recognising** the need for raising revenue to meet the urgent needs for the resettlement, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development of the north-east region, which has been devastated by war, and for the carrying out of any function of government,*

***Recognising** the importance of control over land in resettlement, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development,*

***Mindful** that the Tamils did not participate in the making of the 1972 and 1978 constitutions, which institutionalised discrimination and denied them an effective role in the decision-making process,*

***Noting** the practice in international relations over the last decade of solving conflicts between peoples through agreement between the parties to the conflict on terms of equality and through innovative and imaginative measures,*

***Relying** on international precedents for establishing interim governing arrangements in war-torn countries having the force of law based solely on pacts or agreements between the warring parties recognised by the international community,*

***Noting** that measures such as the Ceasefire Agreement, including the role of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), and the establishment of the SIHRN and the North-east Reconstruction Fund (NERF) constitute valid precedents for making such arrangements,*

Wherefore, the parties, namely the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Government of Sri Lanka, hereby agree to the following provisions:

1/ Interim self-governing authority

An interim self-governing authority (ISGA) shall be established comprised of the eight districts namely: Amparai, Batticaloa, Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee and Vavuniya in the north-east, until a final negotiated settlement is reached and implemented.

Representatives of the Muslim community have the right to participate in formulation of their role in the ISGA.

2/ Composition of the ISGA

2.1 The ISGA shall consist of such number of members as may be determined by the parties to this agreement.

2.2 The composition of the ISGA shall be:

2.2a Members appointed by the LTTE,

2.2b Members appointed by the GOSL, and

2.2c Members appointed by the Muslim community in the north-east.

2.3 The number of members will be determined to ensure:

2.3a An absolute majority of the LTTE appointees in the ISGA

2.3b Subject to (a) above, the Muslim and Sinhala communities in the north-east shall have representation in the ISGA.

2.4 The chairperson shall be elected by a majority vote of the ISGA and shall serve as the chief executive of the ISGA.

2.5 The chairperson shall appoint the chief administrator for the north-east and such other officers as may be required to assist in the performance of his/her duties. The chairperson shall have the powers to suspend or terminate any such appointment.

3/ Elections

The provisions of Clauses 2.2 and 2.3 shall continue until elections for the ISGA are held. Such elections shall be held at the expiry of five years of the coming into force of this agreement, if no final settlement has been reached and implemented by the end of the said period of five years.

An independent Election Commission, appointed by the ISGA, shall conduct free and fair elections in accordance with international democratic principles and standards under international observation.

4/ Human rights

The people of the north-east shall be accorded all rights as are provided under international human rights law. Every law, regulation, rule, order or decision of the ISGA shall conform to internationally accepted standards of human rights protection.

There shall be an independent human rights commission, appointed by the ISGA, which shall ensure the compliance with all such human rights obligations.

The commission will seek the assistance of international human rights bodies to facilitate the rapid establishment of an effective regime for protecting human rights.

The commission shall be entitled to receive petitions from any individual person, award compensation to any such affected person, and ensure that such person's rights are restored.

5/ Secularism

No religion shall be given the foremost place in the north-east.

6/ Prohibition against discrimination

The ISGA shall ensure that there is no discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, national or regional origin, age or gender in the north-east.

7/ Prevention of bribery and corruption

The ISGA shall ensure that no bribery or corruption is permitted in or under its administration.

8/ Protection of all communities

No law, regulation, rule, order or decision that confers a privilege or imposes a disability on any community, which is not conferred or imposed on any other community, shall be made concerning culture or religion.

9/ Jurisdiction of the ISGA

9.1 The ISGA shall have plenary power for the governance of the north-east including powers in relation to resettlement, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development, including improvement and upgrading of existing services and facilities (hereinafter referred to as RRRD), raising revenue including imposition of taxes, revenue, levies and duties, law and order, and over land.

These powers shall include all powers and functions in relation to regional administration exercised by the GOSL in and for the north-east.

9.2 The detailed modalities for the exercise of such powers and the performance of such functions shall be subject to further discussion by the parties to this agreement.

10/ Separation of powers

Separate institutions for the administration of justice shall be established for the north-east, and judicial powers shall be vested in such institutions. The ISGA shall take appropriate measures to ensure the independence of the judges.

Subject to clauses 4 (human rights) and 22 (settlement of disputes), of this agreement, the institutions created under this clause shall have sole and exclusive jurisdiction to resolve all disputes concerning the interpretation and implementation of this agreement and any other disputes arising in or under this agreement or any provision thereof.

11/ Finance

The ISGA shall prepare an annual budget.

There shall be a financial commission consisting of members appointed by the ISGA. The members should have distinguished themselves or held high office in the fields of finance, administration or business.

This commission shall make recommendations as to the amount out of the consolidated fund to be allocated to the north-east. The GOSL shall make its good faith efforts to implement the recommendation.

The ISGA will, giving due consideration to an equitable distribution, determine the use of funds placed at its disposal. These funds shall include the North-east General Fund, the North-east Reconstruction Fund (NERF) and the Special Fund.

The GOSL agrees that any and all of its expenditures in or for the north-east shall be subject to the control of the ISGA.

11.1 North-east General Fund

The North-east General Fund shall be under the control of ISGA and shall consist of:

11.1a The proceeds of all grants and loans made by the GOSL to the ISGA and the proceeds of all other loans made to the ISGA

11.1b All allocations by the GOSL from agreements with states, institutions and/or other organisations earmarked in any such agreements for the north-east

11.1c All other receipts of the ISGA, other than the funds specified below.

11.2 North-east Reconstruction Fund

The NERF shall continue to exist in its present form except that control over it will be transferred to the ISGA.

All grants given for the reconstruction of the north-east will be received through the NERF. Utilisation of resources from NERF will be directly determined and supervised by the ISGA.

11.3 Special Fund

All loans and any grants which cannot be channelled through the NERF for the specific purpose of RRRD will be received into the Special Fund. As in the case of other funds, the ISGA shall control the Special Fund.

12/ Powers to borrow, receive aid and trade

The ISGA shall have powers to borrow internally and externally, provide guarantees and indemnities, receive aid directly, and engage in or regulate internal and external trade.

13/ Accounting and auditing of funds

13.1 The ISGA shall appoint an auditor general

13.2 All funds referred to in this agreement shall be operated, maintained and audited in accordance with internationally accepted accounting and auditing standards. The accounts will be audited by the auditor general. The auditing of all moneys received from international sources shall be subjected to approval by an internationally-reputed firm appointed by the ISGA.

14/ District committees

14.1 In the effective exercise of its legislative and executive powers, the ISGA may create district committees to carry out administration in the districts, and delegate to such committees such powers as the ISGA may determine. The chairpersons of such committees shall be appointed by the

ISGA from amongst its members in order to serve as a liaison between the ISGA and the committees.

14.2 The other members of the committees shall also be appointed by the ISGA, which shall have the powers to suspend or terminate any such appointment. In appointing such members, due consideration shall be given to ensure representation of all communities.

14.3 The committees will function directly under the ISGA.

14.4 The chief administrator of the ISGA shall appoint principal executive officers in the districts, who shall also function as the secretaries to the committees. The chief administrator shall have the powers to suspend or terminate any such appointment.

14.5 All activities and functions of the committees shall be co-ordinated through the respective secretaries to the committees.

14.6 Sub-committees may also be appointed to facilitate administration.

15/ Administration

As part of the exercise of its executive powers the ISGA shall have direction and control over any and all administrative structures and personnel in the north-east pertaining to the powers set out in Clause 9 of this agreement.

The ISGA may, at its discretion, create expert advisory committees in necessary areas. These areas will include but are not limited to economic affairs, financial affairs, judicial affairs, resettlement and rehabilitation affairs, development of infrastructure, and essential services.

16/ Administration of land

Since land is vital to the exercise of the powers set out in Clause 9 (jurisdiction of the ISGA), the ISGA shall have the power to alienate and determine the appropriate use of all land in the north-east that is not privately owned.

The ISGA shall appoint a special commission on administration of land to inquire into and report on the rights of dispossessed people over land and land subject to

encroachment, notwithstanding the lapse of any time relating to prescription.

The ISGA shall determine the term of competencies of the special commission.

17/ Resettlement of Occupied Lands

The occupation of land by the armed forces of the GOSL, and the denial to the rightful civilian owners of unfettered access to such land, is a violation of the norms of international law.

Such land must be immediately vacated and restored to the possession of the previous owners. The GOSL must also compensate the owners for the past dispossession of their land.

The ISGA shall be responsible for the resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced civilians and refugees in such lands.

18/ Marine and offshore resources

The ISGA shall have control over the marine and offshore resources of the adjacent seas and the power to regulate access thereto.

19/ Natural Resources

The ISGA will have control over the natural resources in the north-east region.

Existing agreements relating to any such natural resources will continue in force. The GOSL shall ensure that all monies due under such agreements are paid to the ISGA.

Any future changes to such existing agreements should be made with the concurrence of the ISGA.

Future agreements shall be entered into with the ISGA.

20/ Water use

Upper riparian users of river systems have a duty to ensure that there is a fair, equitable and reasonable use of water resources by lower riparian users.

The GOSL and the ISGA shall ensure that this internationally recognised principle is followed in the use of water resources.

21/ Agreements and contracts

All future agreements concerning matters under the jurisdiction of the ISGA shall be made with the ISGA.

Existing agreements will continue, but the GOSL shall ensure that all proceeds under such agreements are paid to the ISGA.

Any changes to such existing agreements should be made with the concurrence of the ISGA.

22/ Settlement of disputes

Where a dispute arises between the parties to this agreement as to its interpretation or implementation, and it cannot be resolved by any other means acceptable to the parties including conciliation by the Royal Norwegian Government, there shall be an arbitration before a tribunal consisting of three members, two of whom shall be appointed by each party.

The third member, who shall be the chairperson of the tribunal, shall be appointed jointly by the parties concerned.

In the event of any disagreement over the appointment of the chairperson, the parties shall ask the president of the International Court of Justice to appoint the chairperson.

In the determination of any dispute the arbitrators shall ensure the parity of status of the LTTE and the GOSL and shall resolve disputes by reference only to the provisions of this agreement.

The decision of the arbitrators shall be final and conclusive and it shall be binding on the parties to the dispute.

23/ Operational period

This agreement shall continue until a new government for the north-east, pursuant to a permanent negotiated settlement, is established.

The parties will negotiate in good faith to reach such a settlement as early as possible.

Provided, however, that at the end of four years if no final agreement has been reached between the parties to this agreement, both parties shall engage in negotiations in good faith for the purpose of adding, clarifying, and strengthening the terms of this agreement.



LTTE consultative meeting in Paris

CHAPTER 23

COUP BY PRESIDENT CHANDRIKA

Reactions to the LTTE proposals

The proposals by LTTE for the Northeast Interim Self-Governing Authority was received with mixed reactions. The international community welcomed it as a basis for future negotiations. The UNF government felt that the proposals went far beyond their own proposals, but wanted to negotiate with the LTTE. However the opposition and the extremist and racist Sinhala parties raised a hue and cry that the country was going to be broken up by the proposals. They clamoured to reject the LTTE proposals outright.

President Chandrika seizes ministries

On November 4, 2003, when Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe was out of the country on a visit to the USA to meet President Bush, Chandrika Kumaratunga executed a palace coup. She dismissed the three UNF Ministers of Defence, Interior and Mass Media, and took over the ministries herself. This happened just four days after the LTTE had handed over these proposals for an Interim Self-governing Authority to the government.

As Chandrika had done this power grab when the Prime Minister was out of the country, and without consulting him, her action was mala fides. It was also a flouting of the will of the Sri Lankan people who had voted for peace and the policy of the UNF at the general election of December 2001.

To add to the tension, she suspended the Parliament till the 19th of November, and declared a state of emergency. It was clearly an abuse of the constitution and the Presidential powers. There was panic and share values dropped. The international community was aghast at the sudden threat to the peace in the country. Chandrika backed out of the emergency declaration and withdrew the order before publication. She and her People's Alliance were apparently on the defensive, as her plans had misfired. Their hopes of a cross over of UNF MPs did not materialise.

Chandrika had gambled probably on the advice of her confidantes like the unscrupulous Kadirgamar. As the UNF retained a majority in Parliament, a serious crisis had brewed. The emergency would have had to be approved by the Parliament in a stipulated period, and that would not have happened. The budget had to be passed in Parliament to incur government expenditure. Sri Lankans of all communities were sick of war and did not want the cease-fire broken. The business community were outraged and

worried. Chandrika had by her stupidity and arrogance, dug herself into a hole.

Chandrika checkmated

Ranil turned the tables on Chandrika by a tactical move. He gave her an ultimatum to hand back the three ministries to the UNF or take over the peace negotiations with LTTE. The truth dawned on Chandrika and she was pleading with Ranil to continue with the peace talks. The Norwegian facilitators temporarily withdrew from their role until the power struggle ended in Colombo. The LTTE said that they were ready for peace talks, but did not know with whom to talk.

It was obvious that Chandrika was not the patriot she was claiming to be, but just a power hungry politician. She had earlier demanded that the UNF government dismantle the Manirasakulam LTTE camp in Mutur in ten days, but now she was quiet on that issue. She and her supporters had demanded that the Norwegians quit from their role as mediators and monitors, but now she wanted them back. She had vehemently criticised Ranil for his handling of the peace negotiations. Now she wanted him to handle the peace talks and refused to handle it herself. In short she has made a complete fool of herself.

Reactions to Chandrika's power grab

The LTTE maintained a neutral position in regard to the power struggle in Colombo. They declared that they were prepared to resume talks with the Sri Lankan government, but they must know with whom to negotiate.

Late in December 2003, Chandrika enlarged the Ministry of Defence under her by including other powers which were under Interior Ministry and named it Ministry of Internal Security. Police powers, STF, prisons, home-guards, immigration and emigration etc. were added to Defence.

Political stalemate

It is clear that the present Sri Lankan constitution is undesirable and unworkable unless the President and Parliament are controlled by the same party. It had been framed against the wishes of the Tamils and without their participation. As a two-third majority is required to amend the constitution, it is not possible under the present circumstances, to amend the constitution unless the two major parties agree to do so.

With the deadlock, a general election became inevitable. The President has the power to order an election. The Parliament can force a crisis by cutting off funds for the ministries grabbed by the President

Major General Sarath Fonseka, an openly anti-Tamil and extremist Sinhalese, was military commander of the North. The public relations between the all Sinhala armed forces, the LTTE, and the Tamil public in Jaffna was at a low ebb. In December 2003, he was transferred out of Jaffna and replaced by Major General Susil Chandrapala, who tried to cultivate a better relationship with the Jaffna public.

Buddhist violence against Christians and Muslims

The Sinhala South became involved in religious violence. The Buddhist priests demanded legislation against conversion. This was followed by attacks on Christian churches by the Buddhist extremists. The country has seen spasmodic violence between Buddhists and Muslims. This has created a new dimension to the already volatile political situation

United Peoples Freedom Alliance

On January 20, 2004, the opposition People's Alliance and the extremist Jathika Vimukthi Peramuna signed an

agreement to form the United Peoples Freedom Alliance. This Alliance has been aptly described as a combination of the Sinhala Budhist Chauvinistic forces. It can be said that this was a body blow to the peace process. Though President Chandrika was at pains to make out that the Alliance was against war and in favour of peace negotiations, the country was plunged into gloom. The JVP is opposed to federalism and is clinging to its belief in a unitary, as distinct from a united country. They also want to involve many other parties into the peace negotiations and dilute the peace process.

Tamil reaction to new alliance

This Alliance resulted in a Tamil backlash. Senior LTTE men, Anton Balasingam and Thamichelvan expressed their anger over the developments. Balasingam stated that this Alliance had brought confusion and created objective conditions for war. Thamichelvan stated that LTTE will not negotiate with anyone who does not recognise them as the sole representatives of the Tamils. The LTTE declared that they were prepared to talk to any Sinhalese party that commanded the confidence of the Sinhalese people.

Parliament dissolved

On April 2, 2004, President Chandrika dissolved the SL Parliament of 225 members. It was decided to hold elections on April 2, 2004, nearly four years ahead of schedule. This was another political gamble by Chandrika.





Present Tamil leaders in Parliament

R. Sambandan
TNA Leader

Arumugam
Thondaiman
CWC Leader

P. Chandrasekeran
UPF Leader

CHAPTER 24

BETRAYAL BY COL. KARUNA OF LTTE

The rise of Karuna

For 42 days the Tamil nation was in suspense. Karuna Amman, the overall LTTE commander of Batticaloa-Amparai, rebelled against the LTTE leadership and unleashed a reign of terror in the areas under his control. Col. Karuna was an acclaimed warrior, who had fought and won many a battle against the occupying Sinhala armed forces. He had distinguished himself in the battle of Jayasikuru in the Vanni and was honoured as a hero. He was a trusted lieutenant of the LTTE Supreme leader, Prabaharan, and was conferred full autonomy over the LTTE organisation in the districts under his command.

The revolt

In early March 2004, to the consternation of all, he broke his allegiance to the LTTE, and turned a traitor by establishing contact with the hostile Sinhala military. He claimed to be in control of a separate organisation, with 6,000 fighters, and wanted a separate cease-fire agreement with the Sri Lankan government. At first the LTTE leadership endeavoured to reconcile and grant him amnesty to leave the country, and join his family whom he had sent abroad. Succumbing to the temptations from hostile forces, he chose the path of rebellion, and raised the issue of regionalism. The unity of the LTTE was shattered, and the long suffering Tamil nation was bewildered and betrayed. Karuna Amman became a Tamil traitor in the line of Vibishanan, Ettappan and Kakkai Vannian.

Karuna, who had been chosen to represent the LTTE at the peace talks outside Sri Lanka, was probably attracted by the life in those countries and sent his family abroad. He might also have been contacted by agents working against the Tamil cause. He could have honourably resigned from the organisation and settled abroad. Instead he started embezzling LTTE funds and is alleged to have indulged in acts not consistent with his position. When summoned to the Vanni for investigation, he balked, and raised the issue of regionalism.

Karuna started a reign of terror. He drove out Tamils of the North, alleging that the leadership in Vanni discriminated against the people of the East. He prevented the TNA candidates, who were loyal to the leadership from canvassing for the general elections to be held on April 2, 2004. The lead candidate, Joseph Pararajasingham was held in virtual house arrest. He compelled other candidates to toe his line. At the elections, five Tamils were elected from the

Batticaloa-Amparai Districts, and they were under considerable pressure from the Karuna group.

The anti-Tamil elements and the SL military gleefully received all this. The pro-Sinhala media were euphoric. The Sinhala extremists were clamouring that the SL army should help the renegade. The UPFA, which emerged as the largest party was pretending to be neutral in the internal feud. But it was obvious that the SL armed forces were helping Karuna. The Norwegian led SLMM however, withdrew their monitors from areas under Karuna's control.

Karuna's faction was able to influence the general elections and some of the candidates were forced to toe his line. Tamil National Alliance swept the board at the general elections and 22 were returned. Karuna exerted considerable pressure on the Batticaloa-Amparai MPs and there was confusion.

The fall of Karuna

On April 9, 2004, Prabaharan decided to liquidate the renegade. Eastern cadres loyal to him, landed in 50 boats in the early hours, south of the Verugal river separating the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts. Another contingent crossed the Verugal river in a pincer drive. They were under the new commander Col. Ramesh, and with minimum loss of life occupied North Batticaloa in two days. Karuna and the SL army were taken by surprise. His cadres switched sides in large numbers. The SL military was actively conniving with Karuna's fighters and allowing them to cross the government controlled Batticaloa-Colombo road through Valachenai. However, when the LTTE advanced South, the military strengthened their lines and threatened to fire if the mainstream fighters crossed the line. The SL government

declared that it would be a breach of the cease-fire if that occurred.

Prabaharan once again proved a master strategist by getting his fighters to infiltrate into South Batticaloa and Amparai Districts without the knowledge of Karuna and the army. The LTTE fighters sent to retrieve the districts were from the Batticaloa-Amparai Districts and knew the terrain well. Their new commander Col. Ramesh, is a son of Batticaloa. When they advanced, Karuna's army deserted in large numbers, and melted away like the snow at the onset of sunlight. Most of the arms and ammunitions fell into the hands of the retrieving force.

Karuna was on the run. He deserted his fighters and fled into the Thopigala forest with a few hard core supporters. Nilavini, the leader of the Women's brigade, Varathan, the propagandist, Thaatha, Thirumal, Robert, Thurai and a few joined him. The LTTE were hunting for them in their Thopigala hideout. SL army and the government declared that they would grant asylum to Karuna if he requested. LTTE had earlier warned that anyone establishing contact with the renegade would be seriously damaging the peace process.

It transpires, that with the assistance of a Muslim politician Moulana and the SL army, Karuna and a few of his followers fled in vehicles through Minneriya. Karuna, Nilavini, Varathan, and some of his very close supporters were under army protection. He is no doubt a prize catch. Tamils are apprehensive as he may be hibernating in one of the army camps. Some of the men and women who fled with him, including Nilavini, later returned to the East and surrendered to the LTTE. They told reporters the full story about Karuna's escape.

The causes of Karuna's debacle

Once Karuna became a rebel, he became a traitor and lost his moral standing. The LTTE discharged him and exposed the financial frauds committed by him. There were also rumours about his misconduct unbecoming of his position. It was apparent that he revolted to cover up his wrongdoings and raised the issue of regionalism to suit his selfish ends.

The people of Batticaloa-Amparai and the LTTE fighters were not wholeheartedly supporting his revolt. The loyalty to the cause, the movement, and the supreme leader was strong. Many of the top LTTE stalwarts like Ramesh, Kausalyan, Karikalan, and many others deserted Karuna and joined the main organisation in Vanni. The regional cry did not have much support. The retrieval force was far more powerful and well commanded. The fighters were from the same region and exerted considerable psychological influence on the renegade's faction to switch sides. Karuna's collaboration with the SL army showed him in very bad light in the eyes of the Tamils.

The timing of the retrieval made it difficult for the SL army and the government to intervene openly and militarily help the renegade. Prabakaran is a military strategist par excellence. He once again, just out-manuevered his adversary. He chose his time and place shrewdly. The LTTE fighters infiltrated in a manner that the SL army could not detect them. Had the SL army been tempted to cross the cease-fire line and intervened in the internal conflict, Prabakaran would probably have struck at other places like Trincomalee, Manaluru and Omanthai.

The Tamils throughout the world sighed with relief when the Tamil homeland was reunited.



*Y. Gopalaswamy, the Tamil Nadu leader
and fearless fighter for the Tamil cause*

CHAPTER 25

THE FUTURE OF CEYLON TAMILS

President Chandrika appeals to the Norwegians

At the elections held in April 2004, the UPFA emerged as the largest party but with no majority. Of that, the JVP, the hardline ex-terrorist organisation captured 39 seats. Nine Buddhist priests contesting under extremist Sinhala Buddhist Party, the Jathika Hela Urumaya Party also won 9 seats. The Tamil National Alliance with the backing of LTTE,

captured most of the seats in the Tamil majority areas, securing 22 seats.

The country remains divided with the LTTE controlling the most of Northeast with their own army, navy, police, judiciary, administration, banking, taxation etc. The all Sinhala armed forces and police occupy parts of the Tamil homeland. They hold on to High Security Zones preventing internally displaced Tamil people from resettling. There have been some unfortunate killings in the East, apparently by para-military groups linked to renegade Karuna, with the help of some elements in the army.

President Chandrika appealed to the Norwegians, whom she had been maligning earlier, to resume the peace negotiations with the LTTE. They returned, endeavouring to start the peace talks. The extremist JVP who are part of the UPFA continue to criticise and obstruct the peace process. They are abusing the Norwegian mediators and the peace monitors.

Changes in the Indian political scenario

In the Indian Parliamentary Elections held in May 2004, the Congress Party led by Sonia Gandhi was returned to power, defeating the BJP. In Tamil Nadu and Pondicheri, the DMK led coalition with Congress, MDMK and PMK won overwhelmingly capturing all the 40 seats.. The leaders of MDMK, Y. Gopalaswamy (popularly called Vaiko), and PMK, Ramadoss are strong sympathisers of the Sri Lankan Tamils. The DMK leader Karunanithi is also sympathetic to the SL Tamils. Vaiko and Nedumaran had been imprisoned for a long period by the Jayalalitha government for speaking in support of the SL Tamils.

Dr. Manmohan Singh, a Sikh became Prime Minister after Sonia Gandhi declined that position. He heads a coalition government. The Tamils holding key ministerial positions in

Delhi are a formidable force: P. Chidambaram (Congress), Mani Shankar Iyer (Congress), V.Y.Balu (DMK), Dayanithi Maran (DMK), Raja (DMK), Anbumani Ramadoss (PMK). Junior Ministerial posts are held by Subalakshmi Jegadeesan (DMK), Palani Maniccam (DMK), Ragupati (DMK), Vengadapathi (DMK), Velu (PMK), and Ilankovan (Congress).

Incidentally, Subalakshmi Jegadeesan was accused some years ago of aiding the Tamil Tigers and arrested. Vaiko was so popular after his release from 18 months of imprisonment, that large crowds thronged to listen to him. Karunanithy commented that Vaiko was like a storm breaking in the Indian Ocean, and true it was. Who knows – Vaiko may be a future Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

Already, the Tamils in the Indian Central Government are taking keen interest in the development of the Tutucorin harbour, and the deepening of the Palk Strait. They are a force to be reckoned with. The Indian Home Minister Sivraj Patel and Foreign Minister Natwar Sing are showing signs of flexibility on the Sri Lankan issue. These developments in the Indian Sub-continent just across the Palk Strait may have a bearing on the political scenario in Sri Lanka for the better.

Tamil hopes for the future

Tamils can only hope that, the Sinhala dominated government will take steps to alleviate the suffering of the Tamils. The Tamils of the Northeast and the Upcountry should be given equal treatment with the Sinhalese and the Muslims.

The Tamils have to be allowed full autonomy under a loose federal or confederal set up. They should have their own legislature and have full control over all subjects other than

defence, foreign affairs and currency, with Tamil as the official language.

Tamil is an official language but not implemented. The Tamil language should be used for Tamil speaking people living in all parts of Sri Lanka. It should be the language of administration for Northeast.

The government should immediately recruit Tamils into all the public services, including the police and armed forces. Tamils should be ensured a strength in all services at least in proportion to their population. The all Sinhala armed forces and police should be removed from the Tamil homelands and replaced by Tamils. They had been continuously indulging in atrocities against the Tamils. They are guilty of mass murders, disappearances, torture and rape. Tamil women have been systematically raped and sexually assaulted on a large scale by the occupying forces. The Sinhalese and Muslim 'Homeguards' and the Tamil para military working with the SL army should be disbanded. These were used by the SL government to carry out atrocities against the Tamil civilians.

The armed forces should immediately vacate Tamil homes, places of worship, hospitals and public places. The High Security Zones in the Northeast should be dismantled. Tamils should be able to do farming and fishing freely. There should be a provincial police force under Tamil control.

All Tamils who were uprooted from their homes and lands in the Northeast to colonise Sinhalese from outside, should be resettled in their ancestral lands. There should be sharing of power with the Tamils at the centre and complete devolution of authority to the Northeast province. All Upcountry Tamils should be restored their citizenship and voting rights and treated as equals. The rights of the Tamils of the

Northeast and Upcountry, and the Muslims should be safeguarded.

It is to be hoped that Sri Lanka will enjoy peace and prosperity and Tamils treated as equal citizens in the future. It is also to be hoped that Tamil people of the Northeast and Upcountry, will live happily in an autonomous set up, guiding their own destiny. They should be able to develop politically, socially, economically, culturally and linguistically. In this way, the country, which is presently divided de facto, can be reunited.

Let it not be told to posterity for shame, that while the Tamil youth shed their dearest blood in the defence of their downtrodden people, their birthrights were given away at the peace negotiations.

The Sinhala extremists and chauvinists will do well to take note of the Heros Day speech by the Supreme Leader of the LTTE on November 26, 2003. While declaring that he stood by the cease-fire despite the power struggle in the South, he delivered an ominous warning. The Sinhalese leaders should not, by refusing to give the just demands of the Tamils, push them to seek complete separation.